

RESEARCH NOTE

WOMEN AND EVENTS: INSIDE-OUT AND INSIDE-IN PASSIVE ACTIVISM

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An empirical study based on the examination of 5,048 photos uploaded by 1,100 female users of the dating application *happn* reveals that women are adopting an inside-out and inside-in passive activism attitude with regards to event-related products/services to protest against the glass ceiling situation they are facing in the events industry. The study also suggests that future research should look at other industries to see if the results can be generalized.

Key words: Women; *happn*; Activism; Glass ceiling; Event industry

Introduction

Research conducted by Thomas (2016) revealed that “women comprise about 75% of the events workforce but there is a promotion and pay gap that favours men” (p. 202). Dashper (2017) also came up with the conclusion that the industry is female dominated numerically, but mainly led by men. Other research in the area identified the reasons for this subdued position of women in the industry: the lack of female role models; the lack of confidence; the lack of flexibility in terms of working hours; and the limited professional and mentoring networks for women (Dashper, 2017, 2018). The final group of research identified almost unanimously mentoring as the main solution to overcome the

gender issue in the events industry (see Dashper, 2017, 2018; Remington & Kitterlin-Lynch, 2018).

The event industry is not the only industry women are finding themselves in a subdued position. It is a societal issue (Michailidis et al., 2012; Sieghart, 2021). However, existing research has so far failed to investigate the consequences of this gender inequality on how women (regardless the industry) are self-presenting themselves with regards to the products/services produced by the industry they work in (see Burke et al., 2006; Dashper, 2018; Thomas, 2016). Taking the event industry as an example, the study is investigating if there is a correlation between the role and importance given to women in the event industry, and how this gender self-represent itself with regards to the industry. On the basis that the

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gender issue is present in all industries (Michailidis et al., 2012; Sieghart, 2021), the scope of this study is beyond the boundaries of the event industry.

The research question of the study is: Is the subdued position given to women as workers of the industry, reflected in women (regardless the industry they work in) self-presentation as customers of the events industry?

From a methodological point of view, this empirical study is based on visual data analysis (photos) collected from the dating app *happn*.

Activism

Activism is the mobilization of a group with a common belief and set of values to tackle a social problem (Colovic & Mehrota, 2020; Keraanen & Olkkonen, 2022). As a form of action, activism can take different shapes such as advocacy, protest, boycotts, transgression of the law, etc. Social activism, which is based on a shared agenda, is more collaborative and less confrontational (Colovic & Mehrota, 2020; Keraanen & Olkkonen, 2022). This form of activism, which is about lobbying backstage for a cause, is referred as passive activism by Tranter (2010).

There are three main types of social activism:

- a) Outside-in activism is often pressure groups and social movements, which are aiming at influencing practices, policies, societal norms, and other status quo situations.
- b) Inside-in activism happens when internal customers (e.g., staff) are pushing the organization towards more responsible and ethical practices. As opposed to external activism, internal activism has more means to make changes within an organization (or industry).
- c) Finally, inside-out activism refers to an organization taking a strong position for or against an existing issue. This type of activism in general receives divided responses from people (i.e., either support or antagonism).

As this study is investigating women self-representation with regards to products/services of the events industry, the focus is therefore on inside-out activism (women working in industry other than the event industry) and inside-in activism (women working within the event industry).

Methodology

Positioning of the Study and Data Collection

This study is adopting a feminist positioning, which is a positioning based on the belief that women's perspective is important to understand the true meaning and importance of something (Moreno Alarcón & Cole, 2019). In the case of the study, it is about raising awareness about the lack of value given to women in some industries such as the event industry.

As the study is in line with studies aiming to explore the subdued condition of women in the event industry, the use of dating appears to be relevant as dating apps can be considered as feminist tools, because women using dating apps is perceived as an act of resistance as going against some cliché regarding the role of women in society, like making the first move, which is disrupting men's domination (Chan, 2018; Sobieraj & Humphreys, 2021). Dating apps also give the upper hand to women as they can reject the men they do not like arbitrarily (Chan, 2018).

As for *happn*, it was chosen because it is one of the leading dating apps on the market (see Blackwell et al., 2015; Knox et al., 2020), and because access to the platform (and the photos) only requires an account to be created (without having to pay).

This study is based on women aged 30–53 living in the UK. This age range was chosen because according to the life course framework (Zacher & Froidevaux, 2021) it is during the period of early adulthood (25–39) and middle adulthood (40–60) that individuals find their partners.

As for the connection between dating apps and the events industry, it is based on the fact that the dating industry, which includes both dating apps and speed dating events (Statista, 2023), involves the organization of both offline and online dating events (Séraphin, 2023; Speedater, 2023). However, contrary to the event industry, these events are giving women speed daters the power over men.

Type of Data Collected

For this study, 1,100 profiles of women (which correspond to 5,048 photos) were analyzed. The data for this study were collected between March 31, 2022, and May 14, 2022. To understand how

Table 1
Coding of Data

Types of Events	Examples	Coding
Private	Birthday; Wedding	1
Public (recreational)	Themed party; Foam party; Children party; Halloween party; Car festival; Car race	2
Public (sport competition)	Race; Rugby game; Color run	3
Public (art and entertainment)	Music festival	4
Public (cultural celebration)	Graduation; Ascott; Carnival; October Fest	5

women self-present themselves, content analysis was performed. After observation of every single photo posted by daters, the following three categories of photos were identified:

- a) The different types of heritages identified by Park (2014), namely: built heritage; scientific heritage; cultural heritage.
- b) The typology of events identified by Getz (2008): private (birthday, wedding, etc.) and public events [e.g., recreational (themed party, foam party, children party, Halloween party, car festival, car race), e.g., sport competition (race, rugby game, color run, etc.), e.g., art and entertainment (music festival), e.g., cultural celebration (graduation, Ascott, Carnival, October Fest)].
- c) Categories of the hospitality industry identified by Lugosi (2008): Two main times of pictures are falling under this category: first, bars/restaurants; second, hotels.

Data Analysis

All the event management related photos were coded as explained in Table 1. The types of events are based on the typology developed by Getz

Table 2
Number of Consumers Who Uploaded Events-Related Photos on *happn*

	Frequency (%)	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0	1,039 (94.5%)	94.5%	94.5%
1	10 (0.9%)	0.9%	95.4%
2	6 (0.5%)	0.5%	95.9%
3	27 (2.5%)	2.5%	98.4%
4	9 (0.8%)	0.8%	99.2%
5	9 (0.8%)	0.8%	100.0%
Total	1,100 (100.0%)	100.0%	

(2008). SPSS was used to perform some statistical data analysis (Table 2).

Results and Discussion

The findings reveal that out of all the leisure activities, events are the least popular ones (Table 3): 1) Nature-based activities: 35.3% of consumers posted pictures related to this type of activity; 2) Hospitality (food and drink): 12.2%; 3) Cultural and built heritage: 8.8%; 4) Events: 5.8%.

Self-presentation is a communication management approach used by individuals to control how they are perceived by others (Hollenbaugh, 2021). As part of this communication strategy, individuals select the type of information they want to share, so that others accept the conveyed message (Kim et al., 2012; Rui & Stefanone, 2013). On that basis, the low score of "events" is evidence that women are not self-represented with regards to products/services of the events industry. This finding could be understood as both a form of inside-out and inside-in activism. Both are passive forms of activism. The forms of activism adopted by women are to be related with protective self-presentation, which is a neutral presentation of the self to conform to a norm and avoid rejection (Pontari & Glenn, 2012; Rui & Stefanone, 2013). Indeed, in the case of this study, the lesser role given to women correlated with the lesser importance given to events by women. This study is also evidence that the way staff of an industry is treated impacts on how these individuals consume (and perceive) products/services of this industry.

Conclusion


When in an unfriendly and/or not familiar environment individuals tend to develop a form of

Table 3
Number of Consumers Who Uploaded Specific Type of Photos on *happn*

	0 (Frequency)	1 (Frequency)	Total	0	1	Total
Water	858	242	1,100	78.0%	22.0%	100%
Land	954	146	1,100	86.7%	13.3%	100%
Hospitality	967	133	1,100	87.9%	12.1%	100%
Castle	1,045	55	1,100	95.0%	5.0%	100%
Landmark	1,091	9	1,100	99.2%	0.8%	100%
Religious	1,088	12	1,100	98.9%	1.1%	100%
Art	1,093	7	1,100	99.4%	0.6%	100%
Culture	1,077	23	1,100	97.9%	2.1%	100%
Private events	1,085	15	1,100	98.6%	1.4%	100%
Public events	1,052	48	1,100	95.6%	4.4%	100%

anxiety, and as a result, adopt a more protective self-presentation attitude (Pontari & Glenn, 2012), which is a neutral and socially conservative presentation of the self to conform to a norm (Pontari & Glenn, 2012; Rui & Stefanone, 2013). In the case of the event industry, that would mean that the glass ceiling for women in the event industry (see Dashper, 2018, 2020; Thomas, 2016) is translating into a rejection by all women of products/services offered by the industry. This could be conceptualized as inside-out and inside-in passive activism.

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