Organisational change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion in hospitality and tourism: Managerial perspectives

Thanakarn Bella Vongvisitsin [a], Antony King Fung Wong [b],*

[a] *School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong*
[b] *Hainan University – Arizona State University Joint International Tourism College, Hainan University, Haikou, China*

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

The economic significance of LGBTQ+ inclusion has been globally recognised by the hospitality and tourism sectors. This study aimed to explore how hospitality and tourism businesses promote LGBTQ+ inclusion and identify challenges in implementing LGBTQ+ inclusive strategies in Asia. By using a qualitative approach with pragmatic paradigm, this study conducted in-depth interviews with 10 senior-level executives in corporations that play a prominent role in promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion across hospitality and tourism sectors. An LGBTQ+ inclusion model was also developed based on 'unfreeze-change-(re)freeze' theory to further understand organisational change with nonlinear, interconnected, interactive and iterative orientations. Thematic and document analyses identified four essential elements of change, namely, policies and structures, internal communication, learning and development and public engagement. Management support was also identified as an effective moderator for improving the operationalisation of the model.

1. Introduction

LGBTQ+ inclusion is an emerging topic that has become highly relevant in a global business environment and received much scholarly attention[1] (Blanck, Hyseni, & Wise, 2020; Theodorakopoulos & Budhwar, 2015). Recognised as a universal development agenda, the United Nations (UN) agencies have demanded business sectors to advocate for LGBTIQ + inclusion and act as active agents of change (Bross, Houdart, & Tripathi, 2018; Scolaro, 2020; Thomas & Weber, 2019; Tripathi, Radcliffe, & Houdart, 2017). However, there have been many incidences where global standards and traditional values are clashed. For example, foreign companies were banned by Singaporean government from sponsoring LGBTQ+ events since the action was seen as domestic interference (Lewis, 2016; Sin, 2016; Vasagar, 2016). Also, extensive discussions were spurred across the society in Hong Kong by a controversial ban on Cathay Pacific's advertisement featuring same-sex couple (Lee, 2019; Luo & Wan, 2019; Tam, 2019). Besides, a worldwide boycott over Brunei-owned hotels, airlines and tourism promotion was called by multinational corporations and celebrities after the Sultan imposed LGBTQ+ death penalty (Bostock, 2019; Westcott, 2019).

Meanwhile, a growing number of organisational studies have confirmed that LGBTQ+ individuals face numerous challenges in expressing their sexual and gender identities and in dealing with cis- and hetero-normative work environments (Button, 2001; Everly & Schwarz, 2015; Holman, 2018). With employment being one of the most important aspects of people's lives, these challenges create tremendous economic and social costs for LGBTQ+ individuals (Alonso, 2013). Organisations also suffer from the loss of potential employees, turnover of qualified employees, an unproductive workforce and legal costs due to discrimination against LGBTQ+ employees (Holman, 2018; Lee Badgett, Durso, Kastanis, & Mallory, 2013; Pichler & Holmes IV, 2017). Additionally, negative spill-over effects caused by an unease to express sexual and gender identities of LGBTQ+ people at work were found to affect other life dimensions, such as their partners, friends and families (Williamson, Beiler-May, Locklear, & Clark, 2017). Therefore, the difficulties being faced by LGBTQ+ employees are also important issues for organisations and other people in the society (Griffith & Hebl, 2002).

A wide range of policies and strategies in relation to LGBTQ+ inclusion have been implemented by the top management of large-sized enterprises (Van Beek, Cancedda, & Scheele, 2016). Unlike other forms of diversity, LGBTQ+ inclusion focuses on equal treatment towards LGBTQ+ employees than on increasing the number of LGBTQ+

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employees in organisations (Lee Badgett et al., 2013). For example, non-discrimination policies, domestic partner benefits and transition-related medical coverage have been promoted in most leading Fortune 500 companies in the US (Brooks & Edwards, 2009; Ng & Rumens, 2017). Apart from these policies, numerous LGBTQ+ inclusion strategies have also been adopted as a part of diversity and inclusion (D&I) missions that aim to promote and develop inclusive workplaces for employees regardless of their differences in age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE), ethnicity, colour and physical ability, amongst others (Allan, Tebbe, Bouchard, & Duffy, 2018; Button, 2001; Capell, Tzafrir, Enosh, & Dolan, 2018; DeSouza, Ispas, & Wesselmann, 2017; Everly & Schwarz, 2015; Lloren & Parini, 2017; Ragins & Cornwell, 2001; Van Beek et al., 2016).

LGBTQ+ is not a novel concept in the hospitality and tourism sectors given the long global history of LGBTQ+ tourism development (Halden, 2016). The economic significance of the LGBTQ+ travel market or the *'pink dollar'* has been well recognised by the industry (Guaracino & Salvato, 2017; Jordan, 2018; United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2012, 2017). Latest statistics from LGBT Capital (2020) show that the global LGBT population has reached approximately 371 million and contributes US$3.9 trillion in GDP. However, most of the extant initiatives targeting LGBTQ+ focus on *'consumer'* perspectives (e.g. LGBTQ+ themed products, events and promotions). In addition, hospitality and tourism stakeholders are facing challenges in showing consistent, transparent and authentic support for LGBTQ+ equality and promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace (Jordan, 2017). The hospitality and tourism sectors are also interactive and experiential in nature and require the co-creation of memorable experiences between employees and customers (Bitner, 1992; Campos, Mendes, Oom do Valle, & Scott, 2018; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Therefore, LGBTQ+ inclusive workplaces have an important strategic position in these sectors.

Managing diversity is comparable to managing organisational change, which requires the identification of workplace issues, implementation of strategies, mobilisation of responsibilities and provision of resources (Barclay & Scott, 2006). Generally, organisational change has evolved from organisational development studies and emerged as an integrative and holistic approach for transforming an organisation through its functions, systems, structures and work processes (Jacobs, van Witteloostuijin & Christie-Zeyse, 2013). Specifically, organisational change is driven by multi-level, cross-functional and action-oriented strategies (Worren, Ruddle, & Moore, 1999). The outcomes of organisational change and the methods used to achieve them may differ according to the objective of the change, that is, either to improve current performance or formulate new ways of operation (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015; Tummers, Kruyen, Vijverberg, & Voesenek, 2015; Waddock, Meszoely, Waddell, & Dentoni, 2015). Whilst several studies have focused on enhancing profitability and customer satisfaction, organisational change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion has received limited research attention.

This study explored how hospitality and tourism businesses achieve LGBTQ+ inclusion through organisational change. Specifically, this study aimed to identify which intervention strategies cater to LGBTQ+ inclusion in different stages of organisational change and to determine those challenges that arise from the deployment of these strategies. To fulfil these objectives, this study adopted a pragmatic qualitative approach by eliciting business insights from managers in Hong Kong based on organisational change theory. Although LGBTQ+ inclusion has been well studied in the western context, the adoption of this concept in non-western countries or regions is facing some hurdles given the prevalence of socially, culturally and politically distinctive issues in this area (Anteby & Anderson, 2014). In addition, whilst the law and policy reform towards LGBTQ+ inclusion in Asia has achieved some progress, the social, legal and policy environments in this region remain hostile (UNDP, 2015). Hong Kong was selected as the study context given its unique *'East meets West'* nature, its orientation towards large-scale international and local corporations in the hospitality and tourism

industry and its prominent social movement that advocates for LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace.

2. Literature review

2.1. Organisational change

Change management studies generally focus on comprehending organisational change in different levels, including individuals, teams and organisations (Jacobs, van Witteloostuijin, & Christe-Zeyse, 2013). At the individual level, the psychological aspects of change recipients and agents, such as their attitudes, perceptions and emotions (Castillo, Fernandez, & Sallan, 2018; Moon, 2009), were examined. Meanwhile, studies on organisation-level change emphasised organisational environments and populations, specifically the norms, roles, values and interaction amongst employees (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015; Fløvik, Knardahl, & Christensen, 2019; Jacobs et al., 2013). Most of these studies also adopted the classic *freezing-changing-(re)freezing* approach of Kurt Lewin's change theory to refine and guide the implementation of their models (Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2016; Rosenbaum, More, & Steane, 2018; Worley & Mohran, 2014).

Lewin's change theory (1947) posits that change can be planned by incorporating a force field that encourages people to break well-established customs or social habits and achieve their desired outcomes. A successful change requires ensuring the permanency of outcomes by ensuring that the new force field is sustainable and capable of addressing the obstacles to change. Lewin (1947) illustrated the *'changing'* process in three stages, namely, unfreezing, moving (or change) and (re)freezing, through a *'quasi-stationary equilibrium'*. Firstly, 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). Secondly, the *'changing'* stage is driven by different intervention strategies that facilitate transition and adaptation towards new behaviours, values, attitudes, skills, competencies, structures or processes in the organisation (Rosenbaum et al., 2018; Worley & Mohran, 2014). Thirdly, the *'(re)freezing'* stage aims to maintain and stabilise the changes through long-term structures and mechanisms (Burnes, 2019).

Lewin's socio-psychological theory has been widely cited in the fields of management and organisational development. In organisational studies, *'change'* is often referred to as a transition from an existing state to the desired outcomes through processes of preparation, adaptation and reconstitution of the identified change (Carter, 2008; Cummings et al., 2016; Rosenbaum et al., 2018). Accordingly, different intervention strategies are deployed to brace people for change and to align their change initiatives with their organisational goals and business environments (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015; Worley & Mohran, 2014). Nevertheless, Lewin's change theory has been criticised for its linearity, which may fail to address complex issues and the dynamic nature of changes (Sturdy & Grey, 2003; Styhre, 2002; Worley & Mohran, 2014). Grounded on action research that focuses on the force field analysis of specific group dynamics, Lewin's change theory can be flexibly applied in organisational change studies with consistent and valid results (Rosenbaum et al., 2018). Accordingly, this theory was adopted in this study to examine organisational change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion (Carter, 2008).

Owing to the dynamic changes in internal and external business environments, the concept of organisational change evolved and developed through continuously extended scholarly inquiries (Hartley, Benington, & Binns, 1997; Jacobs et al., 2013). Modern business environments are facing pressures from radically *'chaotic, uncertain, constantly changing, disruptive and complex'* marketplaces, technologies and competitions (Imran, Rehman, Aslam, & Bilal, 2016; Worley & Mohran, 2014). Scholars have continued to explore organisational change to highlight its nonlinear nature and to address complex issues (Saka, 2003; Styhre, 2002; Waddock et al., 2015). Given the diverse,

subtle and intersectional issues related to LGBTQ+ individuals, organisational change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion requires a nuanced and differentiated approach with a high level of engagement with multiple stakeholders at all levels (Tripathi et al., 2017). Therefore, this study aimed to examine those complex issues being faced by people at a intersectional disadvantage and to further develop the knowledge of organisational change.

2.2. LGBTQ+ inclusion in businesses

In response to the global social movement directed towards promoting equal rights for LGBTQ+ people, LGBTQ+ inclusion has been coined by leading global organisations and proposed as a solution to the problems faced by LGBTQ+ individuals at work. At the global level, this agenda was promoted by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2011a) to address 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). Meanwhile, the World Bank saw the inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals as an *'economic imperative'* (Lee Badgett, 2014). LGBTQ+ inclusion was also cited amongst the D&I strategies for advancing an inclusive culture and creating an organisation where all employees feel fully valued, respected and treated fairly (Fullerton, 2013; Ineson, Yap, & Whiting, 2013). However, compared with the other dimensions of diversity, such as gender, disability and race, knowledge about LGBTQ+ remains limited (Ng & Rumens, 2017).

Inclusion was defined by the World Bank (2012, p. 4) as *'[a] process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society'*. Several studies described inclusion as a state in which the employees feel valued, respected and supported and are able to contribute fully and effectively to their organisations (Bell, Özbilgin, Beauregard, & Sürgevil, 2011; Van Beek et al., 2016). Inclusion also involves managing the dichotomy between affirming individual identities and integrating different groups by balancing assimilation and alienation (Kulkarni, Vohra, Sharma & Nair, 2017). In other words, inclusion removes those obstacles that prevent employees from participating and contributing to their organisations. Specifically, LGBTQ+ inclusion addresses fundamental issues related to human resources, particularly the treatment of LGBTQ+ employees (e.g. non-discrimination, employee welfare and benefits and medical coverage) (Ineson et al., 2013; Martinez, Sawyer, & Wilson, 2017). Also, this concept can also be related to other business areas, such as financial performance (Foster, Manikas, & Preece, 2020), organisational culture (Fullerton, 2013) and language and communication (Prayson & Rowe, 2019).

A growing body of research tends to support the positive effects of LGBTQ+ inclusion at the individual, organisational and societal levels. At the individual level, LGBTQ+ inclusion generally creates an inclusive working environment where LGBTQ+ employees feel safe and comfortable to disclose their sexual and gender identities without fears of discrimination and victimisation (Brewster, Velez, DeBlaere, & Moradi, 2012; Holman, 2018; Lloren & Parini, 2017). In addition, LGBTQ+ employees feel welcomed to be a part of a cohesive and effective team (Fullerton, 2013; Lee Badgett et al., 2013). A healthy relationship between LGBTQ+ employees and their supervisors and co-workers can also be developed through continuous psychosocial support (Anderson, Knee, & Ramos, 2020; Galupo & Resnick, 2016; Law, Martinez, Ruggs, Hebl, & Akers, 2011; Van Beek et al., 2016). Consequently, LGBTQ+ employees tend to show improvements in their overall well-being and psychological health, which, in turn, increase their job and life satisfaction (Allan et al., 2018; Fullerton, 2013; Wang & Schwarz, 2010; Ragins et al., 2001).

LGBTQ+ inclusion also generates positive business outcomes at the organisational level. Several studies confirmed that organisations can reduce their costs, increase their revenues and improve their bottom lines by promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion (Lee Badgett et al., 2013). Issuing

LGBTQ+ inclusion policies also helps organisations attract higher-quality human capital, enjoy a diverse workforce, receive creative and innovative ideas, retain qualified employees and expand their customer base (Everly & Schwarz, 2015; Law et al., 2011; Van Beek et al., 2016). With the reduced incidence of discrimination against LGBTQ+ employees, organisations can also avoid legal costs and secure their business by complying with non-discrimination legislation (Lee Badgett et al., 2013; Van Beek et al., 2016). They can also build a positive branding image and gain reputation by conveying to others that negativity against LGBTQ+ individuals is an unacceptable behaviour (Law et al., 2011). These organisations can also advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion at the societal level by boosting social morale and convincing other organisations or local, state or federal institutions to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion (Allan et al., 2018; Everly & Schwarz, 2015; Tatum, 2018).

3. Research methodology

To investigate how LGBTQ+ inclusion is developed through organisational change, this study adopted pragmatism as its philosophical paradigm. Based on change theory, the pragmatic stance guided this study towards empirical inquiries to solve problems in different circumstances of actions (Feilzer, 2010; Morgan, 2014). Despite being occasionally questioned about its epistemology, which places greater emphasis on practicality, pragmatism improves the integration between practice and theory by ensuring that scholarly debates and discussions are exoteric and relevant. Theory is also valued as a mechanism to understand phenomena and shape human actions (Denzin, 1996; Wicks & Freeman, 1998). In this regard, theory and data are interconnected on the basis of *'abductive'* reasoning, which moves back and forth between induction and deduction (Hamlin, 2015). Within a given theoretical framework, pragmatism adopts the position in which knowledge is constructed with actionable, useful and contextually responsive findings derived from the nature of experiences and consequences (Patton, 2014; Ruwhiu & Cone, 2010). Furthermore, pragmatism allows researchers to extract theories from practice for further theoretical improvement (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

This study utilised a holistic qualitative approach to obtain data by considering both primary and secondary sources of information (Hennick, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011). To gain insights and extract rich amounts of information, the primary data were collected by conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with top- and mid-level managers of hospitality and tourism businesses (i.e. hotels, airlines, food and beverages, tour operators and theme parks) in Hong Kong. LGBTQ+ inclusion is a new concept in the Asian context, and most of the LGBTQ+ inclusive interventions in this area were initiated by the management. Therefore, this study focused on managerial perspectives to explore the knowledge base of LGBTQ+ inclusive interventions. Meanwhile, the secondary data were collected from official documents (i.e. policy statements, codes of conduct, sustainability reports, external reports, marketing and communication materials and company websites). Document analysis was performed to produce rich descriptions of a phenomenon, event, organisation or programme (Bowen, 2009). The collected documents were also used to triangulate the interview data with the primary data.

A thematic analysis was performed to categorise the data, to identify internally consistent yet externally distinctive themes, to consider relationships amongst such themes and refine to theory (Hennick et al., 2011; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Based on abductive reasoning, the data were deductively coded according to the stages of Lewin's change theory, including unfreezing (UN), changing (CH) and (*re*)freezing (RE). Some codes inductively emerged from the data based on the types of intervention strategies frequently mentioned by the informants, including policies and structures (PO), internal communication (IN), learning and development (LD), public engagement (PE) and management support (SUP). Grounded on these abductive codes, the themes

were critically analysed and constituted from an iterative interplay between theory and data and were conceptualised as a model to highlight their interconnections (Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018).

Only the highly relevant samples were considered in this study because of its research paradigm and unique context, in which statistical generalisation was not involved (Boddy, 2016). Specifically, the pragmatic stance of this study shed light only on those businesses that pursue LGBTQ+ inclusion but did prioritise representation of the overall industry. Nevertheless, this study ensured the quality and trustworthiness of the data by using purposive sampling and by establishing a set of criteria for informant recruitment. Firstly, all hospitality and tourism practitioners were contacted through Hong Kong's LGBTQ+ inclusive business network. Secondly, those organisational leaders holding top-to mid-level management posts (e.g. directors, managers, heads and leads) were targeted as key associates who lead the change. Thirdly, the extensive experiences of these informants, ranging from their planning to implementing LGBTQ+ inclusion strategies, were required to reflect the overall change process. Ten research participants were eventually recruited with a full participation rate from all contacted organisations. The sample size of this study was supported with the reliability and validity by the previous qualitative studies (Boddy, 2016; Francis et al., 2010; Sandelowski, 1995). Table 1 presents the background information of these participants and their organisations.

4. Findings and discussions

4.1. Unfreezing: understanding and addressing LGBTQ+ related issues

The *'unfreezing'* stage involves setting aside the existing state or mindset and preparing for change (Carter, 2008; Lewin, 1947; Rosenbaum et al., 2018). Realising and understanding the current situation of LGBTQ+ employees are key to the efficiency and precision of organisational change. The issues being faced by these employees include discriminatory actions towards the LGBTQ+ workforce, which can be subtle and barely recognisable nowadays (Di Marco, Hoel, Arenas, & Munduate, 2018). Specifically, microaggressions (i.e. tone of voice and facial expressions), workplace incivility (i.e. jokes, use of language, stereotype and intrusive behaviour) and social ostracism (i.e. ignoring or excluding LGBTQ+ co-workers) often take place in a *'grey area'* (DeSouza et al., 2017; Di Marco et al., 2018; Galupo & Resnick, 2016; Holman, 2018). As a result, LGBTQ+ employees frequently report experiencing verbal or physical harassment, prejudice and derogatory or *anti*-LGBTQ comments at work (Embrick, Walther, & Wickens, 2007; Herek, 2009; Lee Badgett, Lau, Sears, & Ho, 2007; Velez, Moradi, & Brewster, 2013).

Individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ often encounter more stressors in the workplace compared with their heterosexual and cisgender

colleagues (Williamson et al., 2017). Specifically, LGBTQ+ people consistently face barriers to employment, marginalisation and discrimination at work (Allan et al., 2018). For instance, non-heterosexual job candidates are deemed less qualified, desirable or suitable for open positions compared with heterosexual candidates (Holman, 2018). In some cases, LGBTQ+ employees are passed up for promotions or terminated from their positions (Sue, 2010). Consequently, the fear of being discriminated against may discourage these employees from seeking professional development (Pichler & Holmes IV, 2017). Meanwhile, transgender employees inevitably experience these discrimination issues especially when their gender identities are not legally recognised (Law et al., 2011).

Apart from these experiences, the struggles of LGBTQ+ employees in *'coming out'* or disclosing their sexual and gender identities and managing their identities in transition are considered timely processes that vary according to the comfortableness and confidence of these individuals (Law et al., 2011; Lee Badgett et al., 2013; Tatum, 2018; Van Beek et al., 2016). Anticipated risks of workplace heterosexism, such as risks to employment status, professional image and ability to complete assigned tasks, lead to the hesitation of LGBTQ+ employees to disclose their identities or even push them into faking their sexual orientations (Button, 2001; Helens-Hart, 2017). In other words, LGBTQ+ employees may have dichotomous opinions about the disclosure versus the concealment of their identities (Brewster et al., 2012). One top management shared that sexual and gender identities are often treated as private matters that LGBTQ+ people, especially in Hong Kong, may not feel the need to share:

> *I believe it's a problem in Hong Kong that so many people feel that they cannot be themselves […] not only [in] the workplace, [but] with families and everybody.* (General Manager F, in-depth interview, 30 March 2020)

Although LGBTQ+ related issues may be suppressed in *'silence'*, such suppression has unconscious and cumulative effects as proven in many studies (Bell et al., 2011; Di Marco et al., 2018). The workplace discrimination and hostile climate experienced by LGBTQ+ employees create adverse psychological outcomes, such as psychological distress, depressive symptoms, anxiety and career indecision (Allan et al., 2018; Brewster et al., 2012). LGBTQ+ employees may encounter these difficulties daily, which lead to chronic stress and physical health detriments that affect their work experience, job outcomes and well-being (DeSouza et al., 2017; Miner & Costa, 2018; Myung & Park, 2016). These challenges may even reduce their job satisfaction and increase their intention to leave their jobs and withdraw from their workplace (Holman, 2018; Ragins et al., 2001; Velez et al., 2013). Their uneasiness in expressing their sexual and gender identities at work also creates negative effects that spill over to their other life dimensions, such as the

Table 1
Background information about the participants and their organisations.

Pseudonym	Gender Identity	Position	Business sector	Policies	Internal communication	Learning and development	Public engagement	Management support
A	F	Group Head	Multi-sector (hotel, airlines, food and beverage)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
B	M	Senior Officer	Multi-sector (hotel, airlines, food and beverage)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
C	F	Manager	Airlines	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
D	F	Director	Airlines	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
E	M	Department Head	Airlines	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
F	M	General Manager	Hotel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
G	F	Managing Director	Tour operator	✓			✓	✓
H	F	Manager	Tour operator	✓			✓	✓
I	M	Director	Hotel	✓			✓	
J	M	Manager	Theme park	✓			✓	

partners and families of non-heterosexual individuals (Holman, 2018; Williamson et al., 2017).

To address the barriers encountered at the unfreezing stage, employee engagement and participation in the change process are important for preparing an organisation to change (Ford, Ford, & D'Amelio, 2008). One senior officer shared that his organisation previously conducted an anonymous survey to identify its number of LGBTQ+ employees and to evaluate its LGBTQ+ inclusive climate. Other organisations also provide an anonymous reporting system where LGBTQ+ employees can file complaints whenever they encounter workplace discrimination based on their SOGIE. Despite facing challenges in identifying the exact incidents, this anonymous platform was considered effective in ensuring the privacy of LGBTQ+ employees and guaranteeing a fully independent investigation (Ineson et al., 2013). Company-wide surveys also allow management teams to further understand the situation of their organisations prior the implementation of change strategies.

In addition to understanding the current state of LGBTQ+ inclusion, designating a taskforce to implement organisational change is also important at the unfreezing stage. Developing organisational leaders as *'change agents'* who act as soundboards for LGBTQ+ employees is considered a powerful change strategy (Brooks & Edwards, 2009). These change agents can be senior line managers or those who determine organisational priorities, devise strategies, control and make crucial decisions regarding resource allocation and manage organisational performance (Hartley et al., 1997; Saka, 2003). In the study, the change agents of most organisations directly involved top management (e.g. board of directors) or an executive committee that was specifically formed to drive LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace. A platform called employee resource group (ERG) was also set up to develop change agents and to prepare the taskforce under the supervision of designated senior managers (e.g. sponsors).

Nonetheless, mobilising an organisational change task force towards LGBTQ+ inclusion may be challenged by a lack of awareness, knowledge and empathy about the presence of LGBTQ+ related issues in the workplace. According to Managing Director G, *'All I wonder is I don't see what I don't see'* (in-depth interview, March 27, 2020); this sentiment applies to both management and other employees. Specifically, mid-level managers and supervisors are recognised as effective contributors to promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion (Martinez, Ruggs, Sabat, Hebl, & Binggeli, 2013). However, many organisations that acknowledge the importance and relevance of LGBTQ+ inclusion to their businesses are unknowingly criticised (Everly & Schwarz, 2015; Van Beek et al., 2016). Therefore, enhancing the visibility of LGBTQ+ related issues and their relevance to the business is crucial at the unfreezing stage. Group Head A shared the following challenge in prompting other relevant departments or subsidiaries to prepare for LGBTQ+ inclusion:

> You will meet people that will literally say that I don't know or I don't have any friends that belong to that group. So, I don't understand what we are talking about. And, we don't have anybody like that working for us. (Group Head A, in-depth interview, 24 March 2020)

4.2. Changing: deploying intervention strategies for LGBTQ+ inclusion

In organisational settings, the *'changing'* stage refers to a period of transition and adaptation through interventions that develop new behaviours, values, attitudes, skills, competencies, structures or processes (Carter, 2008; Lewin, 1947; Worley & Mohran, 2014). Different intervention strategies that are aimed towards driving organisational change may vary according to managerial perspectives of change and be developed with specific models or methods (Rosenbaum et al., 2018). Organisational change is not considered a one-off event or a temporary adjustment but rather a continuous learning process of adaptation (Hartley et al., 1997). Given that organisational change is systematic

and constructive, intervention strategies produce chain effects in the entire organisation (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). In addition, targeted, specific and high-impact interventions need to be tailored to address organisational conditions (Worley & Mohran, 2014).

In this study, the intervention strategies for organisational change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion were conceptualised into four major themes, namely, policies and structures, internal communication, learning and development and public engagement. Whilst interconnected and interactive, these themes do not necessarily follow a sequential order. Whilst policies and structures are put in place to serve as foundations for implementing change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion in an organisation, specific intervention strategies are subsequently deployed in different business functions that are relevant to organisational missions.

4.2.1. Policies and structures

With issues related to sexual and gender identities often occurring in grey areas, instituting LGBTQ+ inclusive policies is important to clearly reflect the stance and commitment of an organisation towards promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion (Galupo & Resnick, 2016). According to the senior managers in this study, establishing new LGBTQ+ inclusive policies or amending the existing policies to be more LGBTQ+ inclusive is a crucial step towards LGBTQ+ inclusion. Such inclusive policies are important in setting goals and guiding organisational behaviour towards affirming the presence of LGBTQ+ employees (Bell et al., 2011; Button, 2001). Formalising LGBTQ+ inclusive policies can also be viewed as a means of officially declaring that disrespecting LGBTQ+ colleagues is not tolerated in the workplace (Miner & Costa, 2018). One senior management viewed LGBTQ+ inclusive policies as a '*starting point*' in establishing organisational cultures and structures that embrace all employees regardless of SOGIE:

> Without the policies, you don't have the basis to [...] expect people to change their behaviour because the policies would inform the behaviours [....] When we have the policies, [...] you know what you're talking about [....] So people know that if you're going to basically infringe the policies, there will be consequences. (Group Head A, in-depth interview, 24 March 2020)

Large-sized organisations publish in official documents their statements regarding non-discrimination, fair treatment and promoting an inclusive workplace for LGBTQ+ employees. For example, LGBTQ+ inclusion can be incorporated into formal instruments, such as manifestos, charters, codes of conduct and corporate policies (Van Beek et al., 2016). To illustrate, Swire Pacific Group (2019) established its D&I policy framework with several focus areas, including gender and sexual orientation, to promote a diverse workforce and inclusive work environment. To comply with the group-wide D&I policy, Cathay Pacific Airways (2019) also declared in its Code of Conduct its zero tolerance towards workplace bullying, harassment or discrimination against LGBTQ+ employees. Consequently, these organisations are enabled by their formalised policies to identify, monitor and resolve LGBTQ+ related issues through different organisational structures.

Given their adequate resources and capabilities, large-sized conglomerates such as Swire Pacific and Cathay Pacific have created a separate business function devoted to their D&I missions. Specifically, two organisational structures, namely, the D&I department and D&I steering committee, were established under Swire Group to ensure equal opportunities, advocate fair and bias-free recruitment, training and promotion processes and monitor and report progresses (Swire Pacific, 2019). As shared by its senior officers, Swire Pacific adopted a holistic approach to make its business and functional policies inclusive of LGBTQ+ employees and to apply these policies to its entire operations. Accordingly, Cathay Pacific established its own D&I committee that, in collaboration with the policy manager, reviews the policies and strategies of the company to ensure that they cover all D&I aspects. These two companies also collaboratively review their policies on a regular basis to

ensure their alignment with their overall strategic plan.

Apart from large-sized enterprises, LGBTQ+ inclusion is also reflected in the policy statements (e.g. vision and missions) of small- and medium-sized companies to a certain extent. Strategic planning tends to be perceived as less formal in small- and medium-sized firms, especially in independently owned firms (O'Regan & Ghobadian, 2002). For example, Walk in Hong Kong, a small-sized tour operator, implemented an inclusive policy to ensure equal employment opportunities for applicants regardless of their gender and sexual orientation. Meanwhile, Eaton Hong Kong, a medium-sized hotel, envisioned its property as an inclusive gathering place for activists and creatives by encouraging people from underrepresented groups, including LGBTQ+, to work for the company. By implementing LGBTQ+ inclusive policies, these companies ensure that LGBTQ+ employees have access equal opportunities in recruitment, training, promotion, compensation and benefits.

> *We would [put our] inclusive policy at the bottom of [employment posts] [….] Your sexual orientation […] will not affect any of the decision making […] the hiring. We welcome any orientations [of] people to apply for our position.* (Managing Director G, in-depth interview, 27 March 2020)

Furthermore, LGBTQ+ inclusive policies often emphasise that LGBTQ+ employees should enjoy the same benefits and remuneration packages received by other employees (Button, 2001; Chuang, Church, & Ophir, 2011; Lloren & Parini, 2017; Van Beek et al., 2016). All organisations interviewed in this study also extended their employment benefit packages (e.g. medical coverage, travel rewards, paid leave entitlement and retirement schemes) to the same-sex partners of their employees. As quoted from Cathay Pacific's 2017 Sustainability Development Report (p. 47), '*travel policy and other employee benefits, for example, medical and insurance plans, have been expanded to also apply to same-sex spouses with* support *of a valid marriage certificate*'. In the same vein, one senior manager shared that other types of relationships, apart from opposite-sex spouses, are equally entitled to receiving the same benefit packages:

> *If you talk about benefits, […] let's take one example, partner benefits. It doesn't matter whether you're in the same-sex relationship […] or in a straight relationship. That's irrelevant. You have the same benefits.* (General Manager F, in-depth interview, 30 March 2020)

LGBTQ+ inclusive policies also reshape organisational structures towards a cross-departmental orientation. One D&I officer shared that his organisation attempted to expand its LGBTQ+ inclusion mission from HR-oriented practices to its other business functions. In other words, every mid- and high-level management was required to contribute to LGBTQ+ inclusion in their respective departments as a key performance index. The employees in this organisation were also entitled to report LGBTQ+ related issues to a monitoring committee. The victimised employees may raise these issues to their immediate supervisors or escalate them to their HR, D&I or internal audit teams. Establishing an anonymous reporting platform can also guarantee a fully independent investigation of these incidents (Bell et al., 2011; Ineson et al., 2013).

Given that LGBTQ+ related issues are often subtle in the workplace, merely implementing formal policies is insufficient in fostering an LGBTQ+ inclusive work environment (DeSouza et al., 2017). Whilst policies and structures are enforced in a top-down approach, a stronger commitment from operational managers is required to promote consciousness of LGBTQ+ inclusion and to operationalise policies (Martinez et al., 2013). One senior management commented that highly specific strategies should be formulated from LGBTQ+ inclusive policies to determine those actions that need to be executed. Meanwhile, one corporate director suggested that LGBTQ+ inclusion can be strengthened by adopting a highly interactive and integrative approach between policies and practices as well as amongst different departments. The following sections describe in detail a wide range of LGBTQ+ inclusive strategies that have been derived from overall policies.

> *You've probably seen organisations where people are trying to say [they] are inclusive and here's the D&I policy [which] comes down from the top. [It's] kind of meaningless. They need people differently trying to tick the box [but] I think we simply haven't done it that way here.* (Director D, in-depth interview, 16 April 2020)

4.2.2. Internal communication

To reinforce the image of a corporation as an LGBTQ+ inclusive organisation, employees should act as key drivers of understanding and executing the relevant policies. Organisational image serves as a standardised reference point for employees to define their behaviour (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). To gain a competitive advantage, many hospitality and tourism businesses attempt to initiate strategies that alter their organisational culture, employee behaviour and beliefs to be coherent with their visions (Arnett, Laverie, & McLane, 2002). According to several senior managers, building LGBTQ+ inclusion internally is more effective than marketing to others. Some companies, in their quest to develop an LGBTQ+ inclusive organisation, have adopted a variety of intervention strategies to drive internal organisational change by targeting their employees.

Communication for organisational change is not about transmission but about a joint construction of meanings (Simoes & Esposito, 2014). To implement change effectively in an organisation, a strategic '*softer*' approach is employed in place of the traditional '*hard*' and '*top-down*' approach by helping employees learn and engage with new values and change their behaviour (Barratt-Pugh, Bahn, & Gakere, 2013; Worley & Mohran, 2014). The ERG, a taskforce formed at the '*unfreezing*' stage for implementing change initiatives, was viewed as an important platform for advocating for organisational change towards a highly inclusive organisation (Brooks & Edwards, 2009). According to Cathay Pacific's Sustainable Development Report (2018), an LGBTQ+ employee support network was created under the name '*Fly with Pride*' to raise awareness on LGBTQ+ related issues and to drive change initiatives.

> *We're kind of leveraging the employee resource group as the team that [is] on the ground […] recognising the challenges that LGBTQ+ employees might be facing [….] The fact that our policies didn't state, for example, that what kind of relationships [was] approved for [enjoying the company benefits] [….] Then, we would rely on the employee resource group to bring that to the D&I office's attention […] and we would work together to come up with a solution.* (Executive C, in-depth interview, 16 April 2020)

As a consultative intermediary for the management, the ERG was viewed as a '*bottom-up*' and '*interactive*' platform for internal communication wherein LGBTQ+ employees can respond to the intervention strategies and provide feedback on the policies (Van Beek et al., 2016). Several senior managers mentioned that the ERG also served as a medium for communicating their organisational commitment to change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion by organising LGBTQ+ related events and activities. The ERG was also viewed as a platform for socialising, seeking advice and supporting the implementation of LGBTQ+ inclusive policies (Van Beek et al., 2016). The presence of ERG also triggers a social identity process that prompts LGBTQ+ employees to feel more comfortable in coming out and participate in the initiatives (Ragins & Cornwell, 2001).

> *Our main goal is just to make sure that people can be who they are […] and they [….] feel comfortable and supported [….] We're more about being visible, making sure that there is an awareness [that] being LGBTQ+ is acceptable [….] making sure that our management team is aware and conscious of what the issues are [and] working through the policies and procedures.* (Director D, in-depth interview, 16 April 2020)

To communicate LGBTQ+ inclusive policies effectively, clear and visible information is important for employees to further understand these policies or the strategic issues being faced by their organisation (Button, 2001; Quirke, 2008). Specifically, organisations may disseminate information in gender-neutral language and provide clear instructions for reporting LGBTQ+ related issues or concerns (Allan et al., 2018; Capell et al., 2018; Van Beek et al., 2016). To integrate these LGBTQ+ inclusion elements into their business activities, some executives shared that conventional communication channels (e.g. e-mail, intranet and social networking systems) are useful tools for promoting the visibility of LGBTQ+ related content.

4.2.3. Learning and development

Learning and development are key to building an LGBTQ+ inclusive working environment. Employees are required to have a certain level of knowledge on LGBTQ+ related workplace issues. Specifically, a number of educational and developmental initiatives with SOGIE-specific topics, such as trainings, workshops and seminars, were organised to enhance the knowledge of employees (Allan et al., 2018; Everly & Schwarz, 2015; Miner & Costa, 2018). In many cases, trainings and workshops were initiated with organisational leaders (e.g. directors, managers and supervisors) to develop their consciousness and to mobilise LGBTQ+ inclusive policies to a wider population (Martinez et al., 2013). Correspondingly, top- and mid-level managers and recruitment officers are also required to acquire comprehensive knowledge about LGBTQ+ inclusion.

> We do have a team that specifically looks after learning and development [and is now] developing programmes that we call inclusive leadership [….] What we're trying to say is that for any leader to be successful in the future, you must learn to be inclusive [….] You must be able to respect and embrace people that are different from you [….] That's basically for our high potential staff [….] We [did] unconscious bias training […] for the chairperson and the board of directors. [Then] we [did] that for people who are recruiting. (Group Head A, in-depth interview, 24 March 2020)

Apart from organisational leaders, LGBTQ+ inclusive learning and development are also extended to all employees through compulsory orientation, training programmes or sponsored conferences and seminars (Brooks & Edwards, 2009). A D&I officer shared that they included an unconscious bias content that is specifically relevant to their organisation in the learning modules being used by their employees. One senior manager explained that LGBTQ+ specific lessons are related to definitions of sexuality and gender, the use of pronouns and other sensitive issues in the workplace. A department head suggested that tailor-made content should be developed for specific groups of employees, such as non-LGBTQ employees, or for specific departments that are perceived to be less accepting of their LGBTQ+ co-workers. An up-to-date and comprehensive content was also provided by external experts or consultants who were invited to organise seminars.

In sum, learning and development can help organisations ensure that their employees are aware of the existence and enforcement of LGBTQ+ inclusive policies (Galupo & Resnick, 2016). To reduce stereotypes and inter-group frictions, training and educational tools should be equipped with sexual and gender sensitisation and provide accurate information (Barclay & Scott, 2006). A better understanding of SOGIE also contributes to the effective implementation of organisational change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion (Pichler & Holmes IV, 2017). Relevant issues and concerns can be included in learning and development modules to familiarise employees with the LGBTQ+ related issues in the workplace, which are often subtle and not explicitly expressed (Button, 2001). Consequently, an LGBTQ+ inclusive work environment is enhanced by improved employee attitudes and an increased level of acceptance towards LGBTQ+ employees (DeSouza et al., 2017).

4.2.4. Public engagement

Public engagement is an area of work in which organisations communicate their values and emphasise brand positioning to the general public. The LGBTQ+ segment is known as a rapidly growing and lucrative market in the hospitality and tourism sectors; hence, many businesses aspire to at least convey a message that their products and services welcome LGBTQ+ customers. Furthermore, community outreach and involvement in different social domains are considered ways of showing solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community in a broader advocacy. The organisations of the informants implemented various public engagement strategies, such as sponsoring events, forums, conferences or activities, participating in business networking and communicating through business functions and visual materials.

In many local LGBTQ+ related events, forums, conferences and activities (e.g. Pride Parade, Pink Dot, D&I Conference, LGBT + Inclusion Index and Awards, Miles of Love and Gay Games), logos of hospitality and tourism businesses are frequently featured as sponsors. This type of sponsorship is considered a non-commercial way of showing generous support to the local LGBTQ+ community and reinforcing an LGBTQ+ inclusive corporate image (Van Beek et al., 2016). In this study, hotel businesses showed support to the LGBTQ+ community by offering their function rooms to hold events and activities. Meanwhile, some companies (e.g. airlines) gave financial and logistic supports to LGBTQ+ related activities. Supporting LGBTQ+ employees to participate in LGBTQ+ related activism outside of the company may also be considered a crucial form of empowerment (Allan et al., 2018). One department head shared that an organisational decision to sponsor any LGBTQ+ related event should consider its alignment to the brand and market positioning of the organisation:

> The sponsorship of Pink Dot […] is sort of […] the budgeted initiatives every year. That's something that we feel quite strongly about [….] Unlike Pride here in Hong Kong [that] tends to be slightly more political, […] Pink Dot is very much more about an inclusion event for the Hong Kong community. That's very aligned with [our] brand [….] The Gay Games element was actually […] more just one time off [because we think it] was a good thing to do for Hong Kong and for [our company]. (Department Head E, in-depth interview, 16 April 2020)

As one of the prominent initiatives in Hong Kong, the annual LGBT + Inclusion Index and Awards offers business networking opportunities to organisations that are interested in LGBTQ+ inclusion (Community Business, 2020). This initiative provides a platform for existing and incoming hospitality and tourism businesses to exchange knowledge and experiences in pursuing LGBTQ+ inclusion. Apart from offering public recognition to sponsors and award winners, Group Head A shared that the participating organisations benefited from benchmarking with the index and learning from the experiences of other organisations. Additionally, some organisations participated in small activities (e.g. Pink Friday) that hold discussions surrounding LGBTQ+ related topics. As a result, networking with other organisations leads to the creation of a collective movement within the industry and stimulates more organisations to remain competitive by mimicking their competitors (Bell et al., 2011; Everly & Schwarz, 2015).

Some organisations in the study also publicised their LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives through different business functions and visual materials. For example, General Manager F shared that his organisation translated its LGBTQ+ inclusive values into something more visible to its employees, customers and the general public, such as advertisement billboards, rainbow flag decorations, gender-neutral signs on washrooms and rainbow *Lai See* (red packets) for the Chinese New Year. Additionally, Department Head E shared that his company communicated its firm standpoint as an LGBTQ+ inclusive organisation by launching an advertisement featuring same-sex couples despite receiving backlash from conservative groups in Hong Kong.

4.3. (Re)freezing: sustaining the momentum of change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion

Traditionally, '(re)freezing' is considered the final stage of reconstituting changes by institutionalising them (Lewin, 1947; Rosenbaum et al., 2018). At this stage, long-term structural changes, such as measuring and monitoring, rewards and incentives, ongoing communication and operating mechanisms, are put in place to stabilise the change (Carter, 2008). To ensure the consistency and sustainability of LGBTQ+ inclusion, organisations should incorporate such agenda as one of their key performance indicators, designate specific human and fiscal resources, enclose these actions in their overall strategic plan and receive management support to implement the corresponding measures (Van Beek et al., 2016). Nevertheless, this study found that management 'backing' or support is required to implement respective '(re)freezing' measures effectively.

To sustain the momentum of change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion, management support is crucial to lead an organisation towards a successful change. Management support has been proven to be an essential stimulus of increased productivity and reduced time spent in all business functions of an organisation (Shrivastava, Mohanty, & Lakhe, 2006). Group Head A shared that their chairperson successfully established a D&I department to drive organisational change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion. General Manager F likewise shared that employees in his organisation actively engage in LGBTQ+ inclusion initiatives because these initiatives are 'spearheaded' by their senior management who 'drives the initiatives, allows them to happen [and] encourages people to make them'. Another manager explained that management support is useful for coping with the 'bumpy roads' to sustain the changing process.

> Collaboration across different departments [becomes] simple because we have management backing. We have people at the top of the organisation who say this is an important issue and this is something that we are committed to [….] I think management backing means that people are willing to put time and effort towards it and help us in meeting these goals. (Manager C, in-depth interview, 16 April 2020)

To create a more inclusive organisation, organisational leaders are committed to institutionalising changes and ensuring that their agenda is routinised, widespread, legitimised, expected, supported, permanent and resilient (Kezar, 2007). This study found that the lack of a tangible structure that strongly values an organisation's mission towards LGBTQ+ inclusion leads to a suspension and discontinuity of the related initiatives (Martinez et al., 2013). One department director apologetically shared that LGBTQ+ inclusion was removed as a D&I agenda because the dedicated change agent resigned without any structure put in place. Their advocacy of LGBTQ+ inclusion within the organisation was pushed towards HR policy change yet became mainstream throughout their overall organisational structure.

Some challenges in implementing organisational change in regional or country branch offices or subsidiaries were also encountered. From the managerial perspective, LGBTQ+ inclusion is often implemented by applying 'top-down' intervention strategies from the headquarters. For example, Director D argued that the approach used by organisations to implement intervention strategies for LGBTQ+ inclusion should be negotiated and adapted to the local contexts where their offices are operating. As a result, amongst the organisations in this study, most of their initiatives were promoted and implemented in their Hong Kong head offices than in their overseas branches. One manager shared a similar case where a Hong Kong subsidiary may not fully prioritise LGBTQ+ inclusion unlike its headquarters.

4.4. Coping with challenges from business environments

The present understanding of organisational change theory is continuously evolving to capture highly complex and rapidly changing business environments (Hartley et al., 1997; Jacobs et al., 2013; Styhre, 2002). To design appropriate paths of organisational change, strategic decisions are influenced by factors in different business environments, such as competitive pressures, legislation, environmental and safety regulations, global economics, preferences of organisational leaders and stakeholders and technological advancements (Saka, 2003). Specifically, external forces (i.e. social, cultural, legal, historical, political and economic) influence the management decisions and approach to achieving LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace (Chuang et al., 2011; Ineson et al., 2013; Lee Badgett, Nezhad, Waaldijk, & Van der Meulen Rodgers, 2014). From the managerial perspective, this study explored several business environments to determine those challenges arising from the change process.

Despite their organisational commitment to achieving LGBTQ+ inclusion, hospitality and tourism businesses still encounter challenges in fully safeguarding the welfare of their LGBTQ+ employees. In many Asian countries and regions, LGBTQ+ rights in different life aspects are still not equally recognised by law (UNDP, 2015). Although Hong Kong has gradually developed legal protection for its LGBTQ+ citizens (e.g. gender recognition, same-sex spouse visa policy and a judiciary ruling that extends public housing allowance to married same-sex couples), organisations are facing some barriers in imposing LGBTQ+ inclusive policies. Moreover, some laws that denote sex segregation (e.g. male and female washrooms) and binary gender titles (i.e. Mr., Miss and Mrs.) hinder organisations from promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion at work.

Given that marriage and civil partnership for same-sex couples are not legalised in Hong Kong, organisations may decide to adjust their policies to recognise certificates registered in other countries and extend their benefits to the same-sex partners of their employees. Nevertheless, Department Head E mentioned that this flexibility of policies might be unable to overcome the problem where local employees are required to spend extra resources and travel to other countries for marriage. For this reason, General Manager F shared that other considerations (e.g. shared residence, long-term or *de facto* relationship) are also internally applied to prove that employees have a stable relationship with their partners despite not having legal certificates. However, organisations may not completely solve this issue and control its consequences when dealing externally with legal restrictions.

> We have a female employee identified as lesbian […] and her girlfriend lives in Vietnam. We are unable to help her come [to Hong Kong] and get a [dependent] visa [….] Because of legal restrictions of the government, Skype relationships are restricted. Basically, […] they can [only] see each other on holidays. (General Manager F, in-depth interview, 30 March 2020)

Whilst focusing on creating an inclusive space for LGBTQ+ employees and customers, some elements of organisations that require a segregation of sexes or identification of gender titles may undermine their LGBTQ+ inclusion efforts. For example, a ratio of male-and-female toilet compartments as stipulated by government regulations may exclude gender-expansive people. Meanwhile, personal particulars in official documents (e.g. legal names and gender titles) may create a predicament for some customers (e.g. transgender and non-binary customers) and challenge the service staff when choosing which pronouns to use to address their customers. To cope with these challenges and make these policies more LGBTQ+ inclusive, General Manager F mentioned a 'middle ground' that demanded a strategic way of simultaneously fulfilling the minimum legal requirements and providing tailor-made service solutions within the premise (e.g. gender-neutral toilets and preferred pronouns).

Although most operations of all corporations in this study were based in Hong Kong, these companies faced other legal challenges in their pursuit of LGBTQ+ inclusion. Specifically, some of these corporations have regional offices in other areas with legal restrictions that may not be favourable for their LGBTQ+ employees. For example, Cathay

Pacific's (2019) Code of Conduct indicates that local laws in *'Outports'* will always take precedence when the Code comes in conflict with the local legislations or regulations. Nonetheless, the Code implies that workplace practices that respect international human rights are adopted. Consequently, one senior officer mentioned that LGBTQ+ inclusive policies were being internally managed in his organisation without coming in conflict with the larger legal framework.

> *There are some more challenges on the LGBT[Q +] perspective, […] as you know, in some regions or countries where you have to be a lot more careful. You can't actively go out and talk about that sort of stuff. And, to a certain extent, we need to leave it to the discretion of the individual country managers about how best to do that. We still have an expectation that the LGBT[Q +] perspective will be communicated internally [….] The values from Cathay's perspectives internally are still paramount [….] We can't dictate like Indonesia or Bahrain that they should have been an LGBT[Q +] event […] but we can make sure that internal inclusion is important.* (Director D, in-depth interview, 16 April 2020)

5. Conclusions and implications

Thanks to the Agenda 2030 adopted by all UN Member States as the promise to *'leave no one behind'* along with other legally binding international treaties and documents, the Sustainable Development Goals have been inarguably interpreted to include LGBTQ+ people (Scolaro, 2020; OHCHR, 2012; UN, 2015). Correspondingly, global business sectors have been called for acting as change agents of change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion (Bross et al., 2018; Thomas & Weber, 2019; Tripathi et al., 2017). With pragmatic qualitative approach, this study was initiated to explore how the hospitality and tourism businesses develop LGBTQ+ inclusion and identify challenges in implementing LGBTQ+

inclusive strategies in Asia. Based on *'unfreeze-change-(re)freeze'* theory, the results of this study were conceptualised as an LGBTQ+ inclusion model (Fig. 1) as theoretical implications. Besides, this study provided practical implications by showing how LGBTQ+ inclusion can be driven by hospitality and tourism sectors as a part of change initiatives towards sustainable development despite the challenging local circumstances.

5.1. Theoretical implications

Given that the classic metaphoric *'unfreezing, changing and (re) freezing'* theory is often seen to be linear and sequential, the subsequently developed models assumed the same context before, during and after the implementation of change (Styhre, 2002). Many studies argued that this approach does not completely discuss the nonlinear and dynamic nature of change that may encounter discontinuous, disruptive and emerging patterns (Sturdy & Grey, 2003; Worley & Mohran, 2014). Moreover, organisational change is explained as a cycle that may include a separate *'loop'* with a specific content of change (Hussain et al., 2018). An *'iterative'* approach is likewise proposed to observe emergent or contingent processes that may produce both intended and unintended outcomes (Kulkarni et al., 2017). Correspondingly, this study theoretically implied that organisational change requires a highly holistic and systematic approach.

The LGBTQ+ inclusion model was conceptualised and proposed to further understand organisational change theory. In this model, instead of a particularly prescribed sequence or starting point, change strategies at different stages were described as *'routines'* that may take place simultaneously in various parts of an organisation (Worley & Mohran, 2014). This model was proposed as a nonlinear, interconnected, interactive and iterative process. Specifically, four essential elements of LGBTQ+ inclusive strategies, namely, policies and structures, internal communication, learning and development and public engagement,
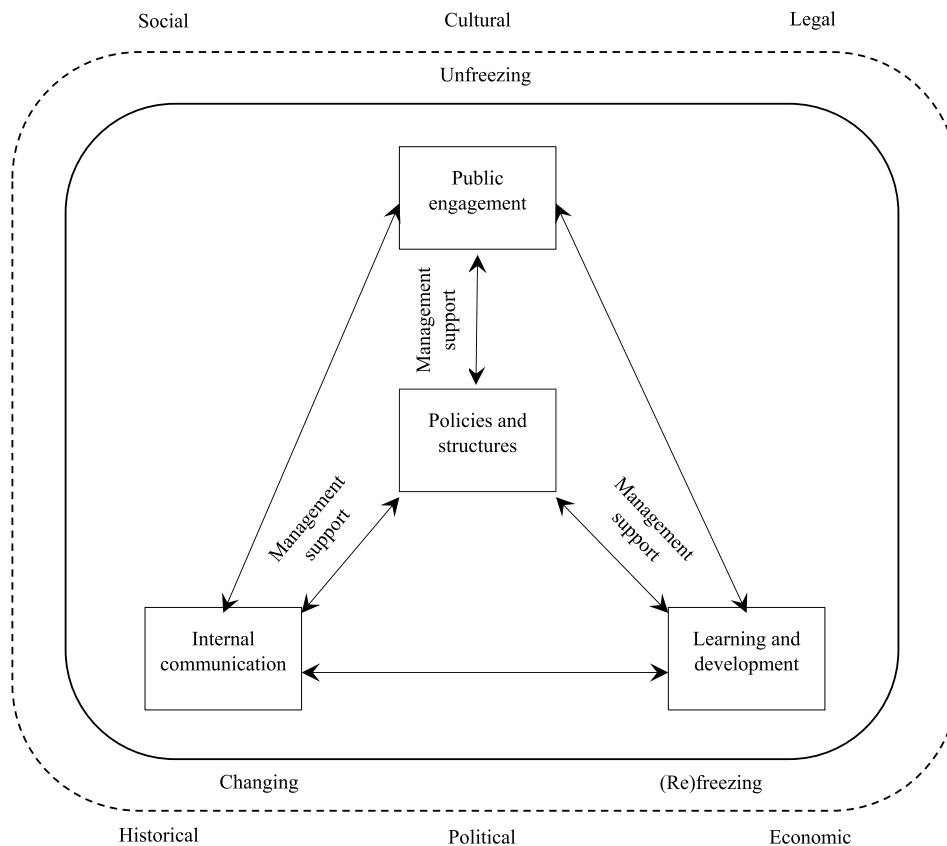

Fig. 1. LGBTQ+ inclusion model.

were incorporated. Moreover, policies and structures serve as foundations of mobilising other relevant strategies, whereas management support is perceived as an effective moderator that ensures the efficient operationalisation of the LGBTQ+ inclusion model within an organisation.

5.2. Practical implications

LGBTQ+ inclusion is recognised as a universal development agenda and a vital code of conduct for businesses to meet their responsibility in upholding human rights and promoting positive social change in inclusive societies (OHCHR, 2011b; Tripathi et al., 2017). From a broader perspective, the exclusion of LGBTQ+ people is equivalent to lack of investment in human capital, poor productivity and output and social and health disparities (Lee Badgett, 2014). Discriminating LGBTQ+ employees and customers also incurs large costs for both businesses and LGBTQ + individuals (Alonso, 2013; Holman, 2018; Lee Badgett et al., 2013; Pichler & Holmes IV, 2017). Given their positive recognition of the LGBTQ+ travel market, hospitality and tourism sectors are seen as potential players in promoting LGBTQ+ inclusion in the society (Guaracino & Salvato, 2017; Halden, 2016; Jordan, 2018; UNWTO, 2012; 2017). Therefore, this study was positioned as a practical reference that could guide hospitality and tourism businesses in aligning their change initiatives towards LGBTQ+ inclusion with the global standards.

In addition, this study provided important practical implications for contextualising LGBTQ+ inclusion in Asia. Despite endorsement from the international human rights framework, LGBTQ+ inclusion faces challenges from socio-cultural, legal, historical, political and economic differences (Suriyasarn, 2016). The case of Hong Kong represents the Asian context owing to its commonly controversial circumstances that affect the livelihoods of LGBTQ+ people, such as social stigmatisation and absence of LGBTQ+ inclusive legislations (e.g. anti-discrimination, same-sex marriage or civic partnership). To compromise with LGBTQ+ exclusionary laws, the responsibilities of organisations in driving policies that respect international human rights standards are perceived as an effective *'hardened soft approach'* (Choudhury, 2018). Meanwhile, the efficacy of these initiatives depends on the moral commitment of organisations and their managers, even though they are not legally obligated to show such commitment (Fasterling & Demuijnck, 2013). This study concluded that LGBTQ+ inclusion in Asia, compared with developed nations in the West, requires more discreet strategies that balance the universalism of LGBTQ+ inclusion with the socio-legal elements of local societies (Hewlett & Yoshino, 2016; Tripathi, 2017). Learning from LGBTQ+ inclusive business cases engenders the development of human rights due diligence that can be implemented by the industry and the state (OHCHR, 2011b).

6. Limitations and future research directions

Several limitations in this research should be acknowledged. Given that this study aimed to investigate how organisational change towards LGBTQ+ inclusion is being implemented, management perspectives are vital. However, the impacts of LGBTQ+ inclusive interventions and their challenges may not be fully understood without acknowledging the perspectives of employees (e.g. internal resistance to change). Therefore, future studies should examine the effects and challenges of LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion from the employees' perspectives. In addition, this study highlighted the difficulty in compromising LGBTQ+ inclusive strategies with local cultures and legislations. Given that most informants were from Hong-Kong-based headquarters, future studies should explore the perspectives of management from the head offices in foreign territories. Meanwhile, a lack of transgender cases in professional settings may obscure the *'inclusiveness'* of LGBTQ+ inclusion. Whilst this study pioneered the exploration of an LGBTQ+ inclusive workplace in the hospitality and tourism industry, future studies should evaluate the effects of LGBTQ+ inclusive strategies on the attitudes and behaviour of employees.

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Thanakarn Bella Vongvisitsin (She/her) is currently a PhD Candidate (Tourism Management) at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. She is also one of the co-founders and serves as Chief Executive Officer of Inclusive Tourism Asia Limited. Her research interests cover community-based tourism and LGBTQ+ tourism. She also contributes to LGBTQ+ community through international advocacy works.

Dr. Antony King Fung Wong (He/him) is Assistant Professor in Hainan University-Arizona State University Joint International Tourism College. His research interests include corporate social responsibility, consumer behaviours, value co-creation and human resource management in hospitality industry.