

# Physical Appearance and the Role of Gender in Tourism: A Comparative Analysis of Male and Female Employees in the Context of Erotic Capital

*Ebru Gunlu Kucukaltan\**, *Pelin Uzun Şirin\*\**, *Bulut Cem Caner\*\*\*\**

Received September 28, 2025 – Accepted December 4, 2025

## Abstract

This research examines how the concept of “erotic capital” – widely recognized in social sciences but often viewed negatively – is softened by adjectives like “presentability”, “physical beauty”, and “extroverted” within the labor-intensive tourism sector. It investigates how this concept commodifies both female and male employees and how businesses implement discriminatory policies based on it. Central focus is on how male and female employees perceive erotic capital, their similar or different experiences, and the benefits and harms they associate with it. The methodology consists of a qualitative, phenomenological approach to examine participants’ perceptions of erotic capital deeply. Data collection involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions aligned with research goals. Descriptive analysis was preferred for data. The findings demonstrate that erotic capital operates as a complex and ambivalent form of capital in the tourism sector, and its effects vary according to gender. Women are more frequently subjected to expectations of grooming and objectification, while men benefit from certain advantages yet face scrutiny based on their appearance.

**Keywords:** Erotic Capital, Physical Appearance, Gender, Tourism

\* Professor, Dokuz Eylül University (DEU), Faculty of Business. ebru.gunlu@deu.edu.tr  
ID ORCID: 0000-0003-2599-0197

\*\* PhD, Dokuz Eylül University (DEU), Institute of Social Sciences. pelinuzunnun@gmail.com  
ID ORCID: 0000-0003-1226-206X

\*\*\*\* PhD, Dokuz Eylül University (DEU), Institute of Social Sciences canerbulutcem@gmail.com  
ID ORCID: 0000-0002-3033-8577

*Corporate Governance and Research & Development Studies*, n. 2/2025  
(ISSNe 2723-9098, Doi: 10.3280/cgrds2-2025oa21132)

## *Il ruolo dell'aspetto fisico e del genere nel turismo: un'analisi comparativa tra lavoratori e lavoratrici nel contesto del capitale erotico*

### **Sommario**

Questa ricerca esamina come il concetto di “capitale erotico” – ampiamente riconosciuto nelle scienze sociali ma spesso percepito in modo negativo – venga attenuato da aggettivi come “presentabilità”, “bellezza fisica” ed “estroversione” nel settore turistico ad alta intensità di lavoro. Lo studio indaga come questo concetto porti alla mercificazione sia delle lavoratrici che dei lavoratori e come le aziende implementino politiche discriminatorie in base a ciò. L'attenzione centrale è rivolta a come i dipendenti, uomini e donne, percepiscano il capitale erotico, alle loro esperienze, simili o diverse, ed ai benefici e danni ad esso associati. La metodologia adottata è qualitativa, con un approccio fenomenologico volto ad analizzare in profondità la percezione dei partecipanti riguardo al capitale erotico. La raccolta dei dati è stata effettuata tramite interviste semi-strutturate e in profondità, con domande aperte allineate agli obiettivi della ricerca. Per l'analisi dei dati si è preferita un'analisi descrittiva. I risultati mostrano che il capitale erotico opera come una forma di capitale complesso e ambivalente nel settore turistico e che i suoi effetti variano in base al genere. Le donne sono più frequentemente soggette ad aspettative legate alla cura dell'aspetto ed all'oggettivazione, mentre gli uomini beneficiano di alcuni vantaggi ma subiscono comunque valutazioni e scrutini basati sul loro aspetto fisico.

*Parole chiave:* Capitale erotico, aspetto fisico, genere, turismo

### **1. Literature Review**

In this study, the erotic capital experiences of female and male employees in the tourism sector are analysed within the framework of gender theories. The aim is to explore how female and male employees perceive and experience this capital, as well as the structural inequalities they encounter in this process. To this end, the study employs theories of gender social construction. According to Judith Butler (1990), gender is not a characteristic inherent to an individual's biological sex, but a performance constructed through social practices and reinforced through repetition. Butler (1990) contends that gender is not an inherent trait but a “state of being” shaped over time by social norms and cultural influences. This theoretical lens is especially useful for understanding how erotic capital becomes embedded in everyday workplace behaviours. In this framework, erotic capital also ties into how gender is performatively presented. Expectations for female workers in tourism to act “attractive, well-groomed, and polite” and for male

workers to display “confidence and charisma” demonstrate how gender roles are constructed in the workplace.

Connell (1995) describes the dominant form of masculinity in society as “hegemonic masculinity”. This perspective views masculinity not just as a biological trait but as a socially and historically shaped form of power relations. When placed alongside Butler’s performativity, Connell’s perspective helps reveal not only how gender is enacted but also why certain gendered performances – particularly men’s confidence and authority – are structurally privileged over others. In fields with close customer interactions, like tourism, men’s erotic capital is typically characterized by charisma, leadership, and confidence. In contrast, women’s erotic capital is often judged based on physical attractiveness, sexuality, and their ability to serve customers. This situation creates disparities in role and reward between female and male employees. Thus, Butler’s focus on enactment and Connell’s focus on hierarchy complement each other, offering a more coherent theoretical foundation for analysing erotic capital in tourism settings.

Butler’s (1990) focus on gender as a performance explains how employees in the tourism industry’s appearance and behavior are reproduced in accordance with institutional expectations. In this performative process, the expectation that women be “attractive and polite” and men be “charismatic and confident” demonstrates that erotic capital is constructed in a gendered manner. Connell’s (1995) approach to hegemonic masculinity reveals that these performances are not only different but also acquire hierarchical value within social power relations. Thus, while men’s erotic capital, defined through charisma and leadership, carries higher institutional value, women’s evaluation based on physical attractiveness reproduces structural inequalities. When Butler and Connell are considered together, erotic capital is conceptualized not as the sum of individual characteristics but as a type of capital shaped by social norms and gender-based power structures.

### *1.1. The Concept of Erotic Capital*

Green (2008) and Hakim (2010) introduced the concept of erotic capital as a fourth type of capital, alongside the three main capital approaches – economic, social, and cultural – developed by Bourdieu (1986). This new type of capital was described as a form based on sexual attractiveness that provides social and economic advantages to individuals. However, Bourdieu (1986) did not limit the concept of capital solely to economic capital; he defined it within a broad framework that also includes social and cultural structures. Connecting erotic capital back to Bourdieu’s framework clarifies

that attractiveness-based advantages should also be understood as shaped by social fields and power relations, not merely personal traits. In this context, capital is seen as the resources individuals possess that provide advantages in social fields, and capital is examined under three headings: a) economic capital, b) cultural capital, and c) social capital. Economic capital encompasses material resources, financial assets, and any assets that carry economic value. In contrast, cultural capital is a type of capital expressed through individuals' education, knowledge, skills, and culture accumulation. Social capital, on the other hand, comprises the connections and relationships individuals have within the network of social relations, as well as the benefits derived from these relationships.

Green (2008: 29) defines erotic capital as “the qualities and quantities that a person possesses and that evoke an erotic response in others”. Similarly, Farrer (2010) describes it as a form of capital used to attract attention, achieve sexual satisfaction, or exchange with other types of capital, aligning with Green's view. Hakim (2010), however, emphasizes that erotic capital predominantly benefits women and plays a crucial role in their liberation and economic independence. This perspective is supported by Lucas (2019) and numerous researchers (Trysnes, 2019; Wojtaszczyk and Syper-Jedrzejak, 2023; Montemurro and Hughes, 2024). According to this concept, physically attractive individuals tend to receive more positive reactions and attitudes, giving them an advantage in various aspects of life. Nonetheless, adverse outcomes can occur. While erotic capital can offer social and economic benefits, it also entails risks such as body commodification and potential exploitation (Wojtaszczyk and Syper-Jedrzejak, 2023; Montemurro and Hughes, 2024). These contrasting evaluations demonstrate that erotic capital is embedded in broader social inequalities rather than functioning as a neutral resource.

Martin and George (2006) discussed the idea of erotic capital, which they referred to as “sexual capital”. Researchers see sexual capital as a form of capital with limited flexibility and distinct, specific dynamics. Over time, sexual capital has become separate from economic capital and has established itself as a unique form of capital. Scholars agree that sexual capital cannot be understood solely through physical traits and recognize that an individual's relationships and behaviors significantly influence it. According to Martin and George (2006), sexual capital should be assessed differently from cultural capital because it is shaped by societal views on sexuality and social dynamics, and it can hold value independently of social status. This distinction sets sexual capital apart from other forms, like cultural and social capital. Placing Martin and George's perspective next to Hakim's multidimensional framing highlights both the relational and embodied nature of erotic capital.

According to Hakim (2010: 500), who explores the facets of erotic capital, it includes five dimensions: a) beauty, b) sexual attractiveness, c) social traits, d) liveliness, and e) social presentation. Beauty relates to a person's inherited physical traits; sexual attractiveness is about the ability to draw others and stimulate sexual interest; social traits involve practical and comfortable communication; liveliness reflects positive and confident behaviors; and social presentation reveals social status through choices like clothing, makeup, perfume, and accessories. These dimensions illustrate how erotic capital is simultaneously bodily, interactive, and socially coded.

Green (2013) criticizes Hakim's concept of erotic capital for being overly broad, inconsistent, and poorly connected to its sociological origins. The review points out that Hakim (2010) muddies the concept by merging character, social skills, style, and attractiveness into a single concept. Moreover, this depiction of erotic capital as a portable personal asset that ignores factors like age, class, and race – despite claiming a broad scope – draws heavy criticism. The focus on beauty and sexual appeal, coupled with inconsistent language, is also marked as problematic. These criticisms reinforce the need to analyze erotic capital within structural and intersectional contexts – an approach this study adopts in the tourism sector.

Requena (2017), while viewing erotic capital as a form of power and status that a person possesses, compared it to social, cultural, and economic capital. It is noted that accessing erotic capital might be easier even when access to these other forms of capital is restricted. The researcher emphasized that this accessibility is what makes erotic capital distinct from other types. Additionally, Konjer *et al.* (2019) highlighted that erotic capital has emerged as an important new form of capital, alongside Bourdieu's established types. While erotic capital plays a role in appearance, attractiveness, and influence, it differs from other capital forms. Unlike these, erotic capital is rooted in social inequalities and structures, focusing on the individual's body. This perspective aligns directly with the gendered labour dynamics observed in tourism jobs, where bodily presentation and emotional labour are central components of work.

The application of erotic capital, as discussed above, has various aspects in practical business settings. It can provide benefits to individuals but also comes with certain downsides. It is important to remember that physical attractiveness alone does not guarantee success in the business world, even though it may be seen as an advantage.

People in the service industry often engage in both aesthetic and emotional labor. Therefore, erotic capital can be advantageous when combined with other forms of capital, such as economic, social, and cultural capital, rather than used solely in professional settings. However, this benefit can

also lead to an unequal labor market environment. Since the traits that constitute erotic capital depend on qualities that individuals cannot always alter, it naturally promotes unfair competition. While it can help women oppressed by patriarchy to challenge workplace inequalities, capitalist pursuits of profit often result in women being objectified and commodified (Green, 2013; Hakim, 2010; Hochschild, 1983; Seçkin, 2014). Thus, the literature shows that erotic capital operates at the intersection of individual embodiment and structural gendered inequalities – an issue central to this study’s analysis of tourism employees.

## *1.2. Erotic Capital in Business Life*

The extra value of erotic capital in a person’s career largely depends on employers’ biases, values, and perceptions of beauty (Anýžová and Matějů, 2018; Lucas, 2019). As a result, the economic benefits it provides in the workplace differ across various situations. Hamermesh and Biddle (1994) examined how physical attractiveness impacts earnings differences in the labor market. Using a survey method, they found that more physically attractive workers typically earn 5-10% higher wages, indicating that attractiveness has a significant influence on earning potential. The study also highlighted that attractive employees are more likely to work in sectors where physical attractiveness enhances productivity.

Seçkin (2014) argued that young, attractive individuals hold a form of capital rooted in social, emotional, and physical effort, which makes them appealing to both employers and customers. This phenomenon, mainly seen in the service, finance, and communication sectors, is tied to consumer culture and capitalist production. The focus on physical appearance in hiring and job performance can cause physical and emotional stress for workers. For women, the high demand for aesthetic labor in hospitality and retail not only reinforces gender stereotypes but also leads to unfair workplace conditions for women (Bilir, 2018; Can *et al.*, 2023; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). Montemurro and Hughes (2024) further strengthen this argument by demonstrating that erotic capital, particularly in service-oriented and customer-facing industries, often becomes a mechanism through which women’s bodies are commodified and regulated. Their findings highlight how the interplay between aesthetic labour and capitalist demands transforms erotic capital from a potentially empowering resource into one that exposes women to heightened vulnerability and institutional control.

Although often overlooked, erotic capital plays a significant role in social

interactions, influencing personal circumstances and human resource decisions concerning the individual who possesses it (Wojtaszczyk and Syper-Jedrzejak, 2023, p. 396). Specifically, physical appearance is crucial during recruitment before formal hiring. Williams and Connell (2010) examined how aesthetic labor influences retail recruitment, demonstrating that stores prioritize candidates' appearances based on their customer profile and brand image. Their research indicates that physical appearance is a major factor in selection, as employers see a worker's appearance as part of the business's overall appeal.

Gordillo *et al.* (2019) examined how physical attractiveness on job application evaluations in Ecuador. They used photographs rated by independent panels, which were then included in fabricated resumes for job applications. The findings indicated that more attractive candidates received more positive responses compared to less attractive ones. Likewise, Bozkurt and Kıran (2022) studied job ads in the TR61 region, including Antalya, Burdur, and Isparta, and discovered that aesthetic effort significantly impacts the hiring of female workers. Their research concluded that female applicants are expected to show aesthetic effort alongside other “feminine” traits.

Taken together, these studies align with recent theoretical discussions emphasizing that erotic capital is not an individually defined asset but a socially structured form of value that reproduces gendered expectations. This perspective is further echoed in post-2020 scholarship, which stresses that attractiveness operates within socially reinforced labour hierarchies rather than as a neutral hiring criterion.

Similarly, Toksoy *et al.* (2023) concluded that people with visible facial differences caused by rare disorders face discrimination in the workplace, influenced by societal beauty standards. Practices like asking for a photograph during job applications perpetuate appearance-based biases and unfairly disadvantage candidates with skin conditions. Another relevant study was conducted by Oluyadi and Dai (2023). The study highlights that companies in the ready-to-wear retail industry expect female staff to appear attractive and communicate with a warm, feminine tone. These expectations differ depending on employees' demographic backgrounds. Specifically, higher standards are placed on the appearance of white female employees. In contrast, Asian female employees are judged more on their accent and eloquence, with higher expectations that they have an accent, an exotic flair, and a feminine speaking style.

These differentiated standards resonate with contemporary debates on intersectionality, demonstrating that erotic capital operates differently across racialized and gendered bodies. The 2020s literature underscores that attractiveness-based value is not universal; instead, it is filtered through existing

power structures, making erotic capital a deeply stratified and context-dependent resource.

Li *et al.* (2019) investigated the impact of employees' physical attractiveness on customer behavior in the service industry, including gyms and training centers, through a scenario-based research study. Their findings indicated that attractiveness generally enhances customer responses, although this effect depends on factors like customer social interaction anxiety and consumption patterns. In 2010, Melissa Nelson, a dental assistant, was fired by her employer for being deemed "too attractive", raising concerns about her fidelity to her spouse. Nelson's lawsuit resulted in a court ruling that his employment termination was not due to gender discrimination. However, it was meant to protect the institution of marriage, leading to the charges being dismissed (The New York Times, 2013). Meanwhile, a report by the Spanish newspaper *El País* (*El País*, 2008) details how 10 nurses at the San Rafael Clinic in Cádiz, Spain, opposed the mini-skirt dress code. They argued that this dress code restricted their mobility and hindered their ability to provide comfortable, effective patient care, leading them to wear trousers like their male colleagues. Following this decision, the clinical management imposed a penalty by withholding the nurses' monthly 30-euro productivity bonus. The nurses contended that this was illegal, claiming they had the authority to set the clinic's dress code policy, and persisted in their opposition by asserting their actions were lawful.

A BBC report (BBC, 2016) detailed that Nicola Thorp, a 27-year-old employee of Portico was fired for refusing to wear high heels measuring 5 to 10 centimeters. Thorp highlighted that there was no dress code for men at her workplace. After she brought her case to the media and initiated a petition, public backlash against the company intensified, prompting management to reconsider the policy. This incident illustrates what recent research continues to demonstrate: erotic capital can function as a disciplinary tool, compelling women to comply with gendered aesthetic norms in order to maintain employability. Such examples highlight the structural pressures that make erotic capital a precarious resource rather than an unequivocal advantage.

Temel's (2023) research also showed that physical attractiveness plays a significant role in the banking industry, especially in private banks, where female employees often face exploitation of aesthetic labor. The study further revealed that employees who do not meet aesthetic standards are often subjected to harassment, obstacles to promotion, and even dismissal by their supervisors. These findings closely align with Montemurro and Hughes (2024), who argue that contemporary labour markets increasingly reward bodies that conform to aesthetic ideals while penalizing those that do not, thereby reinforcing inequities tied to gendered and embodied expectations.



Kahya (2024) explored how appearance influences professional life. Based on data from 279 participants, the study found that appearance has become increasingly significant in the workplace. It also revealed perceptual differences between male and female employees regarding the role of physical appearance. Men tend to perceive physical attractiveness as more impactful in the workplace than women do. Moreover, the outcomes of erotic capital – how attractiveness affects professional success – can vary by gender. Kahya's (2024) contribution is particularly relevant because it provides contemporary empirical evidence that erotic capital is gender-differentiated in both perception and outcome, reinforcing the need to analyze attractiveness within broader gendered power relations – especially in sectors like tourism where aesthetic expectations are pronounced.

Similarly, Kukkonen *et al.* (2024) reviewed 58 articles to analyze how physical appearance affects the labor market. The findings suggest that appearance benefits men in terms of career success and income, especially in male-dominated fields. Conversely, attractive women in these fields may face prejudice, while men do not experience these adverse effects. This systematic review further deepens the theoretical argument by confirming that erotic capital does not operate symmetrically across genders; instead, its benefits and penalties are shaped by the gendered organization of labour markets. Such insight is crucial for understanding how erotic capital functions within structurally unequal workplaces.

However, erotic capital's influence is not exclusive to women; it can also have adverse effects for men. For example, Fowler *et al.* (2016) studied Chinese male models in advertising. Initially, a muscular physique was considered ideal, but over time, a slimmer body became the standard. This shift made some models feel insecure and powerless, as they struggled to meet the changing beauty ideals. Recent studies show that this change shows that erotic capital is a form of capital that changes over time. It is a form of capital that is influenced by social norms about beauty. Therefore, erotic capital depends on broader societal expectations rather than on individual attributes alone.

### *1.3. Erotic Capital in the Tourism Sector*

The tourism and hospitality industries heavily rely on the physical appearance of employees, especially women, to attract and impress customers. This commodification includes dress, behavior, and social presentation (Basnyat *et al.*, 2021). Attractive women and/or handsome men are often hired for customer-facing roles where their “friendliness” and “hospitality”

are crucial (Mathies and Burford, 2011). The industry's focus on attractiveness can lead to discriminatory hiring practices against individuals who do not meet superficial beauty standards, with physical appearance often evaluated early in the recruitment process and attractiveness sometimes judged more harshly after service failures (Li *et al.*, 2022; Fang *et al.*, 2020). Ultimately, “erotic capital” is a tangible factor contributing to economic gains in tourism, but it raises significant questions about equality and service delivery approaches (Basnyat *et al.*, 2021). These dynamics illustrate how erotic capital becomes embedded within organizational logics, where employee bodies are evaluated as marketable assets rather than neutral carriers of labour. This aligns with broader literature suggesting that the tourism sector institutionalizes attractiveness as a component of service quality, reinforcing gendered expectations and unequal power relations. Beyond economics, erotic capital is viewed as crucial for achieving gender equality and promoting corporate responsibility (Basnyat *et al.*, 2021). The dynamics between men and women are particularly noteworthy. This framing highlights that erotic capital in tourism is not only a tool for profit-making but also a site where gendered norms are reproduced, making industry-wide policies on equity and representation especially consequential.

The literature offers limited sources discussing the tourism sector in relation to “erotic capital”, with most references focusing on the food and beverage industry. This study, in concordance with extant literature, underscores the significance of physical attractiveness in the tourism industry. This notion has been previously documented by Basnyat *et al.* (2021); Li *et al.* (2019); Luoh and Tsaur (2009); Jin and Merkebu (2015), and Li *et al.* (2021). The findings of these studies suggest that the tourism industry should be more cognizant of the potential benefits and risks associated with the commodification of beauty and attractiveness. Basnyat *et al.* (2021) argue that hotels and restaurants in the tourism industry should adopt practices to alter perceptions and redefine women's roles. When considered as a whole, these studies show a clear pattern: the idea of attractiveness is firmly rooted in how tourism organizations think about value creation. This means that erotic capital is seen as both an economic resource and a gendered area of vulnerability.

In the service industry, especially, physical appearance plays a crucial role in recruitment, as companies often prioritize attractiveness under the pretext of enhancing image and satisfying customers (Nickson *et al.*, 2005). Consequently, in the tourism sector, the commodification of erotic capital, beauty, and physical attractiveness – using these traits to create economic value – is particularly significant. As noted earlier, erotic capital refers to the idea that an individual's aesthetic, visual, physical, social, and sexual appeal can be a valuable personal asset. It is well documented that the physical appearance

of tourism workers, especially women, is actively used as a tool to attract and influence clients. This commodification extends beyond mere looks to clothing, behavior, and social presentation (Basnyat *et al.*, 2021). Erotic capital is often applied, especially for women, in ways that reinforce traditional gender roles. Women are often employed in roles that require customer interaction, where warmth and hospitality are highly valued (Mathies and Burford, 2011). This indicates that erotic capital is mobilized selectively depending on gender, with women disproportionately positioned in roles where their appearance is treated as part of the service itself -reflecting a broader patriarchal logic within the tourism labour market.

This pattern is also seen in airlines, where female cabin crew are often regarded as the company's face, and in restaurants, where attractive female staff are seen as a draw for male customers (Abubakar *et al.*, 2019). Because female employees' physical attractiveness is frequently considered a source of economic advantage, attractive waitstaff tend to receive more tips (Parrett, 2015). In this context, Luoh and Tsaur (2009) studied how stereotypes about physical attractiveness influence perceived service quality. Their sample consisted of 480 customers from fine-dining restaurants in Taiwan. Customers were presented with various scenarios and staff photographs and asked to rate the service quality across dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. The study found that staff with high physical attractiveness were perceived by customers as providing better service quality. Jin and Merkebu (2015) conducted a similar investigation, focusing on how employees' physical attractiveness and positive mood in luxury restaurant settings affect customer experience, trust, gratitude, and loyalty. Their sample consisted of 398 participants, and the results showed that physical attractiveness has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. Additionally, men sometimes view beauty, physical attractiveness, and sex appeal as challenging qualities to attain, which can enhance the perceived value of services offered by attractive women (Basnyat *et al.*, 2021). These findings collectively underscore that attractiveness functions as a service cue in tourism, shaping customer expectations and interactions in ways that elevate erotic capital as a determinant of perceived service quality.

Physical attractiveness can encourage social interaction, which, in turn, influences customer loyalty. Customers are generally more likely to engage with employees they find attractive (Fang *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, they tend to rate services provided by attractive individuals more favorably (Li *et al.*, 2021). However, this is not always the case, as cultural and temporal differences can influence perceptions of beauty and attractiveness. Furthermore, what is considered erotic capital in one context might be viewed dif-

ferently elsewhere (Li *et al.*, 2022). This variation illustrates that erotic capital is not a fixed or universally valued resource; rather, its meaning fluctuates according to cultural norms and situational expectations, reinforcing its socially constructed character.

Conversely, commodifying beauty by prioritizing appearance over skills and talents can diminish women's roles in the tourism and hospitality industries (Basnyat *et al.*, 2021). This process may also perpetuate women's subjugation within a patriarchal system (Rudman and Fetterolf, 2014; Basnyat *et al.*, 2021). The overemphasis on physical attractiveness has been linked to discriminatory hiring practices, especially against those who do not conform to narrow, popular standards of beauty. Li *et al.* (2021) argue that in-service training and skill development should be prioritized over appearance. In Basnyat *et al.*'s (2021) study, some female service workers recognize that they are stereotyped but may accept it due to cultural norms or view it as a marketing tactic. The influence of physical attractiveness on customer perceptions is complex (Basnyat *et al.*, 2021; Fang *et al.*, 2020; Li *et al.*, 2021). Factors such as the required level of service expertise, gender compatibility between customer and employee, and the significance of service errors can also play a role. For instance, in less successful situations, an employee's attractiveness might be ignored (Li *et al.*, 2022; Fang *et al.*, 2020). These nuances highlight that erotic capital does not guarantee positive outcomes; instead, it interacts with contextual factors such as expertise, service complexity, and gender dynamics, demonstrating its conditional and often unstable value.

Tsai *et al.* (2015) examined how physical attractiveness, sense of humor, and seniority of tourist guides influence tourists' attention and the guide's authority within the group. They used a quasi-experimental design, presenting senior and novice guides with varying levels of attractiveness and humor to a group of university students. The study found that physical attractiveness has a positive impact on tourists' perceptions; however, it is insufficient on its own. Tour guides should also focus on other qualities, such as a good sense of humor and relevant experience.

Abubakar *et al.* (2019) examined the effects of the concept of "erotic capital" on managerial bias in the accommodation sector. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with five hotel managers and 20 employees at 4- and 5-star hotels in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The study concluded that erotic capital offers advantages, including enhancing the hotel's brand image, gaining a competitive edge, increasing sales, improving customer experience, and attracting more customers. However, it also leads to adverse outcomes, such as workplace bias, low perceptions of fairness,

decreased job satisfaction, information withholding, and customer dissatisfaction (Abubakar *et al.*, 2019). Such findings demonstrate that erotic capital simultaneously generates symbolic and economic value while contributing to organizational inequities, revealing its dual function as both an asset and a source of workplace tension.

Fang *et al.* (2020) investigated the impact of service-sector employees' physical attractiveness on customers. Using a mixed-methods approach, they conducted in-depth customer interviews and three scenario-based experiments. Results showed that customers respond favorably to employees' sexual attractiveness, and erotic capital enhances customer satisfaction. However, for roles requiring expertise, the employee's knowledge was deemed more important than their erotic appeal. Similarly, Li *et al.* (2021) investigated the effect of tourism employees' physical attractiveness on customers' evaluations of service quality. Their empirical research, conducted with 334 guests at Guangzhou Chimelong Tourism Resort in South China, found that attractive tourism employees positively affect tourists' perceptions of service quality. These studies demonstrate that erotic capital influences customer behavior, but it is less important than expertise in contexts where professional knowledge is highly valued. This suggests that being attractive is not enough to ensure continuous service excellence.

Besides being a tangible factor that boosts economic gains in tourism through erotic capital, it is considered highly significant for gender equality and corporate responsibilities (Basnyat *et al.*, 2021). This also highlights the different interactions between women and men. While most research emphasizes women's roles, it is also important to examine men's positions within erotic capital and their perceptions of each other, as these are notable aspects. The primary focus of this study is to explore how women and men in the tourism industry view erotic capital, their similar or differing experiences, and the perceived benefits and drawbacks. This orientation is essential for understanding erotic capital as a gendered and relational phenomenon: one that affects not only how women navigate appearance-based expectations but also how men interpret and respond to the aesthetic norms that structure interactions within the tourism workforce.

#### *1.4. Corporate Governance, Ethical Management, and the Regulation of Aesthetic and Erotic Capital*

As the literature demonstrates, expectations regarding employee appearance are not solely interpersonal or subjective but are embedded within organizational policies, codes of conduct, and performance evaluation systems

(Wu *et al.*, 2020; Stevens and Connelly, 2024). Therefore, examining employees' experiences without attending to these institutional mechanisms would provide an incomplete understanding of how erotic capital operates within tourism workplaces.

Research in hospitality management demonstrates that physical appearance is intentionally managed at the organizational level as a component of service delivery. Wu *et al.* (2020), for example, illustrates how aesthetic labour becomes institutionalized when businesses integrate employee appearance and presentation into their brand identity. Such findings suggest that expectations regarding appearance reflect organizational standards of performance rather than merely aesthetic preferences.

The literature also highlights how these expectations become embedded within corporate mechanisms such as hiring policies, codes of conduct, and performance evaluation systems. Appearance standards, often justified through “brand consistency”, can become formalized as normative requirements within organizational policies (Wu *et al.*, 2020). Stevens and Connelly (2024) further show that assessments of appearance intersect with gender, race, and other social categories, and that the discourse of “organizational fit” may legitimize discriminatory practices. These insights point to the need to understand aesthetic and erotic capital as phenomena produced through institutional processes rather than solely through interpersonal dynamics.

It is indicated by these studies that aesthetic and erotic capital function as governance domains regulated through organizational policies, codes of conduct, and evaluation procedures. These regulatory mechanisms influence employees' positions within organizations, career progression, and perceptions of fairness. Thus, the governance of appearance has implications for gender equality and broader ethical and managerial practices in the tourism sector.

Considering all aspects in the literature, the following research questions have been generated:

- RQ1. How do female and male employees in different occupational positions within the tourism sector (e.g., front-office, food & beverage, house-keeping) define and interpret the concept of erotic capital in their daily work interactions?
- RQ2. In what specific ways do women and men report similar or divergent experiences regarding the use, expectation, or evaluation of erotic capital in their workplace roles and customer interactions?
- RQ3. What concrete advantages and disadvantages do female and male employees associate with erotic capital, and how do these perceived outcomes differ by gender?

## 2. Methodology

This research uses a qualitative, phenomenological approach to examine participants' perceptions and experiences of erotic capital deeply. The aim is to uncover meanings derived from personal experiences. Data collection involved semi-structured, in-depth interviews with open-ended questions aligned with the research goals. These interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In this study, "descriptive analysis" was preferred for data analysis. In the descriptive analysis technique, data obtained according to the themes established in the theoretical framework are summarized and interpreted (Wolcott, 1994). Furthermore, in this analysis technique, direct quotations are frequently used to reflect the participants' views in an unbiased manner (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013). In this context, the themes were developed within the descriptive analysis framework, based on a review of the relevant literature and expert opinions. In line with the phenomenological design, the interviews were structured to elicit rich descriptions of lived experiences. Therefore, the interview protocol included probes encouraging participants to reflect on concrete situations (e.g., customer interactions, recruitment processes, workplace expectations) rather than abstract opinions. This allowed the researcher to access participants' subjective meaning-making processes, which is central to phenomenological inquiry.

Participants included male and female staff from Turkey's tourism sector, including hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, guides, and other related industries. To ensure diversity, maximum variation sampling – a purposive method – was employed based on demographics and professional traits, including age, gender, role (front desk, housekeeping, entertainment, management), and experience. Sample selection followed clear inclusion criteria: (1) active employment in the tourism sector, (2) at least six months of work experience to ensure familiarity with workplace practices, and (3) willingness to discuss personal experiences related to appearance and customer interaction. Maximum variation sampling ensured the representation of different occupational groups, and this diversity enabled the comparison of patterns across job categories. The final sample consisted of 16 participants, selected when data saturation was reached through repetitive responses. The sample was evenly split, with 8 women and 8 men. Data saturation was determined by monitoring recurring concepts and the point at which no new themes emerged during consecutive interviews. In this study, saturation became evident after the 14th interview, and two additional interviews were conducted to confirm that no new information was being introduced.

In qualitative research, as in quantitative research, attention must be paid to the validity and reliability criteria of the research. In this context, Guba

(1981)'s reliability and validity model has been adapted to ensure the validity and reliability of the study. This model encompasses the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To ensure the credibility of the research, care was taken to ensure that the participants interviewed were volunteers, and the purpose of the study was explained to them before it began. They were assured that their names would remain confidential. Furthermore, the data were analyzed by two independent researchers to ensure the reliability of the study. To capture the criterion of transferability, the study specified the number of participants interviewed, the data collection technique, the dates on which the data were collected, and the constraints related to the participants in detail. In addition, to ensure consistency, the design and subject of the study were also described in the methods section. Finally, the researchers attempted to enhance the validity of the study by acknowledging its limitations and explaining the rationale behind the chosen qualitative method. To strengthen dependability and confirmability, an audit trail was maintained, documenting coding decisions, theme development, and reflections during analysis. The involvement of two independent coders contributed to analytical triangulation and minimized researcher bias.

The interviews were conducted between May 14, 2025, and June 2, 2025. Before starting the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the research and assured that their names would remain confidential and that the data would be used for scientific purposes. The aim was to gain the participants' trust in the researcher and to obtain reliable answers to the questions. It is also stated that the research has obtained ethical approval from the relevant authority of the institution to which the researchers are affiliated. The interviews lasted between 25 and 40 minutes. Before starting the interviews, participants were asked for permission to record the interviews with a voice recorder. All participants agreed to the use of a voice recorder during the interviews. The participant who did not want the interview to be recorded cited previous security concerns as the reason. The responses given by the participants in the interview that was not audio recorded were noted by the researcher. The interviews, recorded with an audio recording device, were transferred to a computer. To protect the anonymity of the participants, their names were kept confidential, and they were assigned codes, such as P1, P2, P3, P4, ... P16. During transcription, paralinguistic cues (pauses, hesitations, tone shifts) were documented when relevant to meaning-making. These elements provided additional interpretive depth during coding. The demographic table included in the findings section was used only for descriptive purposes. Theme extraction followed a multi-step process: (1) initial open coding of all transcripts, (2) grouping of codes into conceptual categories, and (3) refinement of categories into overarching themes aligned with the theoretical framework. These ensure



that the analytical terms remain grounded within the narratives, whilst still acknowledging the overarching conceptual themes.

Details of the demographic variables of the interviewed participants can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Variables**

Participant	Gender	Occupation	Work Experience
P1	Female	Reservation Manager	20 years and above
P2	Male	Guest Relations Officer	2-5 years
P3	Male	Tour Guide	11 years
P4	Female	Food and Beverage Manager	11 years and above
P5	Male	Entertainment	6-10 years
P6	Male	Food and Beverage Staff	11 years and over
P7	Female	Kitchen & Housekeeping Staff	1 year
P8	Female	Guest Relations Assistant	6-10 years
P9	Male	Front Desk Agent	11 years and above
P10	Female	Tour Guide	11 years and above
P11	Male	Food and Beverage Staff	20 years and over
P12	Male	Front Desk Clerk	6-10 years
P13	Male	Tour Guide	6-10 years
P14	Female	Front Desk Manager	11 years and above
P15	Female	Guest Relations Supervisor	6-10 years
P16	Female	Front Desk Manager	20 years and above

These demographics are mentioned with the objective of emphasizing their diversity with regard to their backgrounds, as well as their extensive experience within this industry.

### **3. The Influence of Physical Appearance on Women's Careers: Perspectives of Female Participants**

Female participants emphasized that physical appearance plays a crucial role in the tourism industry, particularly in hiring and task assignment. The majority agreed that attractiveness has a significant impact on these aspects. This appearance is sometimes assessed directly and sometimes indirectly; candidates' physical posture and looks are evaluated during the hiring process. They noted that physical appearance creates a positive first impression in guest relations, but they believe that friendliness and sincerity are more effective in

ensuring guest satisfaction. They also mentioned that although physical appearance can influence initial perceptions, guests primarily value friendliness, sincerity, and honesty. Communication skills and personal attitudes are considered more important than physical attractiveness in achieving guest satisfaction. This underscores the industry's human-centered nature and highlights the importance of service quality. Therefore, while physical appearance affects first impressions, guest satisfaction and loyalty are more strongly influenced by employees' professional attitude and approach.

Some participants mentioned that a certain physical standard is often expected for specific roles. P15 shared her view on this topic as follows:

*“At our hotel, they tend to be quite straightforward. When hiring, they focus first on physical posture and appearance to determine if someone is a good fit for the role. For example, a girl visited us; unfortunately, she was overweight. While she had excellent language skills, she wasn't considered suitable for the guest relations department. Instead, she was hired into a quieter, behind-the-scenes department. This honest approach can sometimes feel a bit direct, but it helps ensure the best fit for both the team and the guests”.*

A pertinent example, as highlighted in P15's case, describes appearance as a gatekeeping device that is not only linked with job allocation, but also takes precedence over skill-based credentials. Conceptually, this correlates with Connell's (1995) investigation into the structuring of gender-based forms of “institutionalised” power, whereby women whose appearance did not measure up to the “idealised feminine aesthetic” were purposefully channelled towards invisibility.

In the long run, an employee's communication skills, experience, and professionalism are more important than their physical attractiveness. P16, with twenty years of experience in the tourism industry and currently a front desk manager at a chain hotel affiliated with a corporate group, shared her insights, which differed from those of the other female participants.

*“At first glance, it might seem that physical appearance is really important when it comes to professionalism and communication, but honestly, I don't believe it's very effective in the long run. Over time, skills such as effective communication, knowledge, teamwork, and the ability to connect with others in our industry become increasingly valuable. These qualities tend to stand out more and hold greater significance. This view might also be influenced by how companies and the corporate world see things. Having worked at my company for many years, I've come to realize that these personal qualities aren't always the most prominent. What really matters in our industry is the physical characteristics – and by that, I don't mean looks, but rather a well-groomed appearance. We believe that presenting ourselves neatly is more important”.*

It is generally agreed that a strong level of grooming and cleanliness is a minimum expectation within the workplace. Although the importance of appearance is predominantly linked to initial impressions and customer-facing aspects, issues beyond appearance also strongly affect employee output. P16 further expands on this by defining both “beauty” and “grooming”, elucidating organizational preferences for cleanliness rather than mere appearance. Indeed, the inference gained here would suggest that although success may be linked with expertise, the establishment of a presentable appearance remains a prerequisite, thus supporting Butler’s (1990) claim that gender is enacted through appearance, as part of day-to-day, professional interaction.

### *3.1. Perspectives of Male Participants*

Male participants also emphasized the importance of physical appearance in the tourism industry and in professional settings, as did women. P2 mentioned, “I guess they say you have to be presentable; when guests see you, they need to recognize from your appearance that you’re here to provide good service (...)” suggesting that a tidy appearance builds customer trust and professionalism. P6 highlighted that physical appearance impacts decisions, mentioning, *“Since tourism is partly a service industry, it’s expected to appeal visually and engage the senses. Even if this is secondary or tertiary, they prefer employees and tasks that align with these qualities”*.

Visual appeal in P6’s statement suggests that appearance judgments apply equally to men, although their wording is much less forceful than that found in the female interviews. This reflects the larger dynamic, as men acknowledge the importance of appearance but do not see this as something that is foreclosing or constitutive of their identity, as Butler describes, with gender performativity being unequally adjudicated.

Participants have observed that professional competence has become more important in recent years, while the focus on appearance has shifted. P9 added, *“In the past, hiring a young person with a good physique, clear skin, and attractive features was straightforward. Nowadays, there’s more emphasis on skills”*. This shift indicates a move toward competency-based employment, where appearance still matters but professional skills are gaining precedence.

In terms of its analysis, the male stories within Theme 1 show that, although appearance is important to men, this is interpreted as a minimum professional necessity, as opposed to being a strongly gendered display. Compared with female employees, male employees experience fewer forces,

fewer cosmetic duties, and a weaker correlation between appearance and vulnerability. This distinction shows a difference in terms of gender, which emerges clearly if analyzed through the theories associated with Connell (1995) “hegemonic masculinity” and “performance” as outlined in Butler (1990).

#### **4. The Effect of Appearance on Hiring and Job Placement: Perspectives of Female Participants**

Female participants emphasized that physical appearance has a significant impact on hiring decisions and task assignments. They observed that female employees face greater pressure regarding their looks compared to their male colleagues. Women tend to be more attentive to their appearance, engaging in grooming and beauty routines more frequently. Conversely, men generally have more modest expectations about their appearance, and male employees sometimes need reminders about their grooming. This leads to inequality in hiring and promotion, undermining fairness in organizations. They also noted that the majority of those hired or promoted based on looks were women, resulting in unequal opportunities and unfairness. P4 noted that the pressure on female employees is even more intense than on males, stating:

*“More is expected of women. Men would come to work unshaven and be forced to shave. But women had to wear that skirt, for example. During meetings, I often saw my male coworkers unshaven and wearing white socks, despite the company policy prohibiting this attire. But, for example, black socks were mandatory, and he came wearing white socks. But I still had to wear that skirt”.*

P4’s explanation shows the structural gendered double standard. Men are punished for poor grooming, whereas women are expected to conform to appearance standards. This is consistent with Connell’s (1995) views on “hegemonic masculinity”, whereby organizational culture treats women’s bodies as places that must be managed through appearance.

However, P10 mentioned that her profession does not make such distinctions:

*“In guiding, this equality is higher than in other sectors. Guiding is a job that relies more on knowledge. In fact, you are more prominent with your knowledge and language. So what you wear doesn’t matter much as long as customers appreciate you. Of course, at first or while working, etc. Yes, you may get such reactions from other people. But in guiding, you see greater equality. In other sectors, expectations are much higher”.*

P10's account differs in that it shows the strategic deployment of erotic capital with regard to different occupations. Where the job emphasizes knowledge, the expectation linked with appearance is diminished. This is clearly important for purposes of analysis, as it shows that there is not an equal distribution of erotic capital, as different occupations will likely yield different results.

While erotic capital can benefit women, it also has drawbacks, like increasing harassment. In workplaces, women often wear makeup or focus on their appearance – whether by choice or due to workplace norms – while men do this less frequently. Female employees face more pressure to present a certain image, paying closer attention to grooming and appearance. Taken together, the results show that appearance is a resource as well as a vulnerability for women in the workplace. On the theoretical level, this mirrors feminist theories of erotic capital, proving that it can offer strategic benefits as well as position women within a system of surveillance.

#### *4.1. Perspectives of Male Participants*

Male participants highlighted that physical appearance plays a significant role in hiring decisions and role assignments in the tourism industry. They observed that factors such as height, posture, and appropriate attire are especially important for roles that involve direct customer interaction. P2 explained, *“You can’t seat a short person at the desk; our desks are barstool-style, and when a short person sits there, it looks unprofessional from the entrance. These considerations influence role allocation or hiring... In guest relations, particularly at the entrance greeting, some hotels focus on appearance, height, posture, and how well staff uniforms fit on those welcoming guests”*.

This adds that male employees, too, undergo appearance-based assessment, although their appearance standards call for “professional fit” rather than “aesthetic desirability”. They, as opposed to being assessed in terms of their “charm”, “sexual appeal”, or “beauty”, must meet standards such as “height”, “posture”, and “uniform fit”, which confirm professional expectations along masculine norms of hegemony, as opposed to “charm”, “sexual appeal”, associated with “feminine” ideals. Thus, appearance becomes a determinant for men as well, although in a more “utilitarian” and “non-judgmental”, as opposed to “objectified”, “normalized”, form. Thus, this further recognizes that male employees, with regard to appearance, subscribe to organizational ideals of “reliability” rather than “attractiveness”. Applying

Butler's theoretical formulation, male employees' "gender performances" remain "constructed" through ideals of "professionalism", as opposed to appearance enhancement.

However, in other businesses, attractive employees are often given privileges, which can lead to unfair treatment and inequality. P11 noted, *"I have encountered situations where a person who was more deserving of a job or position did not get it because their physical abilities and physical superiority were lower"*. This reveals that physical appearance can affect promotion opportunities. Similarly, P9's statement below also points to unfairness in corporate policies:

*"Unfortunately, in hiring, especially for sales positions such as banquet sales, group sales, or special tour sales, ladies with a neat appearance, well-groomed hair, proper care, and makeup are preferred"*.

P9 further stressed that gender and appearance influence task distribution.

*"In the coastal region, airlines particularly favor women who are physically fit, well-groomed, and wearing makeup for charter flights from abroad. They consistently prefer female staff who meet these criteria. Men are less preferred for roles involving transportation, transport, and airport reception"*.

Male participants clearly indicate that the expectations placed on their appearance are less burdensome than those placed on women, exemplifying how organizations attribute economic value to female beauty, thus consecrating gender divisions of labor as defined within theories of erotic capital. Such practices embody the scripting of femininity as the "front stage, hospitable self", with "logistical" views being associated with masculine roles. Such divisions of roles subscribe to Butler's (1990) formulation of "gender performativity", whereby organizations legitimate or enforce expectations linked to the appearance, conduct, and presentation of employees.

## **5. Erotic Capital's Role in Corporate Justice: Perspectives of Female Participants**

Female participants generally viewed erotic capital with caution, noting it involves conscious or unconscious use of physical appearance in professional contexts. Most were unfamiliar with the term, and during the study, they associated it with sexuality and approached it carefully. P1, who had heard of the term previously, provided this definition: *"When I hear 'erotic capital', I understand it as making something attractive or valuing the high erotic appearance of the people working there"*.

This statement shows that for the female participants, their erotic capital

is largely associated with “the sexual connotations of appearance”. Thus, the term not only serves as a resource or social value for the female participants but also constitutes a space of enactment fraught with the dangers of misinterpretation. Using Butler’s (1990) theories of gender performativity, the female employees in this scenario are constantly embodying their roles based on their appearance, as explained in the performativity of gender. This performance reproduces normative expectations of femininity within the institution, which are defined by societal standards of what it means to be a woman.

Besides, female participants noted that erotic capital can undermine concepts of equal opportunity and fairness in the workplace. They provided examples of implicit policies based on appearance, where employees with certain physical features were preferred for specific roles. This was seen to lead to discrimination in hiring or task assignment.

*“In public relations and guest services, it’s common to see staff who are often tall, model-like women or well-groomed young people working at the front desk. These team members typically have neat hands, faces, teeth, and overall appearance, which can be appreciated in their roles. While looks may not be as essential for positions like housekeeping, they are usually considered important for those at the reception or in guest relations, and this is an aspect people are mindful of during hiring. Naturally, attractive and pleasant women aren’t typically assigned to tasks like washing dishes. However, it’s important to recognize that a woman who has completed excellent courses, graduated successfully from university, and improved her foreign language skills might still encounter challenges reaching high positions in tourism if she doesn’t meet certain beauty standards”.*

P1 expressed her views on this matter as follows:

*“I believe this situation causes inequality of opportunity and corporate injustice. I mean, of course, I believe that ultimately, our physical features are not something any of us can control. We are all born like this. Yes, in terms of appearance, I unfortunately think it harms justice. Even though I think it’s necessary. Maybe I’m explaining it in a way that seems contradictory. However, I think it’s necessary, so I believe it’s done. However, I don’t believe a woman is an unattractive woman. Or an unattractive man. I believe that with the right care, hygiene, and clothing, every person can definitely enhance their own attractiveness. So, if someone faces this injustice because they don’t take care of themselves, there’s nothing you can do about it. But yes, if someone isn’t hired or promoted because they are obviously unattractive, then yes, that is an injustice. Because none of us are the owners of our physical features”.*

P1's reasoning illustrates the internalization of beauty standards as appearance-based norms, despite recognizing inequality, because beauty standards are, in fact, defined as "necessary". According to Butler (1990), this complexity in appearance-based expectations within the workplace can be explained by a script that normalizes them through repetitive practices, to the point that individuals, despite their negative effects, still experience them as necessary. Similarly, Connell's (1995) theory explains that individuals in organizations often perpetuate inequality through commonly accepted forms of femininity that closely align with value-oriented appearance standards. Finally, within the realm of analysis, the female participants acknowledge that, despite its negative effects within corporations, inequality relates closely to structural appearance hierarchies, as "erotic capital" is not simply an individual resource, but requires structuring.

Female participants also noted that erotic capital can undermine equal opportunity by reinforcing appearance hierarchies and shaping job roles accordingly. This dynamic creates both visible and invisible boundaries in workplaces.

Analyzing the collected data from female participants, the dual nature of the aspect of erotic capital, as explained, emerges. It consists of two aspects: firstly, the most beneficial aspect is linked with visibility, approval, and the availability of specific roles. Secondly, the discriminatory, misunderstanding, security risk, as well as the consequences linked with "emotional labor".

Applying Butler's (1990) "performance theory", it clearly illustrates that "female participants" face constant pressure "to express a specific image through their appearance". Similarly, "performance" as per Connell's (1995) "hegemonic masculinity" thesis, illustrates that this "performance" helps in sustaining "power dynamics" within the staff.

### *5.1. Perspectives of Male Participants*

Awareness levels regarding the concept of erotic capital differ among male participants. Participant 3 clearly stated that he had never heard of the concept and could not define it, saying, "*Capital? I don't understand*". Similarly, P5 indicated that he was unfamiliar with the concept, responding, "*I haven't heard of it*". P6 emphasized that he could not establish a connection between the concept and the sector, saying, "*The concept of erotic capital... I don't think this has much to do with tourism*".

These results indicate that male participants may see the importance of erotic capital as irrelevant or unremarkable compared with their own experiences. This is consistent with Connell's (1995) idea of hegemonic masculinity, which argues that men's bodies do not undergo the same kind of aesthetic



scrutiny as females'. Men, therefore, do not regard their appearance as something that might be considered "capital". From a Butler (1990) perspective, "masculine" is "constructed" as "neutral", meaning men are less aware of their own performative obligations compared with women.

However, some participants noted the necessity of exercising caution in the utilisation of erotic capital; otherwise, there is a risk of being labelled and misunderstood. P11's statement, *"I think it's a very fine line where you can encounter misunderstandings and labeling"*, clearly shows that erotic capital carries certain risks. Male participants stated that their own physical attractiveness also provided an advantage in customer interactions. P11 shared his personal experience on the subject: *"Because my job requires me to be very much in the foreground in the service sector, I was able to use my physical superiority in many jobs"*. Similarly, P12 stated, *"I think I got the job more easily. I think I communicate with confidence (...)"*. This indicates that physical appearance may provide an advantage in professional life.

This analysis shows that men acknowledge appearance-based injustice only if it occurs towards other men or through organizational notions of favoritism, as opposed to recognizing its association with the organization of gender. In narratives of male experiences, appearance-based injustice is seen as procedural (concerning promotion, favor, and other forms of organizational benevolence) rather than existential (concerning identity, security and dignity) in narratives of female experiences.

The narratives of the male participants reveal two crucial points:

- a) The ideology of masculine supremacy makes it clear that men should reap the rewards of their erotic capital. This is considered normal. However, a lack of awareness relates to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. In this case, men retain benefits from appearance without recognizing their own demonstration of "aesthetic labor" practices.
- b) The risks, as identified within the male participants (misunderstanding, labeling), compared with those identified within the female group, appear less severe. This suggests that the methodology of "erotic capital" is not linear across genders. Thus, "erotic capital" remains a resource that is embedded within a "gender divide".

## **6. Psychological & Sociological Effects of Gender-Based Discrimination: Perspectives of Female Participants**

Most women participants noted that men and women differ in how they utilize erotic capital, with it being less important for men. Several participants highlighted that physical appearance and gender expectations can lead

to negative outcomes, such as harassment, impacting mental health. Some specifically mentioned female employees facing verbal and physical harassment due to their appearance. P15, a guest relations supervisor, shared her experience:

*“I was verbally and physically harassed by a guest at the hotel. I had gone to the smoking area, which was dark and camera-covered. He was intoxicated and followed me. He had drunk a lot of alcohol, and I thought he was asking for directions. It was a dark area, out of sight of the cameras. I told him he shouldn’t be there, but he harassed me. I reported it to the security manager, and he was removed from the hotel”.*

This account demonstrates how erotic capital can transform from an economic “advantage” into a source of personal vulnerability. The participant’s experience illustrates that women’s bodies are simultaneously commodified and policed in the tourism industry. This duality creates heightened safety risks, showing how erotic capital intersects with power, surveillance, and customer entitlement – dynamics consistent with the structural inequalities highlighted by Connell (1995).

Workplace use of erotic capital has sometimes resulted in unwelcome harassment, harming employees’ confidence and mental health. P15 noted that after harassment, she felt pressured to appear less well-groomed and hesitated to speak up:

*“We all wear uniforms and dress similarly, but our makeup standards vary. Some don’t wear makeup at all, others do. If I wear makeup and someone harasses me, does that make it okay? No. I see my colleague next to me, who doesn’t wear makeup, doing the same job without harassment. I’ve reduced my makeup and become less warm in my interactions... From a male perspective, I think this is probably more prominent for women. Men don’t have much to bring to the forefront because, ultimately, they don’t have as much as women. So yes, I think women are more inclined to use it more in terms of grooming, hair, trinkets, or new clothes”.*

It was noted that harassment can occur both among employees and from customers, which undermines professional quality of life and motivation. However, it was also noted that most businesses rely primarily on training, support mechanisms, and interventions to combat harassment. The importance of organizations proactively creating a safe working environment was emphasized.

## 6.1. Perspectives of Male Participants

Male participants also noted that gender discrimination and erotic capital have both social and psychological effects, often causing more serious negative impacts on female workers. They mentioned that while erotic capital and gender discrimination can sometimes strengthen social bonds sociologically, they may also lead to harmful mental and professional outcomes. P6 commented, *“It can be a positive situation. You get to know more people, engage in more interactions”*. He added, *“I expect it to negatively influence my professional life because this situation will carry a label, prejudice, and many people who think differently may appear during the process. That could also hinder my progress”*.

P3 shared that his experience shows female guides often face traumatic events that lead to long-term psychological damage. His statements highlight that female guides face significant security risks in their work, which leads to psychological harm. He describes the impact on employees’ mental health

*“Of course. Female guides in particular suffered greatly in this regard. They were subjected not only to tourists but also to their captains, to their gaze, so to speak. Unfortunately, such incidents occur quite often in the tourism sector, and female guides often lock their hotel rooms. We make absolutely sure they lock them, and they feel the need to wedge something under the door. Because some guests, especially male guests, sometimes unfortunately misunderstand a smile in this context. The social, psychological, and various effects are quite severe. Women start to withdraw into themselves. They begin to lose trust in the opposite sex. It makes them highly prone to depression (...) Additionally, it can lead to various problems in their personal lives. Currently, tourism workers are often seen negatively. In Turkey, there’s a perception that we engage in sexual relations with every guest, which I believe is a misconception shared worldwide. So, consider a tour guide – regardless of whether they have a partner of the same or opposite sex – their partner might wonder, ‘Are they looking at someone else? Was someone interested in them?’. Unfortunately, this suspicion can strain relationships”*.

These detailed narratives reinforce a critical analytical point: erotic capital imposes profoundly unequal psychological risks across genders. Women experience fear, hypervigilance, trauma, and relational distrust, while men mainly observe these harms from a distance. Connell’s (1995) hierarchy of masculinities explains why men face fewer direct consequences: their social position affords them bodily autonomy and protection from sexualized vulnerability. Butler’s (1990) theory further helps clarify how women’s gender performance (friendly demeanour, smiling, politeness) becomes misread as sexual availability – an interpretive distortion that men rarely face.

## 7. Corporate Policies and Business Attitudes: Perspectives of Female Participants

Female participants stated that companies' policies on physical appearance and erotic capital directly affect the employee experience, and that there are implicit expectations in some companies. Companies' formal or informal policies on physical appearance and erotic capital directly affect the employee experience. Although some businesses do not have written, explicit rules, they often have implicit and established practices. P1 expressed her thoughts on this subject as follows:

*"From my experience, I haven't come across an open policy at any hotel I've worked at. However, I can't help but feel that, even if it isn't obvious, more attractive men and women often seem to be hired and then treated with extra care as the process goes on. I just noticed these things".*

P8 explained the implicit policy at their workplace in the accommodation business as follows:

*"In both hotels I worked at, for example, even if it was implied, we were expected to wear makeup, have our hair look nice, and our clothes were already prepared by the laundry, but looking well-groomed was always desired and expected".*

P16, who works as a front desk manager at a chain hotel owned by a corporate company, expressed the company policy as follows:

*"So, what's important here, in my opinion, as I always say, is that we also had very overweight colleagues working very hard in our department. We also worked with colleagues who were over 45 or 50 years old, whom we could understand because of the fatigue that comes with age. But, of course, what's important here, as I always say, is communication skills, knowledge effectiveness, ethical behavior, compliance with our corporate rules, being results-oriented, and solution-oriented. These are all very important factors, and in my sector, one of the most important expectations the company has of my colleagues is a friendly demeanor. So, no matter how ideal the golden ratio is, no matter how ideal the body proportions are, if there is no communication skill and no cheerfulness, it is not possible for them to fit into our company at least".*

P16 offers a contrasting narrative: an organizational culture where competence and interpersonal skills outweigh aesthetic pressures. This suggests that corporate governance models differ by type of institution. However, even in this description, the requirement that employees must maintain a "friendly demeanour" indicates the presence of emotional labour expectations – showing that different forms of performativity co-exist. Connell's (1995) hierarchy is visible here as well: aesthetic demands may be softened,

but gendered expectations (cheerfulness, friendliness) remain disproportionately placed on women.

Conversely, institutionalized companies promote employee grooming without imposing strict appearance standards, fostering an egalitarian work environment. Participants emphasized that policies and training are vital for safeguarding employees' rights and reducing adverse experiences. They also emphasized the importance of ongoing awareness efforts and prompt intervention in cases of harassment. Although most participants reported not having received training on this topic at their workplaces, those employed at corporate companies were generally seen to have undergone such training.

### *7.1. Perspectives of Male Participants*

Male participants also noted that corporate policies vary in their stance on physical appearance and gender, with some companies adopting an egalitarian approach and others setting appearance-focused expectations. Participants mentioned that some companies aim for gender equality in hiring, while others emphasize appearance and impose expectations on female employees. Participant 9, "*Not in my company*" adding, "*But they definitely did...*" suggesting that the situation differs across the industry. Similarly, Participant 3 said, "*We don't have that in our company, but there are many examples in the industry*". P13 replied to whether erotic capital influences corporate justice by saying, "*Of course it does*".

P6 mentioned that, "Generally, there are more male employees, and this trend continues in management with more male managers. Naturally, this results in higher expectations from the male side. Those who meet, fail to meet, or reject these expectations are treated accordingly" highlighting male-dominated pressures at the managerial level. This evidences Connell's (1995) hegemonic masculinity directly: male-dominated leadership structures shape aesthetic and behavioural expectations, reinforcing unequal power relations. Women carry the burden of conforming to appearance norms, while men enforce those norms from positions of authority.

In summary, male participants reported that corporate policies within the tourism sector varied in their consideration of physical appearance and gender. Some organizations exhibited an egalitarian approach, whereas others enforced appearance-related expectations on female employees. Participant statements reveal that male dominance in management and explicit regulations concerning physical appearance are implemented in certain businesses in a manner that directly instrumentalizes erotic capital. This situation sig-

nificantly affects both the perception of justice and the experiences of employees.

## 8. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study support the notion that physical appearance and erotic capital are significant determinants of labor dynamics in the tourism sector, influencing recruitment, task allocation, and customer interactions. Overall, this research enhances the literature on erotic capital by providing a comparative gender perspective. While women face more intense pressures and risks, men are also affected by appearance-based expectations. Consequently, erotic capital in tourism should be viewed as both gendered and flexible, influencing not only personal experiences but also organizational practices and industry standards. However, the notion of “gender flexibility” should not be interpreted as a generalizable conclusion beyond the data; rather, the interviews show that while both genders engage with appearance-based expectations, they do so in different, context-specific ways shaped by organizational norms and role requirements.

This research demonstrates that erotic capital operates as a complex and ambivalent form of capital in the tourism sector. While physical appearance influences recruitment, promotion, and customer interactions, its effects differ according to gender. Women are more frequently subjected to grooming expectations and objectification, while men derive certain advantages but nonetheless face appearance-based scrutiny. These findings both affirm and complicate theoretical accounts of gender performativity (Butler, 1990) and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995), illustrating how organizational and cultural norms co-construct the embodied experiences of employees. Importantly, the data indicate that these theoretical constructs manifest through specific organizational mechanisms – such as role assignment procedures, managerial oversight, and informal behavioural expectations – which mediate how gendered performances are enacted and interpreted in everyday practice.

Interview data indicate that physical appearance and erotic capital are initially important in the tourism industry; however, in the long run, employees are evaluated based on their communication skills, knowledge, and professionalism. Female employees face higher expectations and more options regarding grooming and appearance, whereas male employees tend to maintain a more “moderate” look. This sometimes results in negative consequences, such as harassment, which can harm employees psychologically and reduce motivation. Corporate policies and training are essential in addressing these

issues, protecting employees' rights, and ensuring a fair working environment. Ultimately, in guest relations, friendliness and sincerity are more critical than physical attractiveness.

By foregrounding the voices of both male and female employees, this study contributes to the evolving debate on erotic capital, moving beyond female-centered analyses to highlight the complex gender dynamics of this concept. Rather than offering moral or normative judgments, the analysis underscores empirical patterns concerning how employees perceive and navigate appearance-based expectations within organizational constraints.

### *8.1. Contribution to the Literature*

This study advances the literature on erotic capital by providing a comparative gendered analysis in the context of the tourism sector. Prior research has predominantly emphasized women's experiences of commodification and aesthetic labor (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007; Basnyat *et al.*, 2021). The findings here confirm that women are disproportionately subjected to appearance-related pressures, reinforcing gendered occupational hierarchies. At the same time, this study extends existing work by demonstrating that men are not exempt from aesthetic expectations. Male participants reported that grooming, posture, and height continue to influence hiring and role allocation, despite a growing emphasis on professional competence. This insight complicates earlier accounts that depict erotic capital as a predominantly female domain (Hakim, 2010; Li, Zhang *et al.*, 2019) and aligns with more recent evidence of male vulnerability to shifting beauty ideals (Fowler *et al.*, 2016; Kahya, 2024; Kukkonen *et al.*, 2024).

Moreover, the study highlights the ambivalence of erotic capital: it functions simultaneously as an asset and a liability. While attractiveness may enhance customer engagement and short-term opportunities, it also exposes employees to risks such as harassment, stereotyping, and unequal treatment. This duality, observed in participants' narratives, corroborates Abubakar *et al.* (2019) and Temel (2023), who emphasize the "dark side" of erotic capital in service industries. By capturing both male and female perspectives, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how erotic capital is embedded in organizational practices and customer interactions.

The data also illustrate that these outcomes cannot be understood solely at the individual level; they emerge from patterned organizational dynamics-including managerial discretion, performance criteria, and customer-service expectations-that systematically shape how erotic capital is recognized and valued.

Female participants consistently emphasized that physical attractiveness

is evaluated more rigorously for women than for men. This result accords with prior scholarship on aesthetic labor and gendered workplace expectations (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007; Bilir, 2018; Oluyadi and Dai, 2023). In line with Basnyat *et al.* (2021), the present study demonstrates that women in the hospitality industry are disproportionately commodified through grooming, attire, and bodily presentation requirements, thereby reinforcing conventional gender roles.

Simultaneously, the data enrich the literature by showing that male employees also face aesthetic pressures, though in different ways. Participants noted that professional skill has become a more significant factor in recent hiring decisions; however, appearance-especially height, posture, and grooming-still plays a key role in customer-facing positions. This aligns with recent studies indicating that physical attractiveness can improve men's professional prospects in certain situations (Kahya, 2024; Kukkonen *et al.*, 2024), while also challenging earlier research suggesting that women are the primary beneficiaries of beauty advantages (Li *et al.*, 2019).

The dual nature of erotic capital-as both opportunity and liability-was also evident in the participants' accounts. Female employees described experiences of harassment and discrimination linked to appearance, confirming earlier discussions of the "dark side" of erotic capital (Abubakar *et al.*, 2019; Temel, 2023). Reports of women deliberately reducing grooming to avoid unwanted attention mirror Rudman and Fetterolf's (2014) concerns about the psychological costs of sexual objectification. Male participants similarly acknowledged the potential benefits of attractiveness in customer engagement, while also highlighting risks of labeling and stereotyping, which correspond with Fowler *et al.*'s (2016) observations on male vulnerability to shifting aesthetic ideals.

Organizational policies played a key role in influencing these dynamics. Some participants mentioned explicit or implicit expectations to meet certain aesthetic standards, while others pointed out more egalitarian approaches within corporate environments. This tension highlights the difference in the literature between firms that strategically utilize erotic capital to enhance competitiveness (Williams and Connell, 2010; Bozkurt and Kıran, 2022) and those that prioritize competence and training over physical appearance (Li *et al.*, 2021). These findings underscore that erotic capital is not merely an interpersonal dynamic but a structural and organizational mechanism reproduced through HR policies, managerial norms, codes of conduct, and customer-service procedures. The interviews reveal how performance evaluation systems, tacit expectations, and managerial interventions can institutionalize appearance-based inequalities.

Ultimately, the findings reveal that physical attractiveness can positively



impact first impressions in customer interactions; however, long-term satisfaction and loyalty are more strongly influenced by professionalism, sincerity, and competence. This aligns with Luoh and Tsaur (2009), Jin and Merkebu (2015), and Li *et al.* (2021), who also discovered that although attractiveness may enhance perceived service quality, it cannot replace expertise or genuine emotional labor.

## 9. Practical Implications

The findings carry significant implications for the tourism industry. First, they suggest that reliance on physical appearance in recruitment and promotion undermines principles of equality and organizational justice. Companies that privilege attractiveness risk perpetuating gender discrimination and reinforcing patriarchal norms, as illustrated by participants' accounts of hiring biases and unequal expectations. Rather than approaching the question from a moral standpoint, this analysis focuses on its organizational implications: appearance-based discrimination cloud the transparency of human resource practices, creating organizational barriers within which individuals with greater appearance-based attributes do not advance based on their organizational merits.

Second, the study underscores the importance of corporate policies and training. Where organizations adopt transparent, competency-based criteria and provide training on harassment prevention, employees report a greater perception of fairness and safety. This reflects best practices identified in earlier research (Abubakar *et al.*, 2019; Li *et al.*, 2021). Finally, this information suggests that, compared with informal organizational practices, the most effective method for remedying appearance-based discrimination is through the use of organizational policies, as this helps limit subjective management practices and promotes greater employee rights.

Additionally, the findings suggest that physical attractiveness influences guest perceptions primarily at the initial stage of interactions. Long-term guest satisfaction and loyalty are more strongly influenced by friendliness, sincerity, and professionalism, as evidenced by Luoh and Tsaur (2009), Jin and Merkebu (2015), and Li *et al.* (2021). Tourism organizations should therefore invest in skill development, emotional labor training, and inclusive workplace practices rather than overemphasizing aesthetic labor.

Therefore, the implications are twofold. First, tourism organizations must critically reassess policies that privilege appearance over competence, as such practices perpetuate structural inequality and undermine organizational justice. Second, organizations should strengthen anti-harassment protocols,

revise performance evaluation standards to reduce appearance bias, and adopt governance mechanisms that integrate employee well-being into corporate responsibility agendas.

## **10. Future Research Recommendations**

Future studies should explore several avenues. First, broader quantitative research could assess the prevalence of appearance-based discrimination and its effects across different sectors of the tourism and hospitality industries, enabling more generalizable conclusions. The research should also examine cultural and contextual differences in how erotic capital is used and whether industry practices could shift toward greater inclusivity and fairness. Cross-cultural studies would clarify how local customs and global industry standards influence the significance of erotic capital. Long-term research might evaluate if attractiveness becomes less influential over time in careers, as some respondents noted, and how skill development affects this trend. Finally, additional research into the experiences of male employees would deepen the existing literature, especially in settings where changing standards of masculinity modify expectations related to appearance and charisma. Further explorations, which seek to assess the organizational or structural impacts of organizational human resource practices, governance, and appearance-based discrimination, would allow further studies on this topic to merge the organizational experiences with the macro-level structural dynamics. Thus, this further research would allow for cross-cultural studies, comparative studies, or surveys that seek to confirm the organizational elements that emerge within this topic.

### *10.1. Limitations of the Study*

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. Interviewer bias may be a concern in the study, as the researcher's presence, tone, or words may inadvertently impact participants' answers. Although a semi-structured interview was used, participants may respond with their own considerations of interview expectations. Also, considerations of organizational level as a point of bias must be considered. Participants with less organizational seniority may be inhibited in speaking about management, appearance expectations, or harassment issues. Participants in more senior organizational roles may downplay or reinterpret experiences of discrimination to conform to desirable social conduct.

Second, there is a concern about the cultural specificity of the Turkish tourism industry. Social norms regarding issues such as gender, appearance, and workplace interactions may be determined within a sociocultural framework that differs completely from that of other cultures. As mentioned, cultural specificity may limit the applicability of this finding to other regions.

Although this was suitable for phenomenological research, the relatively low number of participants further narrowed down the scope of the conclusions. A greater pool of participants, particularly from different aspects of tourism, would have facilitated better saturation of themes and comparisons.

Moreover, cultural and organizational contexts may influence the salience of erotic capital; thus, the findings may not be directly transferable to other national or industry settings. Future research should therefore incorporate cross-cultural comparisons, mixed-methods designs, or quantitative surveys to test the consistency of the themes identified here. Such approaches would also make it possible to examine structural factors -such as national labour laws, organizational governance systems, and HR policies – more systematically.

## References

- Abubakar A.M., Anasori E., Lasisi T.T. (2019). Physical attractiveness and managerial favoritism in the hotel industry: the light and dark side of erotic capital. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 38: 16-26. DOI: 10.1016/j.jhtm.2018.11.005
- Anýžová P., Matějů P. (2018). Beauty still matters: the role of attractiveness in labour market outcomes. *International Sociology*, 33(3), 269-291. DOI: 10.1177/0268580918760431
- Basnyat S., Teng Che I., Hou Ip K. (2021). Gender roles and the commodification of beauty and physical attractiveness in restaurants: perspectives of female servers. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 21(4): 447-460. DOI: 10.1177/14673584211000086
- BBC (2025). *London receptionist 'sent home for not wearing heels'* (2016, May 11). Retrieved February 17, 2025, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-36264229>
- Bilir Z.E. (2018). Duyguların ve bedenlerin ticarileşmesi: Ankara'daki alışveriş merkezlerinde çalışan kadın satış görevlileri. *Emek Araştırma Dergisi*, 3(1): 19-47.
- Bozkurt Ö.Ç., Kıran F. (2022). Tr 61 bölgesindeki iş ilanlarında kadın istihdamı | women employment in job advertisements in Tr 61 region. *Akdeniz Kadın Çalışmaları ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet Dergisi*, 5(2): 345-372. DOI: 10.33708/ktc.1136293

- Bourdieu P. (1986). *The Forms of Capital*. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (pp. 241-258). New York: Greenwood.
- Butler J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.
- Can A., Can D., Yavaş Tez Ö., Yavaş V. (2023). Estetik emek ve işten ayrılma niyetinde cinsiyetin düzenleyici rolü: kabin memurları üzerine bir uygulama. *Türkiye Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 27(1): 133-150.
- Connell R.W. (1995). *Masculinities*. University of California Press.
- El País (2025). Una Clínica Gaditana reduce el sueldo a las enfermeras que no llevan falda corta. *El País*. Retrieved February 17, 2025, from [https://elpais.com/sociedad/2008/03/25/actualidad/1206399607\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/sociedad/2008/03/25/actualidad/1206399607_850215.html)
- Fang S., Zhang C., Li Y. (2020). Physical attractiveness of service employees and customer engagement in the tourism industry. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 80, 102756. DOI: 10.1016/j.annals.2019.102756
- Farrer J. (2010). A foreign adventurer's paradise? Interracial sexuality and alien sexual capital in reform era Shanghai. *Sexualities*, 13(1): 69-95. DOI: 10.1177/1363460709352726
- Fowler J.G., Chu R., Gentry J.W., Chaudhuri H. R. (2016). Vulnerability or masculinity: examining "aesthetic labor" from male fashion models' perspective. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 7(4): 252-265. DOI: 10.1080/20932685.2016.1204239
- Gordillo Z.J.E., Fernández O.C.J., Cárdenas J.R.P., Roldán A.D.F. (2019). Good-looking: physical attractiveness and employment discrimination in latin america, the ecuadorian case. *Journal of Smart Economic Growth*, 4(1): 47-64.
- Green A.I. (2008). The social organisation of desire: The sexual fields approach. *Sociological Theory*, 26: 25–50. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9558.2008.00317.x
- Green A.I. (2013). 'Erotic capital' and the power of desirability: Why 'honey money' is a bad collective strategy for remedying gender inequality. *Sexualities*, 16(1-2): 137-158. DOI: 10.1177/136346071247110
- Guba E.G. (1981). Criteria for assessing the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiries. *Educational Communication and Technology Journal*, 29(2): 75-91. DOI: 10.1007/BF02766777
- Hakim C. (2010). *Erotic capital: The power of attraction in the boardroom and the bedroom*. Basic Books.
- Hamermesh D.S., Biddle J.E. (1994). Beauty and the labor market. *American Economic Review*, 84(5): 1174-1194. DOI: 10.3386/w4518
- Hochschild A.R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. University of California Press.
- Jin N.P., Merkebu J. (2015). The role of employee attractiveness and positive emotion in upscale restaurants. *Anatolia*, 26(2): 284-297. DOI: 10.1080/13032917.2014.948895
- Kahya Y. (2024). Bedensel dış görünümün çalışma hayatı üzerindeki etkisi. *Social Sciences Studies Journal (sssjournal)*, 7(87): 3720-3731. DOI: 10.26449/sss. 3368
- Konjer M., Mutz M., Meier H.E. (2019). Talent alone does not suffice: erotic capital,

- media visibility, and global popularity among professional male and female tennis players. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 28(1): 3-17. DOI: 10.1080/09589236.2017.1365696
- Kukkonen I., Pajunen T., Sarpila O., Åberg E. (2024). Is beauty-based inequality gendered? a systematic review of gender differences in socioeconomic outcomes of physical attractiveness in labor markets. *European Societies*, 26(1): 117–148. DOI: 10.1080/14616696.2023.2210202
- Li Y., Zhang C., Laroche M. (2019). Is beauty a premium? a study of the physical attractiveness effect in service encounters. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 50: 215-225. DOI: 10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.04.016
- Li Y., Liu B., Chen P., Huan T.C. (2021). Tourism service providers' physical attractiveness and customers' service quality evaluation: Is warmth or competence more important? *Tourism Review*, 76(6): 1260-1278. DOI: 10.1108/TR-05-2020-0241
- Li Y., Xie L., Gao T., Guan X. (2019). Does being beautiful always help? contingency effects of physical attractiveness of the service providers on customer response. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 33(3): 356-368. DOI: 10.1108/TR-05-2020-0241
- Li Y., Zhang C., Fang S. (2022). Can beauty save service failures? the role of recovery employees' physical attractiveness in the tourism industry. *Journal of Business Research*, 141: 100-110. DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.11.051
- Luoh H.-F., Tsaur S.-H. (2009). Physical attractiveness stereotypes and service quality in customer-server encounters. *The Service Industries Journal*, 29(8): 1093-1104. DOI: 10.1080/02642060902764517
- Lucas A.V. (2019). Can erotic capital subvert the masculine economy? Aesthetic work and the post-feminist approach to economics. *Recerca Revista De Pensament I Anàlisi*, 24(2): 87-108. DOI: 10.6035/Recerca.2019.24.2.5
- Martin J., George M. (2006). Theories of sexual stratification: toward an analytics of the sexual field and a theory of sexual capital. *Sociological Theory*, 24(2): 107-132. DOI:10.1111/j.0735-2751.2006.00284.x
- Mathies C., Burford M. (2011). Customer service understanding: Gender differences of frontline employees. *Managing Service Quality*, 21(6): 636–648. DOI: 10.1108/09604521111185628
- Montemurro B., Hughes E. (2024). Erotic capital and erotic dividends. *Sexualities*, 28(3): 1139-1153. DOI: 10.1177/13634607241239111
- New York Times (2013). Iowa: Court reaffirms dentist's firing of woman he found too attractive. *The New York Times*, 2013, July 12.
- Nickson D., Warhurst C., Dutton E. (2005). The importance of attitude and appearance in the service encounter in retail and hospitality. *Managing Service Quality*, 15(2): 195-208. DOI: 10.1108/09604520510585370
- Oluyadi L.O., Dai W. (2023). Aesthetic labour and diversity on the shopfloor: the experiences of women workers in fashion retail. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, 42(6): 709-722. DOI: 10.1108/EDI-10-2021-0257
- Parrett M. (2015). Beauty and the feast: Examining the effect of beauty on earnings

- using restaurant tipping data. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 49: 34-46. DOI: 10.1016/j.joe.2015.04.002
- Requena F. (2017). Erotic capital and subjective well-being. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 50: 13-18. DOI: 10.1016/j.rssm.2017.04.001
- Rudman L.A., Fetterolf J.C. (2014). Gender and sexual economics: Do women view sex as a female commodity? *Psychological Science*, 25(7): 1438-1447. DOI: 10.1177/0956797614533123
- Seçkin G. (2014). Gençlik ve güzellik sermayesinin ticari ve iletişimsel değeri. *Akdeniz İletişim Dergisi*, 9(21): 72-80. DOI: 10.31123/akil.442955
- Stevens A., Connelly CE. (2024). Not a good fit? The roles of aesthetic labour, gender, race, Indigeneity, and citizenship in food service employment. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 35(3): 664-684. DOI: 10.1017/elr.2024.31
- Temel H.Y. (2023). Commodification and exploitation of aesthetic labor. *Journal of Management and Economics Research*, 21(4): 275-295. DOI: 10.11611/yead.1370467
- Toksoy G., Ayma D., Akoğul P., Eyigün R.Y. (2023). Farkı yüzünde taşımak: İş yaşamı, sınırlar ve engeller. *ViraVerita E-Dergi*, 17: 170-195. DOI: 10.47124/viraverita.1243732
- Trysnes I. (2019). The trailer as erotic capital: gendered performances – research and participant roles during festival fieldwork. *Societies*, 9(83): 1-12. DOI: 10.3390/soc9040083
- Tsai C.Y., Wang M.T., Tseng H.T. (2015). The impact of tour guides' physical attractiveness, sense of humour, and seniority on guide attention and efficiency. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 33(6): 824-836. DOI: 10.1080/10548408.2015.1068264
- Warhurst C., Nickson D. (2007). Employee experience of aesthetic labour in retail and hospitality. *Work, Employment and Society*, 21(1): 103-120. DOI: 10.1177/0950017007073622
- Williams C.L., Connell C. (2010). Looking good and sounding right: aesthetic labor and social inequality in the retail industry. *Work and Occupations*, 37(3): 349-377. DOI: 10.1177/0730888410373744
- Wojtaszczyk K., Syper-Jedrzejak M. (2023). Erotic capital and its role in the assessment of candidates and employees: scale development and validation. *Decision*, 49(4): 395-419. DOI: 10.1007/s40622-023-00333-4
- Wolcott H.F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Sage.
- Wu L., King C., Lu L. Guchait P. (2020). Hospitality aesthetic labour management: Consumers' and employees' perspectives. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 87: 102373. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijhm.2019.102373
- Yıldırım A., Şimşek H. (2013). *Sosyal bilimlerde nitel araştırma yöntemleri*. Seçkin Yayıncılık.