

Discover out even more concerning women-only host bars in Gangnam, Korea

South Korea's quick economic growth has meant some stunning changes within its conventional social structure, consisting of the increase of supposed host bars, where well-off females pay the equivalent of thousands of bucks for male firm.

In the dim light of an underground space, a lots perfectly groomed boys kneel in rows, calling out their names.

Muscle, with shiny boy-band hairdos, they stuff side by side right into the narrow area, waiting on us to make our selection. Outdoors in the corridor, more of their colleagues are getting here for another night at work. It is 2am, as well as we are their initial clients.

Covert under the sidewalks of Seoul's ritziest postcode, Gangnam, the men at Bar 123 become part of an expanding sector, which expanded out of the lengthy practices of Japanese geisha and also Korea's kisaeng residences however with one important distinction - the consumers here are all females.

Referred to as "host bars", these all-night drinking spaces use female customers the chance to choose and also pay for male companions, often at an expense of countless extra pounds an evening.

One of the females I satisfy at Bar 123 is Minkyung, a waitressing supervisor for a luxury hotel. As soon as or two times a month, she says she comes to host bars.

Minkyung is very quite and her garments are spotless. She does not look like a person who would certainly need to pay for male firm. But the attraction of host bars can be refined. Right here, she states, she has more focus from her male buddies, even more option and also, crucially, even more control.

PROMOTION

" In normal bars the guys that consume alcohol with me have just one objective - to have a casual sex. But I do not desire that, so that's why I come right here, I want to have a good time," she says.

Hosts are worked with by bars like this one to give companionship as well as amusement. Formally that means pouring beverages for their customers, dancing and also chatting with them, and vocal singing karaoke.

Host bar in Seoul

Sex is not formally on offer in the majority of host bars. That would be illegal yet even Minkyong appears happy to flirt and touch with her host, and also the men here approximate that around half the customers want to pay for sex, either on or off the facilities.

James has been operating at Bar 123 for a number of years. In Korean culture, he claims, there is a great deal of satisfaction as well as discussing a rate for sex is never done explicitly. Instead, he informs me, it is all down to the host's own assessment.

" The individuals below are pros - we understand what we're doing," he claims.

" After chatting to a lady for a hr we primarily know just how much cash she makes and what she provides for a living. We've currently analysed her personality and what she's willing to provide."



James and also other hosts claim their clients consist of some of South Korea's elite, as well as that the cash and also benefits available boggle the mind. One customer James satisfied, throughout his very first week in the task, asked him to authorize himself over to her for 2 years.

" She said 'let's make a contract. I've got this notepad and I've numbered it 1-5. Whatever you create down alongside those numbers, I'll get you.'".

James states at the time he took it as a joke however considering that figured out the same female spent 60,000 (\$ 97,000) on another host.

" If it took place now, I would certainly do it - I 'd be assuming straight."

Ironically possibly, host bars outgrew one of Korea's most established and also, some claim, misogynist service practices - the area beauty parlor. These are private alcohol consumption spaces where groups of men select, and are offered by, eye-catching female people hosting.

It was the people hosting' demand to allow off steam after work, says veteran host Kim Dong-hee, that developed the first demand for host bars, with all-male personnel.

These girls are forced to do things they don't want to do for cash.

" I think a lot of them are in pain, and also a lot feel lonesome. Basically, they wish to get our time as well as our bodies."

People hosting still compose a huge percentage of the consumers at host bars right here, yet at Bar 123, for instance, as much as 40% of the clients on a given evening are now from other profession.

The factors for that expanding allure are connected up in South Korea's rapid financial surge. Within 50 years, the country moved from post-war destruction to OECD participant.

However, according to Jasper Kim, head of the Asia-Pacific Global Research Group in Seoul, something crucial was lost along the road.

" I think that with all this fast growth comes fast modification, as well as Koreans simply do not understand exactly how to manage it. Progressively, capitalism is surpassing fundamental social norms that you would expect a number of years ago."

Jasper Kim says South Korea's infamously long functioning hrs have left many Korean women feeling lonely, while the nation's technical breakthrough has actually left many individuals feeling separated.

" The human component of Korean society that existed previously merely does not exist today. Individuals are concentrated on technology, people are focused on their jobs, they aren't focused on human relations any longer.

" In several means, Korean society today sort of reminds me of 1960s culture in the United States, where it's on the verge of some type of social transformation."

The grandfather of Seoul's host bar scene, Kim Dong-hee, concurs that several of the women that involve host bars are not paying for sex however, for friendship, which is why he opened a new chain of freshly-marketed electrical outlets focused on the mainstream market - called Red Model Bars.

Red Model Bar hosts.

Picture subtitle,.

Hosts at Red Model Bars can not touch customers.

" Men want to have visual enjoyment and also want to feel things, they're tactile. Women like to chat and to listen. Which's why I believed of opening up a bar like this - a type of dialogue bar."

Red Model Bars are different to conventional host bars in one key regard - there is a no-

touching rule. Hosts rest on one side of the table, clients on the other, and also no physical call is permitted, and also absolutely no sex.

Perhaps therefore there is an absence of furtiveness among the individuals that function or drink below - the lights are reduced, the design mainly dark red and the room is separated right into discreet cubicles, yet it is an open-plan area and also consumers and also hosts are divided in each cubicle by a big table.

This new service design depends completely on females paying the matching of hundreds or perhaps thousands of bucks to talk with good-looking boys over a drink. Still, it appears to be working - three brand-new branches result from open this year.

Sitting at a table at one end of the bar was one of their normal customers, a flower shop called Kim Nayu. She informs me she comes below each day to satisfy her favorite host as well as go over issues she is contending work.

The price for this slice of male interest is \$487-650 (300-400) a day.

" Talking to close friends would certainly be less expensive" she admits, "but they do not pay attention as much. They're active, as well as quickly to speak about themselves. Below, individuals will certainly take notice of me and they'll pay attention to me."

" I spend a whole lot of cash but it deserves it for what I obtain emotionally. People pay to head to see a psycho therapist or psychiatrist, so it's similar yet less stressful."

Nayu's favourite host Sung-il says it can be difficult to maintain his individual and also expert life different.

" Honestly I 'd be existing if I claim I have not been lured to take points even more with some clients, since we're human, we're guys, but there are guidelines."

One of his clients chatted a whole lot to her hubby regarding him as well as when the 3 of them satisfied, Sung-il as well as the spouse became friends.

" No one hides - the workers don't hide that they function below, as well as clients can be open also."

This visibility is positioning a new type of difficulty to South Korean society, different from the in some cases sleazy abyss of standard host bars and their hinterland of male prostitution.

By offering females a "reputable" method to challenge conventional gender duties and flex their financial power, these new bars ask inquiries of Korean society that are coming to be harder to disregard.

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