

WOMEN'S ROLE IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: A STUDY THROUGH ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

Your work fills a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe in and set out to achieve the very best in what that maybe be no matter what is your gender."

-Emma Lake

Hospitality industry has a major significant role in the world's largest economic activities today. Not overstating the fact that hospitality industry which has been a male-dominated industry over years is now in a phase of revolution and gaining transaction as the "sophisticated industry" for women populated. By the very nature and diverse profile of the job, women are taking up active roles across most of the verticals and the title itself states that hospitality comes naturally to the fairer sex. Over the past decade be it the restaurant, serene cruise liners or top-notch luxury hotels, women have been joining the various sections of the industry with increased vigor. The contribution of women in the hospitality world has achieved a remarkable increment in recent years, and in the industry their major representation in top management positions has made their status more prominent in professional domain. The industry has now emerged as one of the most successful sectors which is supported and managed by a female-centric workforce. In the current scenario new properties are landing up where it is becoming easier for women to get into diversified roles, as the industry also has become keenly aware of women's abilities to lead and there are examples for the female population which makes up more than 50% of the workforce. The Hospitality industry working on rising the number and profile of women by lifting and strengthening their acceptance in Hospitality business. Analyzing the positive status and frame, women are still in the industry probe to challenges that prevent them from advancing within their organizations and reaching their potential at the fullest. This paper attempts to study the invisible barriers as a challenge in the career advancement for women in the hospitality industry. The paper also brings to light the underlying factors of industry inclination in making Hospitality a female dominated business. The methodology employed is the qualitative technique and SWOT analysis.

Keywords: *Hospitality Industry, Female Centric Workforce, SWOT Analysis, Qualitative Techniques.*

Introduction

Hospitality industry has become the largest employer of women in the current date. It is undeniable that women have excelled in Hospitality sector not only in India, but all over the world. Hospitality business in India has traditionally hired women in various positions. As it's a core service sector, women are considered as the biggest asset in this people oriented industry Looking at the current status an overwhelming majority of workers in the industry are women, various subjective cases throws the light on the fact that industries are also more inclined to fill a gender gap. Hotel companies value their female manpower and provide competitive starting, salaries, regular incentives, recognition, and many other lucrative benefits. The X factors of patience, tolerance sophistication and humanity also delivers an extra edge to female over male counterpart in the hotel industry and it provides self pride in rooting out the grey fact that it's no longer a male dominated industry. Industries are attracting more women into extensive roles, as the existing role demands, planning commitment, and intense time .As hospitality is an extremely intense, time and energy consuming, fast-paced industry, this is hard for both sexes but

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particularly for women as they are pushed to face with the decision of having to sacrifice time with family. But the fact states, hospitality industry has changed in past few years and today it is quite helpful for the confident female achievers. With the emergence of major international chains, the working standards, security and job benefits which are at par with any other industry, companies are now enforced to believe in gender equality and constantly focusing on developing conducive work environment for female associates. On the contrary women folk also take their job ladders very positively and are consistently claiming their for well positions. Thus the purpose of the study is to understand the underlying factors of industry inclination in making hospitality a female dominated business by highlighting the progressive role of women in the hospitality domain as well as to address the invisible barriers as a challenge in the career advancement.

Women in the Hospitality Industry: Battling with their Gender Roles

With women taking up active roles across most of the verticals in varied industries, hospitality industry was not left just to remain male dominated. Women in the workforce have become beacon of change due to their desire and capabilities to break the world. What was once considered the norm with women leaving the work force to raise their families, today they are growing into leadership roles. Over the past decade be it the serene cruise liners or top notch luxury hotels, women have been joining the ranks of the industry with great vigour. The hospitality industry deemed to be one of the largest employer of women, could be witnessed by referring to a report published by the Times of India (Feb 23, 2013). In South India and West Bengal, 55-60% of the employees in hotels are women while in Maharashtra, Punjab and Delhi the figure is 40-50%. Underscoring the fact that hospitality industry which has been a male-dominated industry over the past several years. It is now steadily coming up as "go-to-industry". The current proportion of women at IHCL would be at 16%, as they are constantly working towards bolstering their proportion of women and enhancing their gender parity across through various in-house initiatives that are being undertaken. (Dr. P V Murthy. Global head Human resources, IHCL)

2017 report by Broad college of Business alumna Peggy Berg, director of the Castell project published statistics tracking about how women to be encouraged for involvement and the way they are progressing in the hospitality industry. The study done by Castell reported 84% of men and women and 70% of women agreed that 'Women entering hospitality companies today will have more opportunities for upward movement into top executive positions than have past generations.' The case studied "The Fern Hotels and Resorts involve managers in critical decisions, various engagement activities and women centric forums and too ensures giving a comfortable space and environment.

Listing the areas for women taking care of at the Cygnett brand, the study revealed Organization putting the best foot forward in maintaining flexible working environment, designing training and mentorship Programmes, Standardizing the recruitment and promotional policies, working more on equal gender pay, awards for leading women, and setting up sexual harassment committees at all units of Cygnett. Organization also focusing on employee engagement activities which help in creating a healthy work environment.

The study of IHCL, properties revealed the understanding of the rising concerns of women with regard to their safety, flexibility in working hours and pleasant work environment, in reciprocation to these causes, the management at hotels are taking stern in-house initiatives which involves car drops after working hours and providing flexible timings, and benefits. To retain women workforce in the Organization, flexible timings and work from home options are also offered at the corporate offices to ensure a healthy work life balance for them.

Despite of these facts women in the Hospitality Industry have been constantly battling with roadblocks in their hospitality careers. Over the last two decades, women's significant progress in educational achievements has not translated into a comparable improvement in their position at work. In many regions round the globe, in comparison to men, women are more likely to become and remain unemployed, have fewer chances to participate in the labour force and when they do often have to accept lower quality jobs. Progress in surmounting these obstacles has been slow and is limited to a few regions across the world.

As per International Labour Organization's (ILO) 'Women at work - Trends 2016' Report, in the last year 25.8% of women were employed than 76.4% men in India. The figure stated at low-skilled jobs, comprised 29.7% of women whereas 25.6% men. On the other hand, high-skilled jobs included 12% women while 15.9% men. Report outlined in South Asia 24.4% males are more likely to be in a high-skilled job than 23.5% females.

In the academic year 2015-16, of the total 1,050 seats in hotel management and catering technology institutions in Chennai only 78 were filled. Of these, only 4 were taken by females. As a result, not enough chairs occupied by women in the board rooms of the hospitality brands, commanding the top management positions. Though 60-70% of workers in the hotels sector are women, yet a handful occupy managerial posts as compared to men. While gender inequality in many arenas has been on the agenda of social research and activism for decades, the gender inequality in organizational leadership has been sadly overlooked and hospitality industry is no exception here. Taher & Dodo (2011) found that women rarely occupy the work that requires management power and leadership experience. According to HCT (2013) and megbliih (2006) the hospitality industry has overall low representation of women in the work force where currently there are 14.6% women employed in the hospitality industry. Dickerson and Taylor (2000) states that 40% of women because of gender related characteristics denied from the promotional raise.

Gregg and Johnson (1990) stated women employees in hospitality had to perform much harder at workplace and do a better job than their male counter parts in order to get promoted at the workplace.

Mqabala (2000) suggested that there are insufficient promotion opportunities and a non-clear functional description of job which results to many issues that women face today including that they are not treated equally in the workplace and there are discrimination of wage, reported that unfair workplace treatment and discrimination and other challenges such as biased thinking and stereotyping, safety and security issues, glass ceiling problems

Where Ibrahim (2015) noted that discrimination between males and females in promotion in tourism and hotels receive higher wages than women by 20%. Thus wage discrimination is one of a major cause of low female participation in tourism and hotel sector.

However, despite of increase in the number of women employed in the Hospitality industry over the past decade, they still constitute only 14.6 % of the work force; this clearly shows that the Hospitality industry continues to be male culture in the work.

Women shy-away a job in the hospitality industry because of the long inflexible working hours and negligible relaxation on maternity leaves, etc. In addition to women are quite vulnerable to competition from their male colleagues due to challenging obstacles like motherhood, family, stereotyping. It becomes more challenging owing to demands of long working hours and high levels of flexibility which discourage women from taking up jobs in the industry.

Peshave and Gupta (2017) women facing regarding long working hours and irregular working hours. While Madsen (2010) and Ng & Pine (2003) indicated that the challenges which women are confronting is related to workplace culture which includes employer bias, discrimination, stereotyped mindset.

Women face more prejudices than their male counterparts. One of the most common prejudices in the industry is the inability of women to cope up with pressure of the hospitality business. To a large extent there is also lack of women representation across top profiles as more women are majorly hired for visual profiles such as front-office, housekeeping and operations. The industry emphasis has been more on physical appearance than intelligence in case of women, which is changing at a gradual pace today.

Woods and Cavanaugh(1994) found that more than 80% of men and women perceive gender discrimination and sexual harassment as constant challenge.

As per a study commissioned by Diageo couple of years ago, women accounted for almost 70% of the workforce in tourism and hospitality sector in the world. Despite that supremacy, the women in the industry are underpaid, under-utilised and under-represented in the industry. They hold less than 40% of all managerial and supervisory positions. Women hold only 20% of the general managerial positions and the percentage of women in the boardrooms of publicly listed hospitality companies are less than 8%. Ms.Mini Chandra (General Manager, Swa Swara, Gokarna stated that the younger generation women in proving the efficiency are especially facing challenge of coping with the Indian male ego. Statistics from the report suggest that departments that have been less than successful at promoting women into leadership positions are also unsuccessful at recruiting women.

Key Statistics from the Report

In the hospitality industry (as of 2016), men are ten times more likely to be promoted to the principal/partner or president levels than women.

The hospitality industry has been less successful at developing its women than the firms of the S&P 500 and the S&P 500 Finance.

Only 21 percent of attendees on pre-conference rosters for hospitality-related events regarding investment and asset values were women in 2016–17.

One in eight men who were on these pre-conference rosters spoke, compared to one in 12 women.

84 percent of men and 70 percent of women agreed that “women entering hospitality companies today will have more opportunities for upward movement into top executive positions than have past generations.”

According to research carried out by PwC for Women in Hospitality (WiH) women only make up 26% of senior management in the hospitality sector, a figure that drops to 20% when HR roles are excluded.

It is hard to imagine the hospitality industry without the Midas touch of a female who have excelled in this sector not only in India, but all over the world. Women today are more conscious, informed, career oriented and believe in balancing their personal and professional infancy in the Indian hospitality establishments. Though hospitality brands are adapting to the perception change in society towards women and are increasingly opening up to females at top positions, not all brands have been fast to accept and adhere to the changes taking place in the society, In fact, it would only be fair to say that the hospitality industry today holds more potential for women than ever before. The invisible barriers are still the blockages that prevent qualified women from advancing within their organizations However, merely having more women in the working domain is not enough. Their job progression is paramount and remains a major challenge.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the underlying factors of industry inclination in making hospitality a female dominated business.
- To study the invisible barriers as a challenge in the career advancement for women in the hospitality industry.

Need for the Study

There is a strong need to study the initiatives taken up by the organization to retain women on their workforce and make it accessible to achieve their goals. As women are there with their strong needs in taking upon the multiple roles and their thirst for knowledge exploring their skills makes their existence relevant to the Organization. It is being easier for women to get into the diversified roles as Hospitality industry has become aware of women abilities to lead.

Research Methodology

The study is based on case studies. The qualitative techniques and SWOT analysis has been carried out to derive the inferences. Secondary data has been compiled and processed to substantiate the aim of the work.

Data Collection

Data has been collected through case study method. Other relevant information has been collected from journals, periodicals and websites.

Industry Inclination in Making Hospitality Industry a Female Dominated Domain

Variety is the life blood of any company and women have different qualities to offer that can complement those of a man. Companies are adjusting their corporate culture to attract more females by initiating and designing supportive human resource policies. Maximun investment is done by the Hospitality professionals to encourage and retain women. There have always been a large number of women in the Hospitality industry but it is only in recent years they are moving directly to influential management roles and climbing the higher levels of leadership. The study conducted by Peterson Institute for International Economics reviewed data from 22,000 companies in 91 countries and found that companies with at least 30% women in the executive roles have the potential to increase their profit margins by 15% compared to companies with no female leadership. Following the part of this pace talented woman from different field, with different background, experience and perspective are vibrantly becoming the part of the Hospitality industry. Companies are also working in embracing their expectations by allowing female employees in changing their work schedules, taking time off when

necessary and fostering a healthier work-life balance. In the study conducted as females are the largest untapped reservoir of talent in the world Study done by Biswas and Casell(1996)an international chain in England, organization prefer some jobs to be occupied by women such as reception and the sales of the marketing department because of their appearance and sexuality. Kattara (2005) stated that females tend to be more attractive to customers, better at handling customers and more accepted than their male counterparts in people oriented positions such as room division and marketing departments. Other aspect accompany the employment of women according to female managers point of view ,the success of hotel relies on customer satisfaction, The approach used by female managers in managing the staff is more adaptable ,flexible with good communication which aided them in attaining good outcomes for the organization. Industry have come up with great entry level openings and offered opportunities for the woman as starter. Furthermore Smith and Smits 1994, Shirley1995 both cited in Maxwell 1997and identified the traits connected with the female management which assist in enhancing the productivity of the organization which are:

- Meticulous and more organized as hostess.
 - Visible approach, an open management presence while connecting with staff.
 - Have a strong attitude towards teamwork approach.
 - Flexible and smoother in adjusting their management styles.
 - Consistent expectations of high standard of performance from staff by giving an eye on detail.
- Perfect indulgence of the women traits with corporate practices results the industry with success and also bring women into the hospitality arena in numbers.

Facing Invisible Challenges

The hospitality industry plays a major role in sustainability of human development through employment generation and advancement of women. The overwhelming majority shows a diverse demographic structure by giving women employment and opportunities. As gender equality in the work place becomes the standard, instead of exception, but certain reasons are still subjected to discrepancies. Women are struggling hard to balance family responsibilities combined with work, where one has to spend a lot of time to interact and entertain guests, which at times hard and daunting to most women. These factors do not make career options very appealing for the average women. Women are still facing a hidden form of gender discrimination as they are represented equally in the managerial levels but there still exists the disparity in the pay.Many cases highlights that most of the women left the hospitality industry due to gender discrimination, sexual harassment. strong male dominated culture, geographic mobility, long working hours, child care responsibilities. employer's favouritism. In addition to the hardship context women are still confronting a significant challenges, which are beginning in managing the factors. Though women have made strides in reaching at the s levels but the industry has to take cognizance about the scenario and practices women friendly policies that would assist them last to progress their careers.

The entire study reveals, the hospitality industry one of the most thriving sector supported largely by female workforce. Despite knowing the fact that the industry are showing progressive approach in occupying more women in professional domain but it's necessary to work on the remedial procedures towards the challenges faced by the woman workforce, for this equal opportunity needs to be prioritized that can best utilize on women's talent.

SWOT Analysis

Strength

- A woman is bound to be better in managing the manpower, service and operations because of their genetically caring affectionate nature.
- Women can enjoy professional life and when married enjoys a good life style.
- The X factors of patience, tolerance and humanity provides an extra edge over male counterpart in hotel industry
- Women are better communicators biologically than men hence a preferred choice for this sector.
- Mixed with empathy and have a good understanding of human trends would match well with women to different professional roles.
- Highly satisfied, rewarding schedule with extensive travel opportunities, cater well the women professional needs.

Weaknesses

- Gender discrimination and long and inflexible working hours preventing women taking major roles in the hospitality industry.
- Job opportunities are more focused on male candidates; especially in operational departments which can be a major reason for female discouragement.
- Multiplicity of obligations that women play in the domestic, productive and reproductive spheres limit their capabilities, curbing their ambitions and forcing them to skip chances of advancement.
- Women are still been hindered from going tours abroad because of safety concerns.
- Poverty as socio economic factors as a major reason for families to withdraw their girls from pursuing further education which deprived them from the formal and informal opportunities in tourism industries.
- Unconscious bias, from the employer within the industries is the result of major underrepresentation of women in major roles.
- Inability of women to fight with stereotyped culture, and the psychological barrier in a form of inferiority complex, where women not been able to present their ideas in a right way or lack of self result abandon their career aspirations.

Opportunities

The characteristics as a women-friendly domain with , flexible work environment attracts women in heading and leading in varied roles as executive chefs, managers in housekeeping, front office or even general managers and directors.

- Change in the long work hours and unending shifts promotes a good work life balance.
- The upcoming international properties offering a great variety of employment possibilities as relationship manager, training manager and in human resource and sales marketing section.
- Jobs in hospitality industry offers highly satisfying, rewarding schedule and with extensive travel opportunities where women can explore their inner beliefs and strength.
- The career in hospitality industry provides self belief and self pride among women.
- Opportunities for women talent pool in reaching leadership roles through women leadership organizational programmes for example Carlson Rezidor's women Leadership programmes.

Threats

The research studies highlights the key constraints which female employees faced , were lack of experience ,family responsibilities, overstress experienced with dependents" needs especially among the single or widowed mothers, low education , lack of motivation from employers ,corporate malpractices , lack of networking, discrimination, biasedness from the authoritative part and lack of women mentors. In case of opportunities given for promotion and progression male candidates are more preferred.

Implications and Recommendations

Adequate opportunities are to be offered in the field of leadership and management to women employees with a view to equipping themselves with the necessary skills to facilitate in planning coordination and controlling the activities.

- Maximizing the female participation through learning and motivational organizational programmes.
- Applicability of uniform and favourable policies and reward system for improvising their self esteem.
- Aimed at eliminating gender discrimination mentoring programs are more to be designed to increase career development for women.
- Hotels should develop senior management awareness on the benefits of more women managers being appointed based on their merits and full potential.
- Arranging seminars and workshops by the hotels providing women with flexible working hours and introduce day care centers to assist women who have small children needing care.
- Enabling women in meeting both their responsibilities at home and catering with their financial needs hotels should come up with high-paying part time jobs.

- Granting women the various opportunities for undertaking added responsibilities at the workplace.
- Women should be accorded with special and strategic assignments and should be offered more challenging jobs so that they can prove their skills and capabilities.
- Hotels should train women before promotions and should focus on developing programmes for strategic career planning for women.
- Fair review of selection, promotion and appraisal processes towards women.

Conclusion

Despite the avenues offered by the industry and the major advancements women have shown as a workforce, they were still facing challenges in their professional path .Some of the reasons which drifts women away from the job in the hospitality industry are the long inflexible working hours , career breaks because of motherhood, personal issues ,stereotyping, lack of relevant training, lack of encouragement towards leadership and management programmes ,overstress experienced with dependents" needs especially among the single or widowed mothers, lack of confidence and self esteem, lack of motivation from employers and negligible relaxation on maternity leaves, etc. It becomes more challenging owing to demands which discourage women from taking up jobs in the industry. However, understanding the rising concerns of women, consideration is to be given on maintaining flexible working environment, developing training, and mentoring programs, standardizing the procedures, giving transparency in recruitment, performance appraisal & promotion criteria, applicability of policies in terms of equal gender pay, rewarding women by giving recognition and awards. Encountering the potential of female representatives as they are moving an extra mile in the service sector these recommendations can somehow remove the practical obstacles of female participation in the hospitality workplace.

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