

HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM GENDER ISSUES REMAIN UNSOLVED: A CALL FOR RESEARCH

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Abstract: *The purpose of the article is to analyse the status of female hospitality and tourism employees by reviewing academic literature and to present the challenges they face as well as to stress that organizations and wider community miss the opportunities by neglecting female talent while not considering the measures to surpass deeply rooted gender stereotypes. Based on the review, the authors offer an assessment of emerging human resource management practices from the gender issue perspective. The findings provide practical information to hospitality and tourism managers in terms of focusing on adequate strategies to achieve gender equality. Because there are many unsolved issues, the authors call for further research.*

Keywords: *equal opportunities, hospitality and tourism, gender stereotyping, gender discrimination, gender bias, occupational gender segregation.*

1. Introduction

Gender equity in all fields of activities is one of the key European priorities based on international agreement on implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women with regard to access to employment, vocational training and promotion, as well as working conditions (Directive Council 76/207/EEC). However, the principle of equal pay was already introduced back in 1957 by the Rome Treaty (Treaty of Rome, 1957). Despite the fact that gender equity legislative framework remains in force for decades, gender discrimination emerges in form of direct discrimination since women are statistically underpaid compared to men at the same position because women's work is devalued (Foubert, 2010). Generally, throughout the world men earn more than women. 60 years ago, women earned 59 cents on the dollar, today the wage gap narrowed to 78% (Polachek, Zhang & Zhou, 2015: 78). Along pay differential, gender discrimination most explicitly appears in forms of occupational gender segregation that are frequently linked to traditions and stereotypes.

According to ILO (2010) gender equality means the demand to assure equal conditions for both - men and women – their full rights to benefit from economic, political, cultural and social development. However when talking about equal opportunities it is not just about impartiality that pertains individuals but rather about successful development of the contemporary society (Bahovec, Jogan, Klemen-Krek, Medvešček-Milošević, Mladenčić, Neubauer & Umek-Venturini, 2006: 98).

Majerhold (2006: 10) ascertains that gender stereotypical stance is not simply a reflection of the individual but rather emerges in the form of deeply rooted traditional epistemological sexist beliefs, that are common belief patterns in the society, where men are traditionally the leaders whereas women subordinates (Jogan, 2006: 26). Norms and beliefs dictate certain behaviour that govern the relations and positions of individuals in social life, including working life (Smith, Ramakrishnan, Ndiaye, Haddad & Martorell, 2003). However the focus is not on women as such but rather on power of relations between men and women in different historical and cultural contexts. Inequality regimes are linked to society, politics, history and culture (Said, 2005; Baum, 2013: 60). Although gender issues emanate from different national and cultural contexts, crucial differences still exist in contemporary workplaces throughout the world (Reskin & Bielby, 2005).

The aim of the article is to review academic literature regarding the issues female tourism employees face and further to present coping strategies toward more inclusive work settings that are free of gender discrimination. The article begins with the identification of gender bias in terms of oppressed career advancement trajectories of women, the second part deals with the root-causes and forms of occupational gender segregation whereas the central part of the article offers strategies to cope with gender discrimination issues. The final part provides conclusions that can support human resource management practices and due to unsolved tourism gender issues calls for further research.

2. Women career advancement trajectories in hospitality and tourism industry

Almost half of women in US confront some kind of gender discrimination including barriers in career advancement (Thomas, Bierema & Landau, 2004: 63). There are a number of factors beside gender discrimination, that impede women's career advancement, including lower training and educational opportunities, and exclusion of women from informal networks. Promotion systems in most tourism companies operate on the basis of informal and non-written criteria and the decisions that

senior management makes about promotion usually depend on middle managers' recommendation. Such promotion procedures further contribute to gender segregation (Jordan, 1997: 530). Gender segregation leads to unequal career rewards for men and women (Reskin & Bielby, 2005: 82).

2.1 Occupational gender segregation

Occupational gender segregation, a widespread phenomenon throughout the world, refers to unequal distribution of women and men among different jobs and as such limits promotion opportunities for women. The consequences of occupational gender segregation are reflecting in men's perception of women and even women's perception of themselves that lead to overrepresentation of women in lower professional category, lower status and income (Elliott & Smith, 2004; Jordan, 1997: 526). Cleaning, customer service and posts of other lower responsibility are mostly occupied by women whereas maintenance, bartending, gardening and higher responsibility level jobs are mostly taken by men in tourism sector which means that still social norms are important factor of segregation patterns. In fact, vertical gender pyramid of women having occupied lower levels with a few exceptions and men taking the higher and managerial positions is prevalent. Vertical segregation, sometimes called "glass ceiling", means the existence of obvious or/and subtle barriers that lead to absence of women in all the management level posts (Elliott & Smith, 2004). The concept is sometimes presented as "stinky floor" that prevents women to climb to the higher levels of organizational pyramid. Indeed frequently women remain marginalised in the workplace, have limited access to promotion and leadership roles (Baum, 2013: 59).

Tourism is the industry that is built on human relations and thus social divisions of labour are important and coping with gender equality issues essential because tourism employment is gender biased being based on norms of "women's work" (Swain, 1995: 247). A significant portion of employers make recruitment decision on stereotypical assumption about specific jobs that suit only men or women and thus occupation gender segregation occurs (Burrell, Manfredi, Rollin, Price & Stead, 1997: 177). The culture of occupational gender segregation in hospitality and tourism industry is promoted by organizations themselves due to managing recruitment process in accordance to stereotypical stance of women's appropriate work roles (Jordan, 1997: 525).

However there is also a horizontal segregation because more women are employed within the sector than men while earning less (Jordan, 1997: 527; Ng & Pine, 2003:85; Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera

& Ropero-García, 2011: 101 because women are disproportionately represented in lower skills and lower paid jobs within the sector (Baum, 2013: 59-60).

The gender-based wage differential is well documented for the different occupations and is persistent across cultural boundaries (Gray & Benson, 2003). Vertical segregation, which consequence is the fact that women typically occupy lower-status posts, is the most important explanation factor of salary differentials between women and men (Hakim, 1992). The problem of gender differences in wages is especially grave in hospitality sector and it is relevant in most countries. As compared to male colleagues, women earn less not just when entering the world of work, but also when reaching a career-peak position. In other words they earn less even doing the same kind of job with the same level of responsibility. On the sample of Spanish hospitality workforce, the researchers conclude that lower wages, received by women, are due to gender segregation as the consequence of disproportionate concentration of women in worst-paid jobs, functional areas and lower-rank of responsibility jobs and least desirable posts (Purcell, 1996: 22-23; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011: 637; García-Pozo, Campos-Soria, Sánchez: Ollero & Machante-Lara 2012: 274). Although Norway is considered a country with significantly lower gender inequalities, Skalpe (2007: 852) confirms significantly lower earnings by female CEOs in tourism and stronger gender-pay differentials in tourism, compared to manufacturing sector, and further she concludes that women in fact face wage discrimination in both industries. Similar are conclusions that Thane (2007: 523) draws within the human capital research framework with sociological approach, when makes conclusions that gender still plays an important role in wage levels because female tourism employees generally achieve even higher levels of education than men do but still receive on average 20% lower wages than their male colleagues. Although occupational gender segregation in general is strongly manifested, it emerges with different emphasis in different settings (Duc & Pluess, 1999: 2). However, there is a need for establishing fair promotion processes.

2.2 Women in managerial positions

Contemporary leadership concentrates on strong commitment to employee development, the abilities to cope with constant change therefore organizational learning, decentralised leadership, and problem-solving skills gain prominence (Yáñez & Moreno, 2008: 99). Transformational leadership style, through inspiration and intellectual stimulation, promote changes in subordinates and eventually in

organization therefore it is considered better in contemporary business situation than autocratic or transactional leadership style. Women generally take to transformational leadership style and are usually very successful in leadership roles (Hitt, Keats & DeMarie, 1998; Eagly & Carli, 2003: 818; Colwill & Townsend, 1999: 212) with the balanced leadership style that is focused on assignments as well as on the needs of subordinates (Yáñez & Moreno, 2008: 99).

Although women predominate in hospitality workforce they are still underrepresented in management roles due to facing formal and informal exclusionary practices and prejudices of required male characteristics in order to be successful. Even when getting to the management position, women are subject to more pressure (Purcell, 1996, 22-23; Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011: 637). Traditionally, women were believed to be successful only in non-leadership positions, therefore they have been assigned lower-position posts of lower earnings, no prestige, and power (Bosak & Sczensny, 2008: 685) and in this direction Sayers (2012: 519) claims that it is sexism that causes anchoring prejudices about women's abilities as leaders. Although some researchers report greater leadership effectiveness of men (Eagly, Makhijani & Klonsky, 1992) others testify in favour of feminine leadership which is effective in contemporary work settings (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011: 634) and claiming that even men adopt feminine leadership style when there are such organizational demands (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker & Woehr, 2014: 1130).

When career advancement to managerial position is subject to discretion it is most probably influenced by stereotypes that have strong influence on women's career dynamics (Eurofound, 2010: 9). However, women rarely occupy management positions although longitudinal research data testify in favour of success of women. Even without start-up capital female tourism managers out-perform the organizations run by men in terms of organization growth and subsequently raising national employment rates and creating wealth (Alonso-Almeida, 2013: 621). Because tourism companies run by a woman is frequently more successful than those led by man, Alonso-Almeida (2013: 629) recommends that tourist companies should promote women to leadership positions. It is especially important in tourism sector that manager acquires required knowledge, skills and aptitudes. Globally women are equally qualified in terms of academic qualifications and above all they practice transformational leadership which defines many

successful companies (Alonso-Almeida, 2013: 629). And also in this regard women do not lag behind men.

As long as gender segregation persists and women's work is devaluated, there will be more opportunities for advancement and higher earnings on the side of men (Reskin & Bielby, 2005: 82). The researcher stress that the situation is not static but rather slow increase of women's presence in management is occurring (Burrell, Manfredi, Rollin, Price & Stead, 1997: 177). On the basis of meta-analysis researchers conclude that the masculine leadership perceptions and the prejudices against female are still strong and the challenges, despite several attempts to achieve gender equity, are likely to continue (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011: 637).

3. Strategies coping gender discrimination

Equal treatment of men and women in terms of fair salary levels is needed to increase the level of job satisfaction of both male and female employees (Kara, Uysal & Magnini, 2012: 1060-1061) that acts as the means to achieving corporate success. Organisations' success depends on employee commitment and loyalty. Equal opportunity practice might contribute to talent identification and consequently organization success while meeting the skills and productivity requirements of the sector (Baum, 2013: 60).

Enforcing the gender equity policy is in itself insufficient but necessary when coping with gender discrimination. Organizations with such a policy are more positive to women with the climate of trust created within a highly supportive work environment. Positive climate is mutually beneficial to organization and to the employees because it conveys equal opportunities for all and makes sound basis for organizations' success (Jordan, 1997: 531-32; Baum, 2013: 60).

It is also recommended to make steps to identify talent not on the gender basis but rather on transparent access to higher organizational positions for both sexes (Baum, 2013: 60). To avoid occupational gender segregation, organizations should have promoted male careers of jobs traditionally dominated by women and vice versa and remove obvious as well as subtle barriers to career advancement of women including access to managerial positions and decision-making posts. Also social dialog to encourage reduction of wage gaps is required (Baum, 2013: 60-62).

Sometimes researchers stress that hospitality and tourism sectors make oppression to work-life balance because of the variability of the demand cycle due to seasonality differences that demand unsocial

working hours. Working conditions in hospitality and tourism sectors are frequently challenging, employees facing heavy workload and constant pressure although there are considerable differences between countries and between different segments (Eurofound, 2004). To promote family friendly environment, policies that encourage suitable childcare provisions, and ensure that women while on maternity leave remain in touch with the organization, are required (Baum, 2013: 62).

4. Conclusion

The selected previous research examines the important aspects of gender bias in tourism and hospitality industry and its impacts since tourism employment is highly gendered. The analysis of the results indicates that women face occupational gender segregation, unclear routes to promotion due to structural and cultural constraints and predominant masculine organizational cultures. In the modern era, where sound practices are encouraged, tourism and hospitality industry could benefit from adopting gender equity practices. Policy makers and management must take actions towards effective solutions and establish equal opportunity grounds to achieve much better results on the basis of utilising female talent which is being wasted due to gender discrimination, offering them status positions and salary according to their knowledge and capabilities.

Although there is a growing significance of tourism and hospitality industry which is inherent labour-intensive sector and beside that the industry is an important employer of women, still tourism gender issues remain under-researched (Jordan, 1997: 525; Figueroa-Domecq, Pritchard, Segovia-Pérez, Morgan & Villancé-Molinero, 2015: 87). In summary of the article, that incorporates gender analysis into hospitality and tourism research, there is a conclusion of many open, unanswered issues that call for further research.

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