Career development of women in the hotel industry: An Overview

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Abstract: This paper focuses on factors affecting career progression of women in the hotel industry as discussed by researchers in different geographical locations in the world and to investigate whether women are indeed blocked in the process of advancing in their career. It is also focused to explore the mechanism adopted by the hospitality companies to mitigate the issue related to women's career progression. An in-depth study was carried to by reviewing twenty-two articles related to the hotel industry and twenty-eight articles related to hospitality industry. It was revealed that specific factors are common to the industry irrespective of the geographical locations such as networking, gender discrimination, segregation, long and irregular working hours and work and family balance. However, factors like cultural barriers, taking risks on non-linear assignments and significance of finding a sponsor were limited to individual countries. Irrespective of the economic and social developments of the countries concerned covering America, Europe, Australia, Africa, Middle Eastern countries, Far East Asia and South Asian regions, the issue of lack of women leaders in the hotel industry has been a significant issue. The Glass ceiling effect on career development for women was widely discussed and confirmed the existence in many countries irrespective of legal frameworks of equal opportunities. Few uncommon issues were also publicised in the study in the USA commenting few challenges and barriers such as the importance of having a sponsor, making lateral moves with new opportunities and being a '"token" in a male-dominated executive table.

Keywords: Barriers, Career progression, Hotel industry, Senior managers, Women

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades women have been contributing to the professional work force in spite of their house wife role. The contemporary global concentration is on equal opportunities, attracting, encouraging, developing and empowering women in various development projects across the globe. However, the hotel industry is still suffering from inequalities, discrimination and harassment of women and minorities with fewer women in upper hierarchies (UNWTO, 2015). This is in spite of various remedial acts taken by United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2015), International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2010) and a number of other non-government and government organizations. Equal employment legislation enacted in most of the countries to mitigate the issue appears not to be much success. Among the many reasons for these inequalities, discrimination and harassment, the glass ceiling concept, a term first documented in America in Wall Street Journal, referring to barriers encountered by women and minorities to progress in their respective careers irrespective of qualifications and experience they acquire believed to be the main cause behind this (Baum, 2015). Catalyst report (2013) indicated that it was only 15.5 executives among 52.4 percent of women employees in fortune 500 hospitality compa-

nies. It is also a noteworthy fact that 17 percent director positions are held by women in these fortune 500 companies and those companies with women directors financially outperform others. Indeed, it is a clear indication that if we intelligently tap the existing female talents, companies can enhance the productivity and performance. Women participation in the hotel industry in Sri Lanka is comparatively low. Aitken Spence Conglomerate with eight well-known hotels with total 1710 persons has only seven percent women. John Keels Hotels employs around 3,000 persons, of which only 9 percent are women; a figure that drops to 6.5 percent if the chain's Colombo hotels are excluded. Bentota Beach Hotel, which has 281 employees, has a mere 11 women on its staff. The Galle Face Hotel, possibly one of the oldest hotels in Sri Lanka, did not have a single woman on its staff until 1980. Today, out of a total staff of 370, there are only 35 women. Only two of these women are department heads. Jet Wing Hotels is the only reputed hotel company to have two women who hold the position of general manager of hotels (Nanayakkara, 2015). In this backdrop, this paper focuses on exploring how career progression of women was affected in different geographical locations in the world.

Women in the hotel industry: Tourism sector repre-

sents twice as many women employers as the other sectors, one in five tourism ministers are women, much higher proportion of own account workers in tourism and a large amount of unpaid work is being carried out by women in family business. Gender differences in tourism employment do exist and tourism is an ideal job creator for women who need to accommodate paid work around their traditional gender-related roles and responsibilities. It was envisaged that four factors mainly involved in women in the industry such as, women once married will not function as well as their male counterparts, promotions are generally linked with transfers and women reluctant to take up new positions with mobility, female workers have to work much harder to prove them elves than male counterparts and the presence of cultural barriers prevent women advancing their careers (Kattara, 2005).

The International Labor Office highlighted that un-skilled and semi-skilled women tend to be in the most vulnerable jobs, experience poor working conditions, facing inequality of opportunity, violence, exploitation and sexual harassment in the hotels, catering and tour-ism (HCT) sector. In countries like China, career choice of women in the hospitality industry is remarka-bly high, and around 60% of the total tourism employ-ees are women. However, in countries like Sri Lanka, this is remarkably low. These female employees are mainly occupied with operational level employment, and very few represent the middle and upper manage-ment positions. However, the average time taken for women who progress to next level is faster than the male counterparts, but upward mobility is somewhat blocked for women. Average experience forms the next promotion for women is 3 years and men 5 years in China (Yang, 2011).

It is generally agreed by researchers that interactive style of female managers are different from male man-agers and they process well-developed man manage-ment practices (Burke and Collins, 2001). Female managers are more determined than male and demo-cratic in management style whereas male managers are more concentrating on financial goals (Maxwell, 1997).

In contrast to the male managers, female managers claim that patience, smile and humour may help to deal with challenging situations. Researchers further com-mented that without having the right kind of personali-ty it is difficult to pursue their career aspirations. Evi-dently, both female and male managers agree on com-petencies and skills needed to advance in their careers, but with regard to the obstacles and barriers, they per-ceive different opinions. It is believed that both male and female managers value their families and think family first, and thus, for both, it is difficult to progress considering the patriarchic culture in certain regions (Marinakou, 2014). Irrespective of geographical loca-tions, aspiring women in the hotel industry found to

be, single, never married or divorced without children (Sparrow and Iverson; Obadic and Ivana, 2009).

Among European Union countries, the differences in women employed in the hospitality sector exist. While 54% of the total employment representing by women in hotels and restaurants it is 45% of the total employ-ment in the region. Countries like Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland and Poland produce the highest num-ber of women employs in the sector ranging from 68% to 78%, France, Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Greece and Netherlands lie at the bottom with 32% to 51% respec-tively (European Commission, 2015). However, wom-en hold less than 40% of all managerial and superviso-ry grades and less than 20% of general management positions (Baum, 2015). Women represent 52.4% of fortune 500 companies but only 15.5% in executive positions (Catalyst, 2015).

However, women have only limited access to the mid-dle and senior managerial positions in Italy, UK Zar-doska County in Croatia but the scenario is different in Bulgaria. It is hard to find single women in the kitchen in UK and employment in the kitchen is clearly ex-cluded for women. Nevertheless, the scenario is differ-ent in Italy where most of the assistant cooks are wom-en but very few in senior positions. Hence gender seg-regation, employment policies seems different from country to country and even region to region, but the fact remains that the highest echelon is still not open for the majority of women (Obadic and Ivana, 2009).

Women career progression: Brown and Brooks (1990) defined career development as a lifelong pro-cess of preparing to choose, choosing and typically continuing to make choices among the many opportu-nities available in our society. Peshave and Gupta (2017) opined career progression as "constant process of managing work, learning, leisure time transition in order to move upward towards a personally determined goal and creating self-preferred future".

Summarizing the factors indicated by empirical research, long and irregular working hours, old boys' network, hiring practices, geographical mobility (Mooney, 2009; Marinakou, 2014; Brownell, 1993; Pathwardhan *et al.*, 2015; Baum, 2015). Gender stereo-types, glass ceiling, cultural barriers, gender stereo-type, dual role, visibility factor, gender segregation, lack of role models (Marinakou, 2014; Obadicand Ivana, 2009; Pathwardhan *et al.*, 2015; Knox, 2008; Brownell, 1993) were found to be key barriers to career progression for women in the hotel industry. What is blocking the career path of women is not only external factors such as problems of the family, lack of school facilities and employment but also internal fac-tors such as own motivation, skills (Shrestha, 2016).

The new school of thoughts regarding career issues were introduced by Walsh *et al.* (2016) in their study on "Reflections of Career Journeys on Reaching the Top" for the centre for hospitality research at Cornell

Table 1. Human Resource Policies adopted by leading hotel organizations to promote career progression of women.

Organization/Region	Policy
ACCOR Hotels- World-wide/19 properties in Asia Pacific	WAAG (Women at Accor generation)WAAG Australia: Flexible working arrangements: varying work hours, working from home and job share arrangements after childbirth/ mentoring programmes by female role models
Banyan Tree/Global more focus in Asia	TMP (Talent Hiring policies as much as local communities and hiring and promotions only on merit-based irrespective of gender and creating career path through Management Programme) and MDP (Management Development Programme) for continuous learning for employees /
InterContinental/Global	Recruitment based on capabilities and career path from junior positions in budget hotels-Mid Size Hotel-Deluxe Hotels/Mobile Aspirers-Mobile Achievers-Hometown Settlers/The "Best offer Hometown" to mitigate work and family balance issues/
Mantara Hotels/Australia and New Zealand	WIM (Women in Management) with 6 objectives to develop women as future leaders -Women supporting other women in the organization -Assist female talent with potential through mentoring support to develop -Succession planning -Emotional intelligence training for senior staff -Profile senior women in the team through internal communication -Support for women returning after maternity leave
Starwood Hotels/Global-1200 properties in 100 countries	Global Female General Manager initiative: Balanced gender representation in executive positions/merit based with an equal opportunity supporting and surfacing female leaders/ promotion within approach
Wyndham Hotel Group/ Global	-Mentor cycles give women to access senior managers as mentors -WYNternship for new entrants providing wide variety of opportunities -Sponsorship for the national "Women in Leadership Programme

Table 2. Barriers in effective Policy Implementation and Suggestions.

Barriers in effective policy implementation	Suggestions
Cultural Barriers: General perception of the society is employments in hotels not suited for women, especially in South Asia.	Accor hotels have introduced a system that new employees can spend the first night in the hotel with their families. This is a good initiative for other hotels also to convince the family members to eradicate such perceptions
Customer Perception: Potential customers not willing to accept women in nontraditional positions in the hotels. Women porters rejected by male customers is one such example (Knox,2008) where management was concerned about quality standards when customers carry their own luggage.	Encourage women to take up such positions with dual roles of concierge and allocate women porters for female customers initially and gradually change the perception. Emphasize women empowerment programmes in the hotel and give appropriate publicity. Train guests to accept female porters (Knox,2008).
Gender Harassment by fellow workers: Failed strategy of recruiting women in the kitchen	Strong backup systems from the top management including executive chefs. Providing mentoring facilities. Attitudinal and behavioral modification programmes for kitchen staff (Knox,2008)
Attitude of owners influencing the employment practices	Standardised human resource policies for the industry.
Safety and security issues for women doing night shifts	Legislation to protect women either not doing night shifts of providing transport to home or alternative accommodation at hotel premises.
External recruiting for nontraditional posts such as male room attendants failed to owe to limited pool of applicants (Knox,2008)	Job rotation and cross training for internal employees and rote during low season.

University. They have found three critical areas for career advancement in the hotel industry: (1) the importance of taking thoughtful risks including non-linear assignments ;(2) the criticality of networking; and (3) the significance of finding a sponsor. In addition, they discussed the challenges for progression focusing on "being a token" and integrating work and family. Respondents of this study commented even selecting a correct partner in life is also a key factor for those women who wanted to remain and climb the career ladder.

In Sri Lankan context, the key findings were gender harassment and perceptions, glass ceiling, lack of role models, management attitudes, lack of opportunities, lack of training, gender stereotype an insufficient number of role models, supportive working environment and cultural barriers (Karunarathna, 2015; Nanayakkara, 2015). However, most of the above studies have adopted positivistic or mixed methods approach depriving exploring in-depth knowledge on the issue. None of the above studies covered career development barriers for women in different hierarchical levels. Moreover, Karunrathna's study has focused only on five-star hotels and Nanayakkara (2015) has adopted

case study method considering only one beach hotel in causing an issue of generalizing the findings to the entire industry. It is indicated that there are hardly any studies covering different categories of female employees in the industry locally or internationally. Some studies have concentrated only on specific factors such as glass ceiling (Zo, 2013; Akrivos, Ludking andReklits, 2007; Marinakou, 2014; Boone *et al*., 2013; Kunstan and Schmidgall, 1999; Sparrowe and Iverson, 1999), Management and Leadership styles of women (Charuta and Patil, 2014), perception of managers (Pathwardhan *et al*., 2015; Brownell, 1993), segregation (Knox, 2008). Incidentally, some other studies were limited to case studies or single geographical location, five-star hotels only (Pathwardhan *et al*., 2015), casino hotels (Weber, 1998), five-star hotels in Colombo (Karunarathna, 2015), Heritance Ahungalla (Nanayakkara, 2015). In general, barriers to progression can be broadly divided into three main categories such as individual factors, organizational factors and societal factors.

Facilitators and barriers for career progression of women in the hotel industry: It is noteworthy to study whether the barriers are self-imposed or caused by external factors. There are strong arguments that pull factors and push factors to play a key role in women progression in professions. Job dissatisfaction or lack of opportunities is considered as push factors whereas family responsibilities are considered as pull factors (Boone *et al*., 2013). Unwillingness to move and personality traits were key barriers to advancement for women in Canada and hard work and learning/education found to be major facilitators (Blayney and Blonticky, 2014). In a hospitality white paper on women in tourism and hospitality, Baum (2015) identified a range of barriers women face in the hospitality industry where the majority of the employees belong to hotels and restaurant sector. Baum prescribes gender roles in societies traditionally in a home and works place, mitigating chances for women to progress their career to the higher echelons. Role stereotyping limit the talents of women from which promotions to senior management positions are virtually blocked from the inception of a career and creating segregated role models for future career-minded women in the industry (Baum, 2015). Notwithstanding the legal frameworks in countries to protect equal opportunities, discrimination against women at all stages of recruitment, promotion and opportunity cycle is prevailing. Organizational cultures and expectations by workplace make aspiring women who wish to balance between and family at a disadvantage. The attitude of owners who influence management policies found to be the most unarticulated barrier to career progression and breaking the glass ceiling in managerial positions in this industry (Baum, 2015).

It was widely discussed that the work environment itself influences the negative perception of the hospitality environment may heighten gender-related concerns. Employees work in close proximity to one another and the duties involved are traditionally associated with socio-sexual environments such as bars, lounges, and bedrooms. Employees are often recruited, in particular, female, because of out-going personalities and physical attractions. This will lead to sexual harassment where researcher argues that the hospitality workplace may be one of the most sexualized environments in which employees interact (Brownell, 1993).

Geographical mobility is considered as a positive feature in the hotel sector. Interviewees of many studies frequently agreed on it as a necessity to obtain the next development position, one needed to move location when the right promotional opportunity comes their way. This is particularly vulnerable for older women with families whereas younger women are more likely to move with positive promotions. Hence, women are therefore in a double bind, they need to relocate with possible promotions, yet they have to remain in their present company to be in a position to realize the social capital that they have built up in terms of reputation and professional network (Mooney, 2009). InterContinental Hotel group is operating more than 230 hotels in China and the recruitment policies they adopt purely on merit depending on ability and capabilities of applicants. Career path is so diverse that promotions are available for employees to start in a junior position in a budget hotel, to then become a manager of a mid-sized hotel before becoming a general manager of a brand hotel (Baum, 2015). China recognizes that mobility among their employees are crucial and over 50 percent of the managers are non-local (Yang, 2011). Similarly, Geographical mobility and the training, willingness to adapt according to the environment were key findings of a study in Greece and the aforementioned factors are similar to the findings in UK and Australia (Akrivos *et al*., 2007).

Lack of role models, glass ceiling, attitudes of the management, theperception that underestimates the capabilities of women, sexual harassment found to be key factors preventing women from reaching the high echelons of the organizations. Insufficient numbers of female leaders de-motivate potential women aspirants in the industry to reach the highest level of managerial positions in the Sri Lankan perspective (Karunarathna, 2015). However, a similar study conducted in the USA confirms that the old boy network is the most significant obstacle to career development in women followed by lack of mentoring in hotels in USA (Brownell, 1993). Geographical mobility found to be one of the critical factors for career progression of women in Greece (Akrivos *et al*., 2007).

Mooney (2009) researching on women's place in hotel management in an international hotel chain in Australia and New Zealand revealed that the work and family

conflict for managers in the hotel industry are crucial owing to the 24/7/365 work cycle in hotels. Employees have to sacrifice holiday season for the benefit of the customers in hotels depriving holidays of own family and children. It is opined that female middle managers have to face work-family conflict with traditional social values of caregiving responsibilities. These dual role responsibilities tremendously affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Zhou and Wen, 2016). Older women at the more senior level were strongly concerned on this and expected flexible working hours as most of the child care facilities operate according to the office hours that needs fixed attendance. Being given responsibilities as primary caregivers for families in addition to the activities outside the home, work and family balance has become a great challenge for women in this industry. In many instances women struggle to make rigid decisions over their career due to family commitments (Zo, 2013; Yang, 2011). In was also indicated that women have no issue in joining hotels but more likely to leave the industry when they have families (Zo, 2013). It is not due to the glass ceiling effect as widely thought but owing to individual preference of family over career. Some even opted not to advance and stagnate in the same position to have career and family both. Work-family conflict was the most significant contributor as a barrier for women to progress in Singapore. Women in Singapore are supposed to raise finance for the family as well as to perform traditional roles as a house wife, mother and daughter taking care of own family and looking after the parents (Li and Leung, 2001). Brownell (1993) indicated that female managers involved on long and irregular hours of working in respective hotels and return home, children are waiting to get mother's advice, support and attention making it difficult to balance work and family life. This result was quite similar to the view of the female managers in Hongkong where most common obstacles indicated were irregular work hours and work-family conflicts (Ng and Pine, 2001).

Women were confronted with family commitments and managerial responsibilities, and they have to get adjusted to the masculine culture around them. It was referred to as shared background, shared history a mindset with informal networks that were not easily entered by women. The findings of Mooney (2009) further indicated that there is a bias against hiring women who may not be capable of conforming to the image of a manager. Men have traditionally used the networks to progress in their careers whereas women deprive this chance as they are not exposed to important information needed for the progress (Mooney, 2009). Nevertheless, a study conducted in India in five-star hotels found that there is no relationship of mentoring and networking with career progression of women (Pathwardhan *et al.*, 2015). However, surpris-

ingly significant factors in many studies such as mentoring and networking found to be no relationship with promotions in this study in India. Networking is not easy for female managers and the perception of hotel life combined with alcohol, bedrooms, late night entertainment prevent them socializing which is detrimental for their career progression (Boon *et al.*, 2013).

Kattara (2005) was of the view that lack of mentor support and network access are significant factors for career progression for women in Egypt. Developing powerful networks is a significant factor for one's success as it will provide a platform to increase the visibility in the industry. Reaching out to the people at the same level even an investment for future as one of them can be a future CEO of another company. One respondent of this study by Cornell University commented that she was still very active with Cornell Hotel Society and irrespective of the which school you to attend one must reach out to the own internal network, to begin with (Walsh et al., 2016).

Marinakou (2014) found that hotels in Greece may benefit from the managerial abilities of women and use their capabilities and skills in facing the challenges characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability. Views of the participants were analyzed on three main topics such as leadership style and the management adopt, factors that lead to successful management in the hospitality industry and the glass ceiling issues in the hotel management. The female participants stressed the barriers they face and the factors contribute to the glass ceiling where several researchers found in different geographical locations (Karunarathna, 2015; Brownell, 1993; Zo, 2015).

Gender stereotypes prevailing in Greece and sex and gender discrimination is still evident in the hotel sector, but the situation is improving. Similarly, gender stereotypes were common findings of different studies (Sparrowe and Iverson, 1999) whereas gender discrimination was also common (Knox, 2008; Zo, 2015; Sparrowe and Iverson, 1999). In a study conducted in Australia to analyze workplace segregation on managerial employees in Australia (Knox, 2008) revealed that The gender-based segregation particularly applicable to housekeeping department where female working as room attendants and laundry while males worked as a houseman, performing heavy cleaning duties. Female employees were the majority of the back of the house food and beverage areas (kitchen) performing unskilled labour jobs whereas chefs were predominantly male. Chefs were drawing an annual salary of Australian Dollars 250000 and the unskilled labourers earned around AUS$ 30000 per annum. Irrespective of the union memberships and the formalization of equal employment policies, occupational segregation is evident in most of the hotels in this study conducted in Australia (Knox, 2008). A review of existing literature has generally identified a combination of individual,

organizational societal factors obstructing career progression of women (Shrestha, 2016). The perceived obstacle was work and family balance, equity of the opportunities, lack of family support and gender discrimination which was common for most of the studies. Hence, many working women choose jobs that will allow them the flexibility to manage household responsibilities. In an attempt to find out reasons preventing women managers reaching the top penetrating the glass ceiling, gender stereotyping, and discrimination reported as key factors. Kattara (2005) further indicated that existence of challenges could be explained by the existence of gender discrimination prevailing in the hospitality industry in Egypt.

Owing to cultural values in the Asian region, many women need ahusband to be more prominent and highly educated, and professional women are willing to marry men of lower status of their level. It is not only organizational or external barriers, but cultural and societal sanctions create obstacles for women to succeed in Asia (Li and Leung, 2001). Nanayakkara (2015) in this case study analysis of Heritance Ahungalla commented that there are significant social barriers to women's employment in the hotel industry in Sri Lanka. This research argues that social barriers do exist and play a significant role in keeping women's employment in the hotel industry very low. The main barriers to women's employment in the hotel industry appear to be a combination of misperceptions, prejudices and lack of awareness regarding the industry and the situation of women working in it, patriarchal attitudes and socio-cultural influences that lead to some fields of work and employment being considered unsuitable or inappropriate for women and differing levels of social value attached to different professions. On the other hand, the research also showed that there are some sections within the hotel industry itself that are not too positively inclined towards women's entry into the sector. This can result in barriers to women's entry or discourage the employment of women (Nanayakkara, 2015).

A study conducted by Cornell University found that lack of female role models in present executive positions has hindered the career path to the senior managerial positions in hotels (Walsh *et al.,*2014). The above study further claims that planning a career is important to set personal goals, but any opportunity coming without expecting has to be seized. It is great to have plans to reach where you want to be, but there can be unexpected opportunities coming your way to reach your objectives. Many women in the industry are reluctant to grab such opportunities considering negative outcomes for balancing work and family involved with possible motilities with the opportunity. This may slow down or prevent the chances of climbing up the career ladder.

Another key to success is to have a potential sponsor.

Sponsors are critical now for career progression as they groom, advice and direct you into the right path, especially the initial years. Individuals with sponsors are more satisfied with their rate of advancement and retain in the organization. As women lacking in confidence in accepting higher management roles, they always seek advice from sponsors (Walsh *et al.*, 2016). Respondents confirmed that the sponsors are quite different from mentors and gain support to get promoted within and beyond the organizations.

While above two factors are considered as key facilitators for success, this study focused on challenges and came out with few barriers. Being a token was considered as a key challenge for young executives. A term used for isolation among a group. In this case, few women those who climb up the ladder are subject to criticism and discrimination "being the only woman in a room". However, those who inspired to be achieved the goals ignored such discrimination. One respondent in this study has commented that they were called as "Pushy" or "bossy" type just because of the gender. Some were thinking at the beginning how I am going to penetrate into this male-dominated arena. "I am going to be the only woman in this 17 man graduate team". As a new entrant, such questions always bother you, but if you are aspired to be where you want, you have to break this barrier (Walsh *et al.*, 2014)

Human resource policies to mitigate the issue: To overcome the issue of work and family balance, the Intercontinental group in China launched "best offers from Home Town" programme where talented employees can apply to return to their hometowns to support parents and children. This phenomenon not only benefits the individuals but also bring back accumulated experience to the local hotel adding value to the product. Learning from the case is that "Responding to the specific work-life balance needs of employees in particular women, the best offers from hometown programme recognises two distinct demographic and cultural realities for women in China, allowing them to meet personal obligations while pursuing career goals within the company (Baum, 2015).

Women-friendly policies adopted by hotels in different regions are as follows. Starwood Hotels and resorts that operate hotels worldwide including India and expected to diversify soon into Sri Lanka under management or franchised arrangements under the world-class brands of Sheraton luxury collection, St. Regis, Four Point by Sheraton, Le Meridien and Westin provide the more part-time option for women to progress gender diversity. Starwood further introduced a new policy of seven days paternity leave and three days bereavement leave for its directly managed employees. This will not only help women returning from maternity but also balance the work and family life. Grand Hyatt, Mumbai provides a more relaxed environment for women employees to groom themselves by giving staff recrea-

tion area. Forty hour work a week and one-hour extended lunch break with strict instructions to managers not to exceed the shift timings by Marriot India is another strategy to make employees balance work and family (Chaturvedi and Khosla, 2015).

Accor hotels with approximately 3700 hotels globally declared that multiculturism and diversity as their common source of wealth. While aiming for every woman to achieve respective goals, Accor expects more solidarity and respect among women. Diversity commitment programme Accor hotels comprise, combating all forms of discrimination, equal opportunities, diversity trading and awareness, publicising actions taken to promote diversity, reflecting diversity in offer products and services, encouraging debate and assessing diversity initiatives and effective governance for strategy and monitoring. Accor is one of the ten companies introduced the theme "HeforShe" movement from 2015. The theme is to promote gender equality and empowerment of women where the involvement of men is critical to the success of the campaign. Accor further signed principles for women empowerment supported by UN women globally and educated general managers and managers to gain knowledge on gender diversity issues and to implement and share best practices around the world. Three concepts introduced under this theme is to drive towards parity in pay and representation of women, encouraging male engagement at this moment, developing knowledge of the evolving ideal work and a dynamic hospitality industry. Asia Pacific division of Accor hotels has introduced leadership programme called high performing leaders (HPL) for female employees to expose them to the 12-month executive development programme. Understanding the importance of mentoring in women employees, Accor generation network has provided 139 mentor-mentee pairings worldwide. High performing leaders conduct mentoring plans for women leadership programmes to share the experience and assist mentees who aspire career growth within the organisation (Ollivier, 2016). Most of the countries in Europe have legislation to cover gender diversity in hotels and other segments. In Bulgaria, one needs a university degree by law giving a significant advantage to women to reach managerial positions. The stronger legal framework in Italy encourages women participation in the labour market with better child care facilities to combat dual roles (Obadic and Ivana, 2009).

In Sri Lanka, Jetwing Hotel Group collaborated with CARE International, a global non-government organisation and Diageo to provide hospitality training form young adults including rural women as part of women's empowerment programme of Diego. This skills training developing a talent pool attracted 54 women who are 33% of the participants well above the national average of the industry. Students were encouraged to take challenging responsibilities of non-tradition female roles in hotel industry which was an initiative to progress women for leadership positions (Baum, 2015).

Employers are more concerned about their operating profits and service quality and left with minimal options to mitigate occupational segregation hotels. Employers had to reluctantly give up attempts to reduce discrimination in instances where they tried to employ female porters as a pilot study. Customers were not willing to use female porters and carried their bags leaving a question mark on high-quality service in this area (Knox, 2008). However, such attempts by hoteliers to desegregate certain occupations such as porters and kitchen staff with novel and strategic programs are positive signs. Managers had to consider areas beyond their traditional recruitment and selection process to include these female staff in their structure. It was found that only young women are interested in doing male-dominated jobs and if provided additional organisational support, they remain in such positions. Hence, corporate support is vital to encourage women to take over nontraditional jobs (Knox, 2008).

Positive reinforcement should be given to assist such as more flexible work arrangements, investments in skills training, provision of a secure environment by maintaining law and order for women to travel to and from work to emphasise more favourable organisational culture for female employees in the hospitality industry. Women should be well represented to be working at professional or decision-making level rather than a service or clerical. Developing pathways to access informal networks, providing women mentors and the impact of unique job characteristics are the most significant concerns.

Managers in hotels should plan and organise on the vocational training to develop female employees to acquire skills, competencies, attitudes, personality, interest, self-concept and esteem considered as vital ingredients for women career aspirations. Gender neutral organisational policies without segregation and discrimination will enhance opportunities for women. It is important for spouses and family members to understand the nature of the hotel industry and supportive environment from the hotel owners for the women who opt to be continued while looking after a family (Zo, 2013). Akrivos *et al*. (2007) found that globalisation of markets growing steadily and rapidly making n individual differences in management material in career strategies for success is same for any geographical region. Hence, recruitment and retention practices can be standardised. Although the results may differ slightly, women managers can think of formulating networks of their own to get rid of isolation and socialising. One such system prevailing in the USA is women's food service forum (WFF).

Conclusion

It has been widely discussed that the women in the hotel industry occupy lower rankings of the hierarchy owing to various reasons. Some opted to continue in these positions to manage work and family commitments where are others who wish to develop their career path find obstacles. Gender segregation in the industry deprives chances of being becoming general managers of hotels as the positions of female employees are mostly recruited in housekeeping, marketing and human resources departments. Barriers for career progression can be mainly categorized into individual, organizational and societal factors. Glass ceiling, discrimination, networking, harassment and perceptions, glass ceiling, lack of role models, management attitudes, lack of opportunities, lack of training, gender stereotype, supportive working environment and cultural barriers found to be key barriers to female career progression in most of the countries. Special emphasis has been given to factors like the importance of having a sponsor, making lateral moves with new opportunities and being a '"token" in a male-dominated executive table in the USA. Encouraging women to take over new positions in male-dominated occupations with management support and flexible working hours and similar opportunities for married women to have balance work life might enhance women participation in the hotel industry. Providing pathways for female employees to form and progress with informal networks in the industry will also help them to access new opportunities.

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