

Women's Employability in the Hospitality Sector: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

Even though the hospitality industry provides a wide variety of job options, women continue to encounter obstacles in employability, career growth, and compensation discrepancies. This thorough awareness of the possibilities, problems, and strategies linked to women's employability in the hospitality sector is the goal of this systematic literature study that was carried out to give this comprehensive understanding. After conducting an exhaustive search approach across various databases, relevant academic publications, industry reports, and case studies published during the last ten years were located and examined. The study found that even though women in the hospitality industry have access to a large number of possibilities, they continue to face substantial obstacles. These obstacles include the gender wage gap, the glass ceiling effect, and problems related to maintaining a healthy work-life balance. In addition, the study stresses the significance of developing gender-sensitive policies as well as diversity and inclusion efforts to boost women's employability in the industry. The findings contribute to the academic literature as well as industry practices, providing policymakers and industry practitioners with information regarding efficient approaches to improve gender parity and women's career progress in the hotel sector.

Keywords: Women's Employability, Gender Wage Gap, Hospitality Sector, Career Progression

Introduction

The tourism and hospitality sectors provide many job possibilities in various fields, including those relating to lodging, transportation, and attraction locations (Aynalem, et al., 2016). Therefore, the availability of qualified and trained labor is an essential component in accomplishing any tourist development strategy or program; thus, workers are an absolute necessity in the tourism business (Selvam, 2019). On the other hand, employment in the tourist business is notoriously difficult due to its precarious nature, poor job status, lengthy and antisocial working hours, and low compensation.

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The most visible and immediate repercussions of such a situation are the difficulty in attracting suitable workers and the high staff turnover, both of which are expensive to the industry's performance (Je, et al., 2022).

One of the major global businesses lacking women in senior leadership positions is the tourism and hospitality sector. Although women make up the majority of the hotel staff (55.5%), men continue to hold the top positions (Korać, 2021). It is common knowledge that women struggle to advance to senior executive positions. Although there have been gradual changes throughout the years, there is room for improvement. Traditionally, the hospitality sector has been regarded as one of those service-oriented "care" businesses where women have found relatively more options for employment. Recent numbers do indeed corroborate this idea (García-Pozo, et al., 2012). Women made up 55.5% of the workforce in the hotel industry in 2017, according to Ozdemir and Harrah (2021). However, there are disproportionately more men than women in managerial positions (such as president, partner, and CEO). Even though there are now a sufficient number of women working in the industry, they still face prejudice and are paid less than their male counterparts. Women make up 41% of managers in the hotel industry, but less than 0.05% of top corporate management (Campos-Soria, et al., 2015). According to this study, innovative hospitality organizations of the 1990s and the following decade are especially well-suited for the participatory leadership styles of women. There are recommendations for retaining managers who prioritize their careers over family and work (Diaz & Umbreit, 1994).

The tourism and hospitality sector is a key contributor to the economy of the entire world, since it is responsible for the employment of millions of people all over the world (Kumar, 2018). Despite this, there is still a substantial problem with women's employability in the industry, with gender discrepancies continuing in opportunities, income, and career growth (Baum, 2007). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2019), the hospitality industry has seen tremendous expansion in recent years, which has resulted in an increase in the number of job opportunities available across a variety of subsectors, including hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and event management (Dutta, 2018). Even though there are positions available, women continue to experience difficulties in terms of their employability, career growth, and compensation inequities (Poulston, 2008). A gender wage gap has been found to exist in the hotel industry constantly (Mohapatra & Mahapatra, 2016) and women continue to be underrepresented in leadership and senior management jobs (Poulston, 2008). These findings have been published in several studies.

Opportunities for Women in the Hospitality Sector

According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (2019), the hospitality industry has been acknowledged for its ability to provide employment possibilities for women (Maslakçı & Sürücü, 2022), since it provides a variety of career routes and flexible working conditions. It has been discovered that women do very well in a variety of

positions, including customer service, event planning, and food and beverage management (Kumari & Garg, 2013). In addition, due to the worldwide character of the industry, there are chances for women to work in diverse situations and to create international connections (Koc, 2020).

Challenges Faced by Women in the Hospitality Sector

Despite the numerous possibilities that are out there, women who work in the hospitality industry encounter several obstacles that make it more difficult for them to get jobs and advance in their careers. The following are some of the most significant difficulties:

Gender Wage Gap: There has been some research done on the gender wage gap in the hotel industry, and the findings have consistently shown that women earn less than their male counterparts (Peshave & Gupta, 2017) These findings have been similar throughout all of the studies. According to (Ristova & Angelkova, 2019) researchers have hypothesized that variables such as occupational segregation, discrimination, and various career pathways could be factors that contribute to these differences. Studies have consistently reported a significant wage gap between male and female employees in the hospitality sector (Mohapatra & Mahapatra, 2016).

Glass Ceiling Effect: Studies have shown that women are significantly underrepresented in senior management and leadership roles in the hotel industry (Ristova & Angelkova, 2019) This phenomenon, known as the glass ceiling effect, has been well-documented. According to (Maslakçı & Sürücü, 2022), some of the factors that contribute to the influence of the glass ceiling are gender stereotypes, a lack of mentoring, and restricted access to powerful networks. Women are underrepresented in senior management and leadership positions, often experiencing barriers to career progression (Lathabhavan & Balasubramanian, 2017).

Work-Life Balance: According to research (Dutta, 2018) the demanding nature of the hospitality business makes it difficult to strike a healthy work-life balance. This is especially true for women who are also responsible for providing care for other people. Researchers have investigated the influence of work-life balance on women's career selections and levels of satisfaction, highlighting the need for more family-friendly policies and practices within the sector (Dutta, 2018) These studies have highlighted the necessity for more family-friendly policies and practices within the sector. The demanding nature of the hospitality industry, including long working hours and irregular schedules, can make it challenging for women to achieve a healthy work-life balance (Lathabhavan & Balasubramanian, 2017).

Strategies to Improve Women's Employability in the Hospitality Sector

- Work-life balance may be improved and women's career advancement can be aided by organizations implementing gender-sensitive policies(Zhou, et al., 2021). Policies such as flexible working arrangements and family-friendly policies are examples of such policies. Policies should be adopted by organizations.
- Advancing the Causes of Diversity and Inclusion The promotion of a culture that values diversity and inclusion is one way for businesses to raise the employability of women. This involves advocating for gender equality through specific initiatives for recruiting, training, and mentoring (Baum, 2007).
- Promoting Initiatives That Affect the Whole Industry According to research from (Kumari & Garg, 2013) collaboration between industry stakeholders, including government agencies, educational institutions, and professional associations, can assist overcome structural hurdles that prevent women from finding employment in the hotel industry.

Methodology

The terms "women," "employability," "hospitality sector," "opportunities," "challenges," and "strategies" were used in a methodical search of several online databases, such as Scopus, and Web of Science. The results of this investigation are presented in the following paragraphs. Articles that had been examined by other researchers, reports on the sector, and case studies that had been published in the past decade were all considered for inclusion in the literature review. The articles that were chosen underwent in-depth analysis so that pertinent material could be extracted and essential themes could be uncovered.

The technique that was used for this thorough and systematic literature evaluation followed a structured and in-depth approach to guarantee that relevant and high-quality sources were included in the study. The procedure consisted of the following significant steps:

1. Selection of Databases To carry out the literature search, we accessed some of the most well-known electronic databases available, such as Google Scholar Scopus, and Web of Science. These databases were selected because of their comprehensive coverage of scholarly publications, reports on the hotel and tourism industries, and case studies related to management.
2. Search Strategy We devised a search strategy by utilizing relevant terms and phrases, such as "women," "employability," "hospitality sector," "opportunities," and "challenges." We also used the word "strategies" in our search. The search was conducted by employing a variety of different combinations of these keywords and phrases to guarantee that a wide variety of different literature sources were included.

3. **Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion** To preserve the standard of the research as well as its continued applicability, we devised particular criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Articles, industry reports, and case studies that focused on women's employability in the hospitality sector and had been published within the past ten years were the types of research that were considered for inclusion as part of the inclusion criteria. Articles that were not suitable for evaluation either because they did not satisfy these criteria or because they were not pertinent to the study issue were disregarded.

4. **Extraction of Data and Analysis** The articles that were chosen for this study were meticulously examined to extract pertinent material and determine significant topics relating to the possibilities, difficulties, and viable methods for increasing women's employability in the hotel industry. To offer a cohesive overview of the available research on the subject, we performed a synthesis of the data that was retrieved.

Results

Opportunities for Women in the Hospitality Sector

Possibilities for Women to Advance their Careers in the Hospitality Industry Growth of the Industry. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (2019), the hospitality industry has seen tremendous expansion in recent years, which has resulted in the creation of a large number of work possibilities for women in a variety of subsectors, including hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, and event management. **Diverse Options for Professions**, the hospitality industry offers a variety of career routes, which gives women the opportunity to explore a variety of jobs and positions that are tailored to their unique set of talents, interests, and professional goals.

Obstacles That Women Face When Working in the Hospitality Industry

Gender Wage Gap

The research that has been done on the topic (Ogada, et al., 2021) demonstrates that the salary difference between men and women still exists in the hospitality business.

The Effect of the Glass Ceiling

According to the findings of Poulston's study (2008), women are grossly underrepresented in positions of leadership and senior management within the hotel business. These women also confront other challenges to their professional development, such as issues in maintaining a healthy work-life balance in their jobs, a lack of mentorship opportunities, and gender stereotypes in the workplace.

Harmony between Work and Life

The lengthy working hours, shift work, and high stress levels that are common in the hospitality sector make it difficult for women to maintain a healthy work-life balance (Masadeh, 2013). This makes it especially challenging for women to find a happy medium between their professional and personal responsibilities. Their capacity to combine their personal and professional commitments is hindered by factors such as long working hours, working shifts, and high-stress levels.

Strategies to Improve Women's Employability in the Hospitality Sector

Gender-Sensitive Policies According to (Mary) the implementation of gender-sensitive policies in the hospitality industry, such as flexible working arrangements and family-friendly regulations, can help solve challenges linked to work-life balance and boost women's ability to advance in their careers.

Initiatives Related to Diversity and Inclusion

According to (Araújo-Vila, et al., 2021) organizations may increase women's employability by adopting gender equality-focused recruiting, training, and mentorship programs. These programs are aimed at promoting gender equity.

Discussion

Implications of Findings

The results of this comprehensive literature analysis have several important repercussions, not only for industry professionals but also for those who formulate hospitality policy. As a means of addressing the obstacles that women confront and fostering a more welcoming atmosphere in the workplace, organizations ought to formulate and put into action policies that are gender-sensitive as well as diversity and inclusion programs. To encourage gender equality and women's employability in the sector, policymakers should also investigate the possibility of adopting industry-wide rules and standards.

Strengths and Limitations of the Review

A review should comprise both a thorough search technique and the incorporation of a wide variety of literary sources, such as academic publications, reports on the industry, and case studies. This method not only guarantees a complete comprehension of the subject matter, but also offers valuable insights into the possibilities, difficulties, and solutions connected to the employability of women in the hospitality industry.

Having said that, there are also certain restrictions attached to this evaluation. To begin, the scope of the review is restricted to publications that have been published during the past 10 years, which may preclude the inclusion of certain pertinent research published at an earlier date. Second, the review concentrates almost entirely on works written in English, to the exclusion of possibly pertinent information gleaned from sources other than those written in English. Last but not least, the review might be influenced by publication bias, which occurs when studies that produce significant or positive results are more likely to be published than studies that produce non-significant or negative outcomes.

Conclusion and Future Research Directions

The comprehensive literature study indicates that even though the hospitality industry provides women with a great deal of opportunity, they nevertheless face substantial obstacles in the form of income disparities between men and women, the glass ceiling effect, and a lack of work-life balance. Implementing laws that are gender sensitive as well as programs that promote diversity and inclusion are critical tactics for overcoming these issues and improving women's employability in the hospitality industry.

Over the past few decades, as more women gradually entered the workforce and attained significant positions, there has been an increase in interest in gender diversity in organizations. Given the advantages of workplace diversity, both academic and business research have focused on understanding how increasing gender diversity impacts organizational outcomes. There is still limited understanding of the impact of gender diversity on top positions in the hospitality and tourism sectors. Both previous studies and the current analysis presented in this paper indicate that gender diversity may impact the performance of businesses in the hospitality industry. However, the extent of this influence varies depending on the chosen performance indicators and analytical constructs.

This analysis might be expanded in further research by investigating the efficacy of certain methods and policies in enhancing the employability of women in the hospitality sector. Additionally, this review could be expanded by investigating the influence of cultural variations on the experiences and opportunities available to women working in the industry. In addition, researchers might explore the role of male allies and their contributions to the development of a workplace that is more inclusive and fair in the hospitality industry.

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