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Reflecting the Transformative Change - Managing Gender Diversity in corporate with special reference to Hotel Industry

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Abstract:Managing Diversity is a huge challenge in todays global world. Although women have made great strides in diverse fields , gender inequity still exists in various forms.

Well gender distinction is not just a social concern. It could also create a competitive edge to address the global challenges that corporations are facing and will face. In corporate world, female representation falls with hierarchy. The limited female presence in leadership positions is an issue to be addressed. In Europe, females only average 12 % when it comes to higher positions i.e., companies' boards of directors. It is 15 % in the America and drops to 5% in India and down to 3 % in the Middle East and North Africa.

Quotas have only recently arrived in the business world. The most widely known example of corporate board quotas is in Norway, where a 40% gender quota for public limited, state-owned and inter-municipality companies was introduced in December 2003. There has been use of voluntary gender quotas in the corporate sector.

There is substantial variation in the proportion of female managers across industries. Some industries e.g. Primary sector, energy and water have no firms with a woman among their top CEOs or vice-directors, while other industries are more 'female-friendly' like private service and retail, hotels and restaurants. This clearly indicates substantial industry differences.

This paper discusses and explains main barriers to diversity across hotel industry. The conceptual paper suggests and encourages hotel employers should place female employees in more opportunity-enhancing positions so that they can exploit or utilize their talents and increase the possibility of climbing up the corporate ladder. Engaging women in the workforce worldwide would enhance organizational uniqueness and productivity

Keywords: Male/Female ratio, Corporate, Hospitality, Performance.

INTRODUCTION:

"So often, it takes only one woman to make a difference. If you empower that woman with information, training, or a microloan, she can lift up her entire family and contribute to the success of her community. Multiply that one woman's impact by a hundred or a thousand, and perhaps a million lives can change. Condoleezza Rice, former US Secretary of State" (Ernst and Young, 2009, p.14).

It is mostly about building a workplace where each woman can develop and grow without encountering gender-specific barriers.

As women represent over half of the global talent pool, it is clear that they should be at the forefront of the economic and social scene, not just out of a sense of fairness, but to ensure that the very best minds, men's and women's alike, are brought together to address the challenges that our societies face. Achieving good male/female ratio in corporations, at all levels, is a long and demanding journey, which requires the implication of the whole company and the strong commitment of the top management.

Women's space in corporate governance has been the focus of many research studies and a crucial agenda for many activist groups. For instance, the European Women's Professional Network, a non-profit organisation founded in late 2002 with over 3,500 corporate members and entrepreneurs, commissions a bi-annual study on gender diversity known as Board Women Monitor.

Over recent decades hospitality sector has made considerable advancements and contributions to finance and job opportunities creation. The environment in which hospitality management operates is diverse in terms of the sectors being associated and makes it one of the complex areas for working.

crowford (2003) suggested that management, through its discriminatory practices; fail to adequately utilize its human resource, negatively affecting gender relationships and worker commitment, jeopardizing overall organizational effectiveness. Study also explored that the disparity in the treatment of male and female extends to internal promotion, even where women have superior

qualifications to their male counterparts.

Hemmati, M. (2000) researched that women have achieved higher level of education and contributing 40% of global work place. Yet their share of management positions remains unacceptably low, with just a tiny proportion succeeding in breaking through the "glass ceiling". Women are often forced to choose casual labour, part time and seasonal employment .

It can be concluded from the existing studies there is a wide inequality between females and males on work related issues of promotion, pay, training and family issues such as childcare responsibility, being married, conflicts with family responsibilities and advancement. The studies show biases of men towards women employees at various stages.

According to Sparrowe & Iverson (1999) gender biased income, workforce participation, occupational crowding disparity persists and pernicious forms of sex discrimination continue in the hospitality industry of United States.

Diversity in many ways is closely connected to another term that we see commonly used today, which is 'Change'. Managing diversity is an essential part of change management. If Indian companies have to thrive in today's changing global marketplace, it has to learn to manage diversity, both within the company and without.

India has witnessed significant demographic changes in the past twenty years; many people from traditionally agricultural communities have now joined the ranks of the middle class. Also, large numbers of women are now being employed in traditionally male dominated areas.

The reason for the increasing levels of diversity at the market place can be summed up in one word – Globalization. Though a much maligned and overworked word, no other term captures so effectively the situation in the markets today. The challenge for Indian companies that cannot manage marketplace diversity effectively is enormous. This is true not only in global marketplace, but increasingly so in the Indian marketplace itself. (BMA report, 2009).

GENDER DIVERSITY AND WORK PRACTICES

The gender proportions in the workplace have shifted in recent history. More women have joined the work force with valuable work experience and educational background, thus qualifying them for management jobs.

In 1997, the Conference Board of Canada demonstrated a strong relationship between high governance index scores and revenue growth and recognition as leader in the sector. Governance indices include board's activism, independence and style of functioning. In 1998 Millstein and Mac Avoy established a statistically significant correlation between an active, independent board and superior corporate performance.

Research material available concerning gender diversity in Corporate, including the hospitality sector does reckon the disparity in many fronts including income levels. A disparate distribution of income between male and female employees exists in the hospitality industry, with female earning less (Biswas and Cassell, 1996; Purcell, 1996;

Sparrowe and Iverson, 1999). Gender-based income disparity has been confirmed as a form of sex discrimination within the hospitality industry (e.g., Sparrowe and Iverson, 1999; Thrane, 2007). There also have been several examples of research highlighting differences between men and women managers in effective strategy implementation (Schaap, Stedham, and Yamamura, 2008). Still other research has documented gender differences in promotions to managerial positions (Manwa and Black, 2002; Thrane, 2007), wherein men are over-represented in preferred positions that pay better.

The glass ceiling continues to pose a barrier for advancement as women are still excluded from the male networks and receive median weekly earnings below their male counterparts (Women in Management). The Catalyst Group reports that companies which had high women represented in its senior management team, returned a 35% on equity (ROE), figures much higher than other companies with fewer women at authoritative positions. Although other variables could have contributed to this type of returns, the competitive advantage of employing and promoting women cannot be ignored (Diversity Initiatives, 2004).

Main reason for this disparity may be that female employees have a Dual responsibility (higher domestic responsibility) and mobility requirements. Adib and Guerrier (2003) explored the ways in which gender interacts with such variables as race, ethnicity, and the class background of chefs and their employees in the context of how they position themselves within organizational power arrangements. Adib and Guerrier (2003) concluded that the lack of power resulting from employees' immigrant status was the most significant reason behind harassment of female employees working in the same department in the Hotel. Kattara's (2005) finding citied characteristics such as age, work experience, and work-family conflict as main factors that might stop female employees from reaching the top corporate positions within the Egyptian hotel industry.

Media by and large highlighted information on the directors of the board. However, practitioners and academics have been interested in the composition of board and the slow advancement of women in the corporate boards. This is baffling due to the fact that equal opportunities policies have been around for more than 4 decades. A Google search shows WebPages in excess 350,000 for female or women corporate board directors, including more than 25,000 WebPages in Google Scholar. Extant research shows emergence from an interdisciplinary academic community across management, leadership, hotel, entrepreneurship, sociology, finance, law, corporate governance, and service industry. Various research findings, notable among them being the reports of McKinsey and the conference Board of Canada, emphasise that inclusion of women in the Board is not just the right thing, but the 'bright' thing.

In the Hospitality industry, corporations such as Marriott and Carlson have been recognized by Fortune (Hotel-Online, 2003) and Working Mother (2002) as one of the 95 100 best places to work. Working Mother also recognized Carlson as the best in the industry while for three consecutive years (2002-2004), NAACP Lodging Industry Report Card ranked the Marriott Corporation with the

highest grade among other hotel corporations in the lodging industry (Hotel-Online, 2004). The company had launched its diversity program more than fifteen years ago.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES ON GENDER EQUITY

Women are still not represented adequately on boards of corporations. Improvements have been seen in this area in some countries. However, gender diversity within executive committees remains very low.

The survey done by Mckinsey in 2010 suggests that a majority of leaders, both genders, recognize that good male/female ratio is a performance driver. But the actual implementation of these measures in corporations remains limited. It is indeed surprising that the achievement of diversity is not at the top of – nor even on – companies' strategic agenda: only 25 percent of respondents identified this as a top-10 priority in their company. This is a concern, as earlier studies by McKinsey shows a link between having gender diversity as a top priority and achieving women representation in C-level positions (CEO, COO, CFO, etc.). Moreover, the companies that have placed this topic high on their strategic agenda implement on average more gender-diversity measures.

Against common sense, the increase in the number of female university graduates will not by itself be sufficient to close the gender gap in top management positions. The projection of historic trends demonstrates that unless prevailing corporate norms and rules for promotion are changed, the growth in female graduate numbers will have a marginal impact on women's representation in executive committees.

Women's broadening career paths have not led to a proportional increase in female leaders. Increased education and labour participation rates among women are only weakly correlated with the number of women in leadership positions in the corporate sector.

MEASURES TO IMPROVE GENDER EQUITY

Measures identified by McKinsey & Company focuses on organizations should work on options for flexible working conditions (e.g., part-time programs) and or locations (e.g., telecommuting). The CEO and the executive team should monitor progress of the gender diversity programs and implement one if absent. Also monitor programs to encourage female networking and role models. The focal point as a measure mentioned in the report stressing on the work life balance.

Encouragement or mandates for senior executives to mentor junior women is necessary to improve work ethics and culture in an organization.

Inclusion of gender-diversity indicators in executives' performance reviews, Skill-building programs aimed specifically at women, Performance evaluation systems that neutralize the impact of parental leaves ,Indicators of the company's performance in hiring, retaining, promoting, and developing women, Systematic requirement that at least one female candidate be in each promotion pool and most important Gender quotas in hiring, retaining, promoting, or developing women are few pointers suggested as measures to improve gender equality in organizations.

The corporate workplace has traditionally been a male-dominated one. This has changed greatly in recent days in many of the business sectors like Technology Services, Finance & Banking and Retail.

One significant change now is that men and women are being employed in the same roles within a company, whereas earlier even in the most diverse of organizations, there was clear demarcation as to what was a 'woman's job' and what was not . As a result the Challenges from Gender Diversity this has brought with it a fresh set of challenges from the HR perspective. Gender Diversity is one of the reasons many HR policies fail; one man's bread is often another woman's poison.

One sector that has been relatively successful in promoting Gender diversity is the IT Industry. Even here, the Gender ratio is skewed heavily in favor of men. A study by the magazine Dataquest in 2002 showed that the ratio of men to women in the major IT companies ranged from 2:1 to 24:1. Another study by the same magazine in 2007 showed that the representation of women in the IT workforce was around 24% in 2005. In 2007 this figure had marginally improved to 26.4% which is a good sign in Indian organizations(BTA report , 2008).

BARRIERS IN ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN ORGANIZATIONS

According to the data published by McKinsey based on Survey conducted over the past four years around the world, the issue of the double burden – which is currently inherent in most models of society – and its incompatibility with the demands associated with senior management remains onerous. The dominant model in the business world (or the one perceived as such) seems to demand total availability as well as greater geographical mobility ("anytime, anywhere"). Both male and female leaders more frequently quote these two barriers as the biggest ones preventing the advancement of women. Interestingly, women respondents identified a third important barrier: the reticence of many women to advocate for themselves.

Costantini (1990) documents a significant aspirations gap between male and female activists in the U.S. from 1964-1984 through self-reported political ambitions. Women face an additional barrier to entry from the lack of female predecessors and role models demonstrating that it is a place where women can be successful. Women's preference for non-competitive environments may limit their drive to contest in competitive corporate advancement process. Niederle and Vesterlund (2007) shows that women prefer competitive engagements less than half as often as men of similar ability. Gneezy, Niederle, and Rustichini (2003) utilizes a series of lab experiments to determine that, among men and women who perform similarly in non-competitive environments, women are less successful than men in tournament-based environments.

The system of selection for corporate board members often makes use of networks of existing board members and senior management of a firm, who in most cases are predominantly men. A commonly cited reason for the low level of female leadership on boards is a lack of

access of potential female candidates to informal networking opportunities, particularly to break into male-dominated networks (Janiak 2003, Fairfax 2006, Lord Davies 2011). Since they are relying on their existing networks, selection committees may be restricted on finding well-qualified women to elect to their boards.

HOSPITALITY SECTOR AND GENDER DIVERSITY

"I measure the progress of (diversity) male/female ratio looking at the number and percentage of women assigned to senior operational roles like country manager or general manager"

- President, Europe group, of a Food and Beverage company.

Restaurants and hotels have long struggled with the issue. As recently as the 1970s hospitality industry and trade unions maintained separate union locals and hiring halls for men and women. In large urban hotels unions and employers negotiated separate wage rates and working conditions for housekeepers and "hallmen" ; the hallmen — who as the job title implied were always men — maintained a hotel lobby's restroom while housekeepers or maids — all women — cleaned toilets and made beds in a guest room. Until gender-segregated union locals were abolished separate wage and working conditions applied to banquet servers as well while in the travel industry airline flight attendants, many of whom were nurses, were forced to resign if they chose to marry or no longer fit into their uniforms.

At workplaces select industries and jobs are termed as female jobs. Service industries such as insurance, banking, travel, telecommunication, and hotels are considered to have "women jobs". Particularly in hotels women constitute majority of secretaries, front office assistant, housekeeping attendant, housekeeping supervisor, executive housekeeper, guest relation executive, in positions supportive of men, who comprises the majority of front office manager, shift manager, food & beverage manager, food & beverage controller, human resource manager, training manager respectively (Roos and Gatta, 2001). FHRAI (June 2002) attributes this to personal qualities of patience, tolerance, willpower and empathy for others that come from being a mother. This points towards occupational sex segregation (Bose and Whaley, 2001). It is supported by an HVS survey in the 1100 hotels of the country that found percent of women employees to be higher in 5 star deluxe hotels at all levels, including managers, supervisors and staff. It comes down in lower star category hotels the all-India women general manager average was found 2-3 per cent only.

A study done on Turkish Hospitality sector suggest a significant gender bias for recruiting efforts and salary offered. These results show that personnel in the Turkish hospitality industry perceive that male recruiters are not only more likely to offer applicants a job but also to offer them the highest starting salary. These findings imply that, contrary to the situation in some Western countries, such as the United Kingdom (Purcell, 1996), the Turkish hospitality industry still may be perceived as being male-dominated where the hiring and salary decisions are made by male managers. Additionally, these findings are supported by a significant

gender bias regarding supervisory preference; specifically, employees prefer to work for male supervisors more than for female supervisors. However, it is interesting to note that employees are indifferent as to whether male or female supervisors perform the other supervising functions of training employees, providing a motivating environment for them, or rewarding them.

A significant gender bias for recruiting, salary offered, and supervisory preference, suggesting that gender matters for these managerial activities. These findings are consistent with prior research (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998; Bass et al., 1996; Rosener, 1990, 1996; Vilkinas and Cartan, 1997). The study also shows that when gender bias is examined vis-à-vis the hotel employees' demographics characteristics, we gain a deeper and better understanding of how gender bias affects the Turkish hotel industry. The results indicate that gender bias is impacted the most by the departments in which personnel work, but not nearly as much by the employees' education level or their position in the organizational hierarchy, and not at all by their age. The implication is that examining gender bias at an aggregate level may not provide sufficient understanding of the nature and/or extent of perceived gender bias in managerial activities; indeed, the aggregate level may be only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Also, the non-systematic patterns of gender bias vis-à-vis the employees' demographic characteristics further support the potential complexity of gender bias in the Turkish hospitality industry.

Representative Data classified by gender shows male managers were reported more frequently as General Managers (55%), and in the Food and Beverage (74%), Financial Management (57%), Engineering (96%), and Security (86%) departments. Female managers were more often reported in Rooms (52%), Sales and Marketing (67%), and Human Resources (73%) Departments.

High-profile companies in the hospitality industry are being recognized for highlighting gender equality and other diversity issues. George Chavel's efforts earned foodservice giant Sodexo the #1 spot on Diversity Inc.'s 2010 Top 50 Companies for Diversity list. According to the magazine Sodexo "is at the forefront of creative ways to examine the ROI of diversity initiatives." Sodexo was also honored by the National Restaurant Association in 2010 with the NRA's Faces of Diversityaward, which was presented by NRA's respected CEO Dawn Sweeney. Four other leading hospitality brands appeared on Diversity's 2010 top employer list: at #7-Marriott International ; #19-Starwood Hotels & Resorts; #24-MGM Mirage, and; #33-Walt Disney. Marriott: Diversity heaped praise on CEO Bill Marriott, calling him "forthright and deeply inclusive" and noting the company has "increasingly made visible" its diversity programs. Starwood Hotels & Resorts: At Starwood CEO Fritz van Paasschen "personally signs off on" executive bonuses; 20% of senior man agement's incentive compensation is directly tied to diversity initiatives.

Several studies demonstrate a disparate distribution of income between male and female employees in the hospitality industry, with females earning less than their male counterparts (Biswas and Cassell, 1996; Purcell 1996; Sparrowe and Iverson, 1999). Gender-basedincome

disparity has been confirmed as a form of sex discrimination within the hospitality industry (Sparrowe and Iverson, 1999; Thrane, 2007). Still other research has documented gender differences in promotions to managerial positions (Manwa and Black, 2002; Thrane, 2007), wherein men are over-represented in preferred positions that pay better. Part of the reason for this disparity may be that female employees may interrupt their working lives due to preferences for marriage and caring for children.

Of course, gender might not be the sole cause of disparities in the distribution of income and managerial employment in the hospitality industry. Other variables might interact with gender to produce these disparities.(Musa, 2009)

Abundant evidence suggests that women's employment in the hospitality sector is segregated both horizontally and vertically. Women are segregated into those areas of employment which require their domestic skills and their "feminine" characteristics, as shown in the works of Enloe (1989), Kinnaird, Kothari and Hall (1994), and Adkins (1992). According to Burrell, Manfredi, Rollin, Prize and Stead (1997), cleaning, and reception in hotels in the UK,

France, Spain and Italy are occupational areas where women predominate. The barrier against women working in reception in small hotels is still current, due to the need for security at night or for carrying heavy suitcases, which stereotypically excludes women. On the other hand, bar jobs are dominated by men in Spain, the UK, and France, but are more evenly distributed in Italy. These authors found that there is a high proportion of men in kitchen-related jobsin France and the UK. In Spain, this proportion is more balanced, whereas women dominate in Italy. However, the women working in this area are more likely to be washing up and cleaning rather than cooking. In the Balearic Islands, Ramos-Mir, Rey-Maqueira and Tugores-Ques (2004) report that the maintenance, bar and kitchen departments in hotels are dominated by men, whereas cleaning is dominated by women. Ng and Pine (2003) show that horizontal segregation also exists at the managerial level. Women dominate in the areas of personnel, training, conferences, and banquets, whereas men predominate in the management of areas such as security, food and beverage, control and finances. This distribution between functional areas suggests horizontal segregation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

All the major contributing attributes points towards the already proven barrier ' Dual responsibility' which is affecting the Male/Female ratio in the large scale hotel category.

The companies that will succeed in fostering effective leadership, sustained by diversity of practices and of gender, will gain a unique opportunity to develop a competitive edge that latecomers will find hard and long to acquire; especially as the barrier lies in culture and mindsets. Today, taking a lead in gender diversity is a strategic decision.

There are both Pros and Cons of the Corporate Quota system. More research is needed on the long-term effects of corporate gender quotas, in addition to research in a larger variety of contexts once the board quota target deadlines are reached in other countries.

Of course, all enabling policies, processes, and infrastructure are critical to supporting women's development initiatives, but the means to remove the glass ceiling have to be in the hands of women themselves. Women will build their own way to the top mainly based on the supportive learning, coaching or mentoring initiatives that companies put in place.

In the Indian context, promoting and managing diversity, particularly at the work place would go a long way in promoting social progress and help bring down barriers created by differences in Language, Caste, Ethnicity and Religion.

All discussions lead to similar conclusions, which support the vigour of the results. The objective of this study was to deepen on gender discrimination and diversity. The distinction is of interest, because each discussed pattern has different causes and consequences.

Cleaning jobs, customer service and jobs with less responsibility in the area of administration are dominated by women, whereas maintenance, jobs with a high level of responsibility in the areas of kitchen, restoration, and administration are dominated by men. However, although intermediate posts in all functional areas are integrated regarding gender, they are characterised by being transition occupations toward greater responsibility posts for men, whereas they represent the upper limit regarding womens' chances of promotion. These results are similar to those found in other countries with similar characteristics (Burrell et al., 1997), which means that cultural and social customs are an important explanatory factor for the existing segregation patterns.

The results obtained show that occupational segregation is an important problem in hotels. These estimations suggest that the administrative authorities must apply more resources to solve this problem in both industries, but above all, in the hotel industry. The relevance of the problem increases with the worker's age, but is reduced by educational level. Occupational segregation could decrease if workers improve their human capital and the issue of women's access to training within the establishments should be addressed.

To achieve gender equality objectives, McKinsey & Company suggested that it will be necessary to follow a transformational change management approach. This includes: "creation of a clear vision and compelling business case for change; integration with – and refinement of – the core business management processes; capability building (e.g. helping men and women more effectively sponsor others; and leadership role modeling not just at the top, but throughout management levels to the front-line" (Arora et.al., 2011, p. 3).

Women should understand that it is incumbent upon them to have high expectations of their organizational leaders in terms of empowerment and gender equality.

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