Chapter 15
Gender Equality Policies in Indian Hotel Industry:
A Study of Selected Hotels

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ABSTRACT

An awareness of the under-representation of women in top positions in the corporate world has prompted many corporations to review their policies and practices. If firms are to remain productive and competitive in an increasingly demanding global market place, they must recruit, retain, develop, and promote their most talented people, regardless of their sex. This is increasingly seen not only as the right or ethical thing to do, but also the smart thing to do. And in keeping with this realization, a small number of leading edge organizations are attempting to become more women-friendly. Having women in key positions is argued to be associated with long term company success and competitive advantage adding value through women's distinctive set of skills and creating cultures of inclusion through a diverse workforce. This chapter tries to evaluate the gender equality policies in selected Indian hotels and finds a mixed picture. The analysis suggests that majority of the hotels are not yet adopting pro- active policies to encourage the representation or empowerment of women in hotels. Female employees tend to be concentrated at entry or operational level and their presence is lower at senior positions. Based on the results study suggests the Indian Hotel industry to rework on HR policies to provide equal and equitable opportunities for female employees.

INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of free India guarantees all its citizen's equal rights and it goes a step further and makes a special provision for safeguarding the interest of women. Legally speaking they enjoy equal rights in all aspects of the social, economic and political setup of the country (Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham) (2008). While gender inequalities in many areas have been on the agenda of social research and activism for decades, gender inequality in organizational leadership has been sadly overlooked. Women have attained remark-

able success in what was once considered the "male domain", of the working world (Global banking conglomerate standard chartered (2011, March-9). Worldwide the number of women in the workforce has increased over the years with a corresponding increase in the number of highly educated women equipped with technical know-how. However, discrimination against women in the workplace has impacted their advancement in jobs that acquire higher societal recognition among men. Gender inequality in the workplace is exhibited in various forms, such as occupational segregation, gender-based wage gap and discrimination. Their presence in senior management level is negligible (Global consulting technology and Accenture 2011, March). Women are graduating and entering management positions, yet there is a bottleneck at middle management levels. while entry is easier, progression slows down after the middle level and in most situations, regardless of their technical and professional qualifications or achievements, women are prevented from climbing up in the corporate ladder to reach the top (Krishnan & Daewoo, 2005). In India, research and surveys reveal that men out-number women in terms of attaining top managerial positions. Review of secondary sources shows that data on Indian female managers is almost non-existent. . A tremendous amount of research has been undertaken in this area with "Breaking through the Glass Ceiling" by International Labour Organization (2004) being one of the most comprehensive international studies. The very fact of women being adequately represented in the work-force, but hardly present in the managerial positions got labeled "the glass ceiling", "a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women and minorities from moving up in the management hierarchy"(Krishnan & Daewoo, 2005). Women make up 9, 1% of the workforce in the Hotel and restaurant industry and men 90, 9%. According to the 2001 census, in India, 90, 07% of employees in hotels and restaurants are male; women only fill 9, 93% of the positions in

this field. In Delhi 3370 women work in hotels and restaurants compared to 56780 males (Lan & Wang Leung, 2001).

Rich mind of educated female talent has been an important factor in allowing India to become one of the world's fastest-growing economies. But recently this particular dynamo has been showing signs of strain (Correll, Shelley, Benard & Paik. 2007). According to a recent Nielsen survey in The Economic Times, (2011) "Women of Tomorrow," 6,500 women across 21 different nations, Indian women are the most stressed in the world today. An overwhelming 87% of Indian women said they felt stressed most of the time, and 82% reported that they had no time to relax.

The Nielsen survey's respondents blame the difficulty of juggling multiple roles at home and work. Career opportunities for women in "the New India" are rapidly expanding, but family expectations and social mores remain rooted in tradition. Indian women are pulled by demands from relatives as they attempt to conform to the paradigm of "ideal daughter," "ideal wife," and "ideal daughter-in-law." Among the many interviews conducted in researching the book, it wasn't at all rare to hear of successful professionals who woke up at 4:30 a.m. to make breakfast and lunch for children and parents-in-law, put in a full day at work, then returned home to clean up after the extended family and prepare dinner. Ambitious women often feel they have to overcompensate at work, too, to counter ingrained preconceptions about their commitment or competence. "There's a sense that a woman is just working until she gets married, [that] she is not a long-term resource," said one senior finance professional. But proving their worth by putting in longer hours or volunteering for business trips — the conventional methods to further one's career — isn't always possible (Keene & Reynolds, 2005). These stresses have serious ramifications for India's continued economic growth. More than half (55%) of the Indian women interviewed have encountered workplace bias severe enough to make them consider scaling

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