Women in Hospitality: Challenges admits Covid-19 Global Pandemic

C L De Silva[1] and D A C S Silva[2]

[1,2]NSBM Green University, Sri Lanka
lasitha.d@nsbm.lk

ABSTRACT

Before the COVID, there were more than 2.3 million visitors in Sri Lanka. Travel and tourism income remained a significant contributor to the national economy. By 2022, Colombo will open more than 14 hotel projects in its pipeline to meet the growing number of passengers as per the industry strategy. Sri Lanka reported around 60% of its occupancy last year, but key indicators of Easter terrorist attacks revealed less than 2018 in April 2019. It has been predicted, for example, that 25,000-30,000 additional employees would be needed per year to accommodate for the expected rise in guest arrivals to the region, post-COVID forecast. Still, only less than 1,000 hotel management training graduates have generated annually, as per the tourism industry higher educational institute figures. It needs to build a good picture of the hotel industry to draw more women into the workforce to bridge the market's expanding labour shortage, to meet state economic objectives, more efficiently. The industry is offering equal opportunities for woman from its initiation in 1966 after the II world war and expansion in the same year with the approval of parliaments Act No. 10 of 1966.

1. INTRODUCTION

The diverse landscapes and natural wonders of Sri Lanka have attracted a growing number of visitors. In 2018, there were more than 2.3 million visitors, more than 2.17 million in 2017, recorded in Sri Lanka. Travel and tourism income remained a significant contributor to the national economy, and for two consecutive years, they contributed 5.1 % to GDP in 2017 and 2018. Tourism foreign exchange in 2017 rose to 15.9% of total foreign exchange revenue. By 2022, Colombo will open more than 14 hotel projects in its pipeline to meet the growing number of passengers. However, the pipeline was constructed to supply about 2000 rooms to the luxury market and to rely less on the budgetary and medium-sized regions with around 600 rooms. In 2018, the average daily revenue of LKR 20,500 and daily revenue of LKR12,300 were reported in each bed. Sri Lanka reported around 60 % of its occupancy that year, but the key indicators of Easter terrorist attacks revealed less than 2018 in April 2019 (IPS, 2020).

This review includes a detailed history review of Sri Lanka's hospitality industry, including evaluating sectoral segments, the general environment and emerging business patterns, and the causes for women's low participation among the hospitality industry in Sri Lanka.

2. THE KEY MARKET TRENDS BEFORE-COVID-19

Sri Lanka is speedily recovering and attracting more visitors from the Easter terrorist attacks. The terrorist attacks on Easter in April 2019 resulted in a 70.8 % decrease in tourist arrivals in Sri Lanka and a smaller number of arrivals of about 37,000 registered in May 2019, creating a significant gap in the percentage change in 2018 for the same month. It succeeded, however, in bouncing back and regaining its momentum in

tourism arrivals over time. In June, the change in the share of arrivals was around 57 %, in July 46.9 %, in August 28.3 %, in September 27.2 %, in October 22.5 % and in November 9.5 %, 2019. The population accounts for approximately 20 %, 11.3 %, 10.9 %, 6.7 %and 4.7 %, respectively, of international tourists from Sri Lanka to China, the UK, Germany and Australia (Arunatilake, 2020).

3. Industry Competitive Landscape

In Sri Lanka, the hospitality sector faces tough competition from both international and local chain City hotels and resorts to resorts, boutique and other single and small-scale properties. Therefore, a distinctive aspect of the brands might be the location and architecture of the hotels. Moreover, big international and local brands such as Cinnamon, Jetwing, Aitken Spence, Hilton, Marriot are spending more on training for their workers to boost customer loyalty, sustainability measures and new experiences. Today hotels are striving to create lasting experiencers for their guest in order for repeat clientele and customer loyalty. Today the spectrum of tourism activities including lodging, food, accommodation, travel is based on creating lasting experience.

3.1. Global Tourism Trends and Opportunities in Sri Lanka

People are pleased to fly around the world while enjoying different communities and lifestyles to explore global dynamics. Because some find the experience soothing, it is quickly becoming widespread for travel. It all applies to the adventure requirements of the user. The gamut of international travel is rising dramatically, and the ultimate result is the establishment of the foreign tourism and hospitality sectors.

The tourism sector is a principal service export from Sri Lanka. After foreign worker remittances and textiles and clothes, it is currently the third-highest export earner and brought in USD 4.4 billion in 2018 alone, equivalent to 4.9 % of its GDP. The sector has undergone explosive growth since the end of the armed war in 2009, with tourist arrivals growing by around 2.8 times over the last decade; in 2018, the highest annual number of tourist arrivals of 2,333,796 have registered. In Sri Lanka, the tourism industry has shown significant improvement and expansion, notwithstanding the downturn following the terrorist attacks on Easter Sunday in April 2019. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in China, which is the source of a significant number of Sri Lankan tourists, and the subsequent revocation of visas for Chinese tourists on arrival in Sri Lanka, along with the clampdown of the Chinese government on outbound tourism, have already adversely affected the overall arrival of tourists in the area.

Nevertheless, tourism in Sri Lanka has proven to be resilient. It is recognised as a significant growth area in critical national policy articles, including Vistas of Riches and Splendour, to raise annual arrivals of tourists to seven million and foreign exchanges to 10 billion US dollars by 2025. The same paper stresses the need to economically and socially empower women in the region. Besides, increasing women's jobs would significantly decrease poverty and contribute to economic growth. Given that tourism provides direct and indirect employment, this blog discusses the main barriers to the inclusion of women in the hotel industry in Sri Lanka, and how their contribution to achieving these ambitious goals can be improved (Uresha, & Obeyesekere, 2020).

4. Low Participation of Women Among the Hotel Workforces

Given its rising significance, the tourism industry in Sri Lanka and its development face many restrictions, including a severe shortage of qualified human capital. It has been predicted, for example, that 25,000-30,000 additional workers would be needed per year to accommodate for the expected rise in guest arrivals to the region. Still, only less than 1,000 hotel training graduates have generated annually. In this regard, the National Policy System seeks to raise the number of employees from 388,487 to up to one million, thus developing technical and higher educational institutes for tourism training in the major tourist

sites and promoting desirable skills development courses (IPS, 2020).

Women are highly under-represented in Sri Lanka tourism work force, with women, accounting for less than 10 % of the tourism formal working population, relative to 54 % internationally, compared to the sizeable female representation in the tourism industry worldwide, with some regional variations. In particular, in individual nations, such as Mexico, South Korea and South Africa, jobs in the sector are far greater than in the rest of the economy. Moreover, in Sri Lanka, female enrolment in hotel schools is disturbingly insufficient. In the sense of a rising sector and the country's still low female labour force participation rate, these numbers do not forecast well, which 33.6 % compared to 73 % for male employees. Male employees exceeded women in all occupational groups within the hospitality field of Sri Lanka, except for guest relations and front office employees and a certain amount of marketing functions. Thus, attracting more women into the sector would help solve the increasing lack of human resources, which is a crucial barrier to its development (Ramalu, & Janadari, 2020).

4.1. Why are Women Losing Industry Opportunities?

The strong presence of women in the global tourism industry has begun to several encouraging variables, such as ease of entry due to less focus on structured education and preparation, greater emphasis on personality and hospitality expertise and the availability of part-time jobs. In Sri Lanka, though, it seems that societal expectations, values, and biases are holding women away from the industry. Despite the reality that hotels are searching for more female personnel, women are better employers than male employees due to many reasons.

Industry occupations are perceived to be socially unsuitable for women, especially single women. They are frequently related to illegal activity such as prostitution, drugs, safety problems (sexual harassment) and health problems (sexually transmitted diseases), stereotypes perpetuated by the media. Consequently, parents and husbands have prevented their children and their partners, particularly female children, from pursuing a hotel industry career. According to a World Bank survey on women's involvement in the Sri Lankan labour force, 85% of respondents said that women are likely to abandon their tourism work after marriage. Studies often illustrate other factors that have prevented women and young people from pursuing work opportunities in Sri Lankan hotels. However, these involve degrading job titles in the industry, such as 'bell boy' relative to more dignified titles and types of jobs in rival industries; favourable international jobs and self-employment opportunities elsewhere in the country; weak English command; low wages and poor career development prospects; lack of job protection and public sector retirement benefits; Women's involvement is often influenced by the unequal distribution of vocational training centres in the world since they are less inclined to participate in and move programmes further from home than others. In this regard, it is promising that the government has recognised the need to set up more technical and higher educational institutes for tourism training throughout the world (Ruiz-Palomo, León-Gómez, & García-Lopera, 2020).

5. How to Increase Women's Participation

It needs to build a good picture of the hotel industry to draw more women into the workforce to bridge the market's expanding labour shortage. Global awareness-building and recruiting programmes with strong community engagement in rural areas, aimed at educating the public about the working practices, history and essence of hotel work, should be carried out to overcome the misconception associated with hotel workers, employees, hotel organisations, and the government. The industry also needs to involve the media in collaboration with the government to resolve the myths regarding open employment and occupational protection, whilst emphasising the significance of the sector and its contribution to the economy. Around the same period, as part of the training/curriculum, hotels and hotel schools, technical institutes, higher educational institutes must include English and other

languages and collaborate with high schools to recruit young people into internships/work placements. Although women in the industry are poor, there are more women in tourism management than in other sectors of the economy, such as ICT, tea and commercial agriculture. In this sense, to draw more women into the industry, as well as counter gender norms, they need to be held up as role models. Supporting employee professional growth and offering regular preparation, mentoring, and promotions can also be prioritised to attract and promote women step up the ladder and support facilities such as housing and childcare to resolve hotel work climate issues. A stronger emphasis on the advancement of human capital within the hotel sector will go a long way in growing women's involvement, while at the same time promoting the growth potential of the industry to meet government objectives as per the post-COVID-19 strategy.

REFERENCES

Arunatilake, N. (2020). Systemic Issues Affecting Female Labour Force Participation in Sri Lanka. *Voices on South Asia: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Women's Status*, Challenges and Futures, 345.

IPS. (2020). *Women in the Hotel-Industry*, www.ips.lk/talkingeconomics/2020/02/24/so-sri-lanka-more-like-so-where-are-all-the-women-in-the-hotel-industry/

Ramalu, S. S., & Janadari, N. (2020). Authentic leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour: the role of psychological capital. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*.

Ruiz-Palomo, D., León-Gómez, A., & García-Lopera, F. (2020). Disentangling organisational commitment in hospitality industry: The roles of empowerment, enrichment, satisfaction and gender. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, vol. 90, 102637.

Uresha, K. I., & Obeyesekere, S. G. (2020). *Role of Employee Gender on Customer Delight in the Sri Lankan Tourism Industry*.