

Generating Factors for Female Managers in the Tourism Sector of Northern Cyprus

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Abstract: *The classical stereotype existing in a society is the idea that males are prevailing in their career development, while female leaders are rather an exception to the rule. The implicit social contract that secures the gender roles of men and women implies that males are more focused on career and the role of female is secondary and unpromising.*

The research paper aims to understand the importance of tourism sector in Northern Cyprus through analyzing what factors generate female employment as tourism seems to be an attractive option from the human resources point of view. It studies the case of Northern Cyprus employment practises influencing women's work in hospitality industry, namely accomodation sector and travel agencies.

This study is empirical in nature and aimes to collect primary data from 400 employees involved in hospitality activity. All data was statistically analysed with a strong focus on demographics.

Three hypotheses were developed and a matched employer-employee data approach is used in the research. It has been proved that even considering the overall higher level of education of the female employees in Northern Cyprus, the majority of examined participants is still facing a barrier to occupy better managerial positions comparatively to male counterparts which tend to hold higher managerial positons.

Keywords: *tourism, hospitality, gender, males-females, Northern Cyprus*

1. INTRODUCTION

The tourism and hospitality sector is considered significantly increasingly for the economies in many countries. Tourism is generally and globally acknowledged as being one of the very few economic sectors that has more than significant growth prospects and is characterised as a catalyst for peace and prosperity (CEDEFOP, 2012). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the next decade will involve a major growth of the tourism industry, generating one in every ten jobs worldwide (WTTC, 2011). From this point, in a dynamic growing environment, hospitality and tourism sectors become a leading force where the process of upgrading skills through educational and training courses takes on a greater significance. As tourism becomes more global in postmodern world, the personel management and human factor in tourism are becoming a major issue for the innovative thinking and challenge. Still, HRM in this field is in need of essential change in order to meet the challenges of the next few decades.

As a complex socio-economic system, tourism is affected by many factors, the role of which in each moment can be different both in strength and duration of exposure to the development of tourism. Therefore, they are based on objective needs for effective tourism activities. One of such factors is women's role in the public sphere that tremendoulsy increased, emphasizing the role and position of the female labor force that slowly monopolizes it. Overall, the research tends to tolerate the role of women as a generating factor in tourism, considering a significant importance of gender equalities or inequalities. It has been tested that a number of unseen but clear obstacles exist in the tourism sector of Northern Cyprus for females to fully integrate them into existing pool of labor market. To trace the dynamics and analyze the gender balance, the following specific hypothesis been explored.

Hypothesis 1: Female force is dominating in tourism sector.

Hypothesis 2: Overall, female force tends to be more educated comparing to male force.

Hypothesis 3: Males are dominating in occupying larger parts of executive positions in tourism in Northern Cyprus.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Country Profile

Northern Cyprus is a part of island commonly known as a Republic of Cyprus is divided after political decision in 1974. Northern Cyprus is "the flying Dutchman" on the political map of the world: its

existence as a state recognized only by Turkey, for the rest of the world it is a part of the unified Republic of Cyprus. For the tourists, for a long time, it remains as "terra incognita" and still echoes of this non-recognition are felt at every step entering the country; the visa is put onto a separate leaflet, the local airport does not appear in the list of IATA. However, the merits of the main tourist region are not changed, clean and local beaches and shores, list of historical heritages, affordable accommodation and a range of various hotels and services.

Within last decade, the economy of Northern Cyprus experienced a rapid growth in different fields of economy due to positive changes of fiscal policies put into practice by the government. In this period the real growth rate of GDP and GNP progressed between 10.6% - 14.2 % and 11.4% – 15.4%, respectively (State Planning Organization, 2014).

Currently, Northern Cyprus gives a high priority to the development of tourism that contributes 9% to gross domestic product with an average 31% of occupancy rate in 2015. In 2011, the total number of bed nights was 2,287,869 and the occupancy rate was 41.4 percent. In 2013, these figures were 2,877,564 and 47.9 percent respectively. In 2013, the four top nationalities whose people stayed in tourist accommodation establishments were Turkey, the United Kingdom, Germany and the Netherlands. Thus, the number of people visiting Northern Cyprus has increased since 2010 by 30% with almost 2 million foreigners visited the country in 2014. The total number of tourist accommodation establishments corresponding to total bed capacity is 132.

According to Sapient a economics (2014), the country has a small and diversified population of approximately is 286,000 inhabitants. 50% of the population lives in the cities and 50 % in the countryside (data for 2011).

Job demand trends have changed country profile considerably in recent years, with the increased number of females integrated into the workforce. Traditionally, agriculture has been a principal sector with a highest women employment in Northern Cyprus sector that no longer dominates the industry but still remains active. Following extensive growth by 1990-2000s, gave a way to investments in the service sector, one of which is tourism and hospitality. In this context, the role of employment for women in the region is not still discussed that affects most by unemployment and creates an additional problem in terms of labor market integration and equality.

2.2. Women in the Labor Force and Gender Inequality

The current Northern Cyprus legislation states to provide equality between men and women in all aspects of work and ensures protection to women. It expects that local women as a working force are actively involved in the development of various sectors of the economy and tourism sector is one of the largest. However, the ratio of females (34% in 2009) is still below the desired levels.

According to Lisaniler (2009), only 56% of the working age population of Northern Cyprus is a part of the labor force. Among this, the ratio is 40.4% for women and 70.2% for men. As stated by the author, 60% of females are not seeking employment. The unemployment ratio in Northern Cyprus in rural and urban areas for all age groups is 2 or 3 times higher than that of the men. Women are more affected by unemployment than men. Apart from that, the growth of female job seekers has dramatically increased indicating that women are shifted into a powerful active population. Accordingly, the rate of females looking for work has risen more rapidly than that of men. Regardless of education level, females are more influenced by unemployment than men. Young people are particularly hard hit by unemployment, with two-thirds of the unemployed population aged under 30.

2.3. Employment in Tourism and Segregation

It can be useful to analyze the segregation of labor in tourism by reviewing some countries such as Australia (Knox, 2008), Portugal (Costa et al., 2011), Spain (Burrell, 1997) carried out a cross-national study in order to compare women's employment patterns in hospitality in four different countries: France, Spain, Italy, and the United Kingdom. The authors indicated that employment is segregated along gender lines. For example, receptions and room services are mainly occupied by the females; bar and restaurant jobs are mostly predominated by males. Yukari and Kato (2008) studied the Brazilian tourism labor market. It was found out that the hotel and travel agency sectors are not dominated by women mainly and women tend to fill the least-qualified and low-paid positions.

Another point of view is vertical segregation and the “glass ceiling” in Northern Cyprus in the tourism sector which has yet less researched. According to the authors (Costa et al., 2011; Jordan, 1997) propose that females tend to occupy low paid and lower-level positions in tourism occupations. Researchers are often critical of the seasonality of such work (Gmelch, 2004), which also tends to offer low-paying, low-skilled opportunities with little chance for advancement.

Research focusing on the hospitality sector found out the existing barriers experienced by females, where only 4% are senior managers and only 1% are executive management (Richter, 1994). Several reasons for this gender mismatch can be seasonal unemployment, cultural background of society and level of education and training. Seasonality made tourism an attractive opportunity for women who could combine paid employment with family responsibilities (Ghodsee, 2003). Tourism employment is gendered in nature and the problem with this segregated employment is that women's low status within their societies is reinforced and magnified in the mass industry (Jordan, 1997). Men prevail in management and supervision in all the countries under analysis except the United Kingdom, which could be a result of women's prevalence in hospitality management degrees.

One of the authors suggests that traditional gender distinctions have promoted the image of men as travelers and women as hostesses. The social construction has allowed national governments and tourist organizations to describe women in a service role (Leontidou, 1994). Cave and Kilic (2010) concluded that there is a sharp horizontal and vertical segregation, underpinned by strong socio cultural barriers and traditional gender roles.

3. METHOD

The research primarily focused on selected accommodation establishments and tour agencies working in Northern Cyprus. The study analyzes the characteristics of employment in these two sectors and their comparison with the economy as a whole.

Since the main goal of the study was to analyze the conditions of tourism employment in Northern Cyprus, namely its gendered patterns, several specific research objectives were proposed, which contribute to the achievement of the main goal. The data was collected during 2014-2015 years from the main three touristic cities, namely: Kyrenia (Girne), Nicosia (Lefkosa) and Famagusta (Magosa). Out of 400 distributed questionnaires, total usable responses were 353. The questionnaire used was translated into Turkish Language by back to back translation method and distributed to the respondents. The analysis was performed through cross tabulations and comparison of relative frequencies and means. Pearson's chi-squared test and t-test were adapted.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Females in Tourism Sector of Northern Cyprus

According to the results received in 2014-2015, 69.5% of all employees are females confirming that the tourist accommodation sector is a major employer of women. The share of women employment stands at 56% in the EU-27. Interesting to note, that among the EU-27 countries, the highest share of female employment in the tourist accommodation industry is present in Romania (72%), Norway (71%), Poland (70%), Finland (70%) and Germany (69%). Malta (38%), Greece (44%) and Italy (49%) are the only countries where women do not take the majority of the jobs in the tourist accommodation sector (European Commission, 2008).

4.2. Workforce Division

Concerning the workforce, men are significantly older than women ($t(57,128.40) = -4.350, p = .000$), except in the accommodation sector, where the reverse trend is observed ($t(42,276.08) = -9.887, p = .000$). In the economy as a whole, the average age for men is 32.5, while for women it is 26.2. In travel agencies and tour operators, the gap is wider: Men are on average 38.3, whereas women are 33.1. In contrast, in the accommodation sector, women are 28.3 years old on average, while men are 32.2. The vast majority of workers are Turkish and Turkish Cypriot origin: 87.3% of women and 93.2% of men. Most non-national workers come from other countries. The proportion of Turkish workers is similar in travel agencies and tour operators (97.7% of men and 93.5% of women). However, the accommodation sector has a higher proportion of non-national workers, particularly among women (8.8% of the non-Turkish employees in this sector are male, and 7.7% are female).

4.3. Education in Tourism Sector of Northern Cyprus

According to the literature review, tourism sector employees in general have low levels of education (Yukari and Kato, 2008). Considering the data received, it has been noted that generally employees working in the field of tour operations and travel companies are more educated and qualified comparing to their counterparts working in the field of accommodation and hotel sector. One of these reasons is that accommodation and hotel does not require much knowledge from the employees. Thus, 12.5% of its employees have a higher education degree, as compared to 48.2% of the workers in travel agencies and tour operators. While 87.% of the workers in general only have basic education or no education at all, this percentage is considerably lower in travel agencies and tour operators 51.8% of the workers in this sector have completed at least secondary education. As observed by Jacobs (1996), Costa et al. (2011), female workers tend to have higher levels of education than their male colleagues. This trend has been researched through the data. The gender divide in education presents that females tend to have higher education (64.3% of women vs. 32.3% of men), while males are more represented among those with secondary education (53.6% of men vs. 32.4% of women).

4.4. Women as Managers

Traditionally, males were tended to occupy executive and managerial positions as been paid higher. Still, the majority of females is underrepresented at managerial level and Northern Cyprus is not an exception in this regards. The proportion of males in such positions by far exceeds the proportion of female executives and senior managers in the accommodation sector (17.4% vs. 9.8%), but with a difference in travel agencies and tour operators (41.5% are women and 14.2% are men). As it is seen, the tour and agency level hires more women than men and education level can be one of the vivid reasons. Thus we e can see a deep segregation in all sectors in Northern Cyprus. Burrell et al. (1997) suggested that it is the fact that women are poorly qualified that hinders them from gaining access to occupations of greater responsibility. Indeed, as noted by Lisaniler (2003), women who are out of the labor force show their family commitment as one of the reasons why they stay out. Women who are presently unemployed but have worked at some point during their lives give family responsibilities as one of their reasons for leaving their jobs. In other words, as the authors concludes, “this means that women want to work in paid jobs outside the home as long as they are the forms of employment that do not hinder their children’s education, do not interrupt the routine of their family, do not create family problems, and finally do not cause them to neglect or delay their household duties”.

Similar ideas been proposed by Doherty (2001), saying that several employees in the UK noted that career success came at a high price since virtually none of the senior women had children, and many were single or divorced. But, there are other more positive experience by the Greenwich Experience that tested sample of only 51 women in UK that flexibility of tourism sector helps them balance work and family life.

5. DISCUSSION

This article proposed to understand the current role of women in the modern society of Northern Cyprus considering the case of tourism and hospitality. With the primary data obtained from 353 participants the researched characteristics were examined, and the factors affecting the female performance are analyzed through three hypotheses which were proposed, namely:

H. 1: Female force is dominating in tourism sector.

H. 2: Overall, female force tends to be more educated comparing to male force.

H. 3: Males are dominating in occupying larger parts of executive positions in tourism in Northern Cyprus.

As a consequence, all three hypotheses were tested and proved.

- It was found out that 69.5% of all employees in Northern Cyprus working in the field of tourism and accommodation are females.
- Another finding is that, 12.5% of total employees have a higher education degree for those involved in hotel services, as compared to 48.2% of the workers in travel agencies and tour operators. As research shows, the education balance proved to be in favor of females in education presenting (64.3% of women vs. 32.3% of men).

- Finally, the expected rate of males taking executive positions tested that it exceeds the proportion of female executives and senior managers in the accommodation sector (17.4% vs. 9.8%), but with a gap difference in travel agencies and tour operators (41.5% are women and 14.2% are men).

Thus, it is possible to conclude that females working in hospitality industry of Northern Cyprus are affected by various senses and does not fully allow to integrate the women into higher managerial and executive positions. Undoubtedly, the role of women can be maximized and tourism can be a growing input sector contributed by female participants in a whole and in the general. Tourism development for career perspective especially for women in Northern Cyprus has been planned with a careful consideration as this sector is a real one which generates profits and has perfect perspective for the future. The management of the companies should include programs offering formal training for women so that they will have the skills necessary to obtain management positions. In hospitality employment, women in management have to be very diplomatic and though to succeed, subject to more pressure than most female managers to tread the delicate line between personal and occupational identity, managing their sex, gender and authority roles.

6. CONCLUSION

For every country, tourism is very important economic activity because it generates employment. Tourism and hospitality industry in this regard is not an exception. Hospitality business is a colorful combination with a sole focus on many different people, aimed at ensuring a comfortable stay and leisure of the guests where social relations between employees, managers, guests are considered as a highest level of interaction and inter communication.

Thereby functioning of the hospitality industry has fundamentally important social consequences for individuals and for their communities. In current conditions, the social functions of the hospitality industry are strengthened as a consequence of enhanced and increasing globalization where the role of women extremely increasing. With the progressive development of the industry, a significant transformation undergoes between work division, gender balance and gender equality and Northern Cyprus is not apart of this social issue.

The image of tourism work is considered to be particularly attractive to women, possibly compensating for relatively poor payment and limited opportunities. Women are more likely to accept the low pay and conditions than men. It is argued that women seek these jobs in order to accommodate easily their family commitments. Governments and many organizations try to implement equal policies in response to attract more women to take over the managerial positions. However, there is a very little and limited evidence in Northern Cyprus where women are still not considered equivalent to substitute the men to occupy higher executive positions.

This research paper explored reasons for this apparent policy failure by reviewing data and using data collected from questionnaire feedbacks with policy actors in sector organizations. What emerges from these analysis is that prevailing theorizations and policy definitions emphasize the individual aspects of prevailing females to occupy significant organizational positions, employment and cultural factors. The study argues that narrow explanations of workplace gender inequality limits the capacity of policies to prevent or resolve the problem.

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