

Representation of women managers in hospitality and tourism: a content analysis of related magazine articles

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Women
managers in
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tourism

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to investigate the representation of women managers through a content analysis of related magazine articles within the hospitality industry in the Maldives. Evidence suggests an increase in the number of working women, yet there is relative neglect toward identifying issues involving women in the industry.

Design/methodology/approach – Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to content-analyze the narrative on the sampled articles from a Maldives-based hospitality magazine, *Hotelier Maldives*. Qualitative content analysis and quantitative methods report on the challenges faced by women managers and reasons for their success based on the narratives.

Findings – This study revealed that although women managers are underrepresented in management, there has been a broad increase in the participation of women within the industry. This study falsified the perception that gender is a limiting factor to hold senior positions in the hospitality industry and that increased participation of women managers may be driven by the changing social and cultural contexts.

Originality/value – This study is one of the first to examine how women managers are represented in hospitality magazines. Despite its relevance, previous tourism research has not focused on this kind of measurement.

Keywords Content analysis, Women managers, Hospitality, NVivo, Magazine

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

While business has usually been considered a male-dominated activity (Berg, 1997), recent studies emphasize significant contributions of women in business around the world including transitional economies. The global entrepreneurship monitor indicates that women entrepreneurs create, run and grow businesses across all industrial sectors. In 2010, almost 42% of entrepreneurs in the world were women (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2010). Since then not only has there been an increase in the number of women entrepreneurs, the overall participation of women in the labor force continues to grow with an additional quarter of a billion women having entered the labor workforce since 2006 (World Economic Forum, 2015). While growth in the number of women in professional occupation is slow and the numbers are not impressive, yet there are some areas that have witnessed women occupying management and senior management positions in substantial numbers more than the others. Hospitality and tourism, in particular, has been one such industry witnessing an increase in the number of women joining the labor force due, in part, to the increasing opportunities for women wanting to work in the tourism sector. According to one estimate, 90% of hotels and galleries are managed and owned by women (Copeland and Murni, 2010). Yet, other studies (Duffy *et al.*, 2015; Moswete and Lacey, 2015) document the



role of women as owner-managers of small tourism firms including small hotels, bed and breakfast, snack bars, catering services, restaurants, event planners, tour operators/guides and souvenir vendors (Desa *et al.*, 2012; Akehurst *et al.*, 2012).

With an increase in the number of working women, there has been a simultaneous increase in the number of research studies studying the influence of women managers and their significant contributions to world economies (Langowitz and Minniti, 2007). However, there is a relative neglect toward identifying issues involving women in tourism. Recent literature review suggests that studies about women entrepreneurs comprise less than 10% of all research in the field, while research surrounding women managers in the hospitality and tourism industry is even more starkly underrepresented. Despite its managerial relevance, to date, few studies in the hospitality and tourism literature have examined the challenges faced by women in the industry. It is of particular importance to understand factors that mobilize or prevent women from entering this industry, as a failure to understand these factors may result in the underutilization of women's managerial potential. This study specifically focuses on the representation of women in managerial positions in the tourism intensive industry of Maldives located in the Asia-Pacific region. Maldives, which is a 100% Muslim country, is considered one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world (Rasheed, 2014). Although Maldivian women are recognized as being among the most emancipated in South Asia and the Islamic world (The World Bank, 2004), studies report that the proportion of women working in the Maldivian tourism industry is relatively low (Shakeela *et al.*, 2010). As women labor participation is influenced by culture, which, in turn, affects access to employment opportunities, the present research is among the few studies that focus on markers of women success in a non-Western society (Al-Ahmadi, 2011).

The need to undertake this study is both methodological and theoretical. Methodologically, much of our information about women's career development in developed countries, such as Maldives, comes from surveys or in-depth interviews with a small sample of women executives. This study focuses on learning more about women's career development by examining the reality of women at managerial positions that can be extracted from their media representations (Levie, 2010; Achtenhagen and Welter, 2007; Ahl, 2007). Such knowledge is relevant to address issues related to women advancement in the hospitality industry. Theoretically, reasons for the success of women managers remain curiously understudied within the realm of media representation of women managers in hospitality and tourism. Most empirical research has simply studied gender stereotyping or has statistically analyzed reactions of workers from the hospitality industry toward gender issues. Correspondingly, to address the above outlined gap, the present research explores the drivers of success as attributed by women managers by drawing on magazine representation of women managers within the hospitality and tourism industry.

Literature review

Women in tourism

Several studies have investigated why women work in tourism and what types of work-related challenges they face while working in this industry (Burgess, 2003; Doherty, 2004; Woods and Viehland, 2000). Findings suggest that while the industry has some brilliant women Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and executives (e.g. Marilyn Carlson Nelson, CEO of Carlson companies; Stephanie Sonnabend, President, Sonesta International Hotels; Charlotte St. Martin, Executive Vice President (EVP), Loews Hotels and Barbara Talbot, EVP Four Seasons, to name a few), yet women who hold top managerial positions remain an exception rather than the norm (Mann and Seacord, 2003; Costen *et al.*, 2003). Burgess (2003) indicates

that men are better represented in higher status jobs than women. This is true even for developed countries such as the USA, UK and other European countries where tourism and hospitality is one of the fastest growing sectors (Primavera, 2001).

Systematic investigation of women's progress in management within the Asian context started in the mid-1980s and the studies primarily focused on profiling women entrepreneurs (Teo, 1996) or attempted to identify the changing patterns in their businesses (Lee, 1996). For example, Teo (1996) reported that women entrepreneurs in Singapore faced work-family conflict, which negatively affected their job satisfaction and life satisfaction. Similarly, Khandelwal and Sehgal (2018) studied factors contributing to the success of women entrepreneurs in the Indian context and found that societal norms and values based on gender-specific roles rendered a lot of pressure on women. Despite the work-related problems, it was found that the ratio of the female to male workforce in Turkey increased over the past few decades (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2006) with the tourism industry being one of the favorite choices for women to search for employment in Turkey. Although some Asian countries have been at the forefront in passing labor equity laws, where a large percentage of women participate in the labor market, female executives are still underrepresented in the region. As the Asian region is experiencing a rapid growth in tourism and hospitality businesses, it provides an increasing opportunity for women to participate in the tourism sector and promote economic growth and development. While the present research explores the subject of women in tourism and hospitality through an Asian lens, it is hoped that the ideas and issues that arise will provide insight on a general discourse surrounding the status of women in hospitality management.

Theoretical background: gender schema theory

Gender schema theory (Bern, 1981), a theory on gender role development, entails stereotypical messages about gender such as that boys are strong and girls are weak. Individuals learn differences between the classifications of male and female from society from early childhood and then adjust their behaviors to meet these expectations (Mc Vee *et al.*, 2005). For example, children participate in gender-appropriate behavior, which is evident in their toy selection (Martin and Ruble, 2004). Bern (1981) argues that this behavior continues in adults who are predisposed to associate traits, objects, behaviors and characteristics based on gender schemas. For example, nursing and teaching have long been considered gender-appropriate careers for women because of the nurturing traits associated with such jobs.

Media representations in line with gender schemas reinforce gender stereotypes in the society such that media represents the societal gender schemas by the underrepresentation of women in various roles that are categorized as male-appropriate. Media coverage of certain professions as gender appropriate or gender inappropriate further reinforces gender stereotypes. In a content analysis of newspaper coverage of women entrepreneurs in Germany, Achtenhagen and Welter (2011) found that overall German newspapers still create a picture of women's entrepreneurship that is old-fashioned and builds on traditional gender stereotypes and role models and as such media discussions do little to encourage rethinking of traditional role stereotypes.

Resultantly, women's career advancement to senior leadership positions has been met with differences in gendered social status. In line with the gender schema theory, gender stereotypes have often led men to dominate at top leadership levels (Weyer, 2007). Organizational structures further promote structural oppression preventing women from reaching their full professional potential (Ridgeway, 2001).

Based on gender role development theory (i.e. Gender Schema Theory, [Bern, 1981](#)), the present study has two main objectives, namely, to identify and provide a meaningful interpretation of the nature of articles appearing in tourism and hospitality magazines featuring women managers and attempts to illustrate the determinants of success among women managers through the analysis of such articles and to evaluate the association between women managerial success factors and their marital status.

Media representation of women managers

Much of our information about the challenges women managers face in the industry comes from surveys. However, a lot can be deduced from their depiction in media, which permits an analysis of women managers in their social context allowing us to capture diverse facets of their struggle and challenges in the industry ([Davidsson, 2003](#)). Media is a powerful force as it creates and maintains meaning, thereby influencing our thinking and actions ([Fairclough, 1995](#)). Media, including newspapers, magazines and periodicals, legitimate a certain version of reality ([Moscovici, 1976](#)). According to the social cognitive theory of mass communication, media communication significantly affects social attitudes and behavioral intentions ([Bandura, 2001](#)). In that sense, media has the power to produce reality, and therefore, affect public perceptions and evaluations ([Berger and Luckmann, 1969](#)).

This function of the media specifically applies to businesses as it influences and shapes the behavior of people ([Czarniawska and Rhodes, 2006](#)), and has significant influence on how individuals, and, in turn, organizations, business networks and communities “understand” managers and leaders. Therefore, media makes sense of, and gives sense to ([Hellgren et al., 2002](#)), women as managers and as leaders. However, media contents about women leaders and managers focus more on their private lives than on their contributions to society.

Although there is a complete lack of studies surrounding media representation of women managers in the hospitality magazines, there is enough evidence in support of the underrepresented status of women around the world in several male-dominated industries including politics, sports and movies ([Shifflett and Revelle, 1994](#); [Jones, 2006](#); [Alexander, 1994](#)). Media representation of women managers, in particular, depicts what women business owners typically do and what issues confront them. The late Anita Roddick, creator of The Body Shop, for example, used her public image to advance her business and to draw attention to her campaigning activities. An analysis of media representation of female managers, thus helps to understand and interpret the reality of women workers. Recognizing the significance of media representation of women managers, a growing number of studies are examining these representations and issues related to women workforce in the industry ([Lämsä and Tiensuu, 2002](#)). In a study by [Achtenhagen and Welter \(2011\)](#) on the representation of women entrepreneurs in German media, it was found that media still clings to the old gender stereotypes in its representation of women entrepreneurs. Such representations have an evident impact on women’s identity and opportunities in a career context. Studies show that newspapers, business media and research publications portray female entrepreneurs as less successful than male entrepreneurs ([Achtenhagen and Welter, 2007](#)). Afterward, [Ross and Carter \(2011\)](#) conducted a content analysis, which revealed that male coverage in news items tend to appear more often, and hence, favored in comparison to female news coverage. Findings also revealed that women were three times more likely than men to be described in terms of their family status (e.g. mother, wife and daughter), either as part of their personal biographical detail or else they were invited to speak precisely because of their relationship to the main (male) news subject ([Ross and Carter, 2011](#)).

Despite recognizing the importance of media representations of female managers, some important gaps exist in past research. First, portrayal and coverage of women managers as reflected in hospitality magazines is completely lacking. Although women's participation in tourism is on the rise, the contemporary tourism space is still subject to criticisms for being highly masculinized and privileging male counterparts, which is reflected in the higher representation of male managers as compared to their female counterparts in tourism and hospitality publications. Second, as stated in the literature above, there has been some research surrounding media representation of women entrepreneurs, yet none with regard to the representation of women managers. These two may be different as the challenges and issues related to women entrepreneurs may be unlike those faced by women in managerial positions. Therefore, it is pertinent to search for answers to the following questions: how do magazines present women working in tourism and hospitality? What aspects of women managers' work and life find media coverage? To what do women managers in the industry attribute their business success to? These and other related questions become a subject matter of further investigations.

Factors affecting women managers' success

Factors contributing to the success of women managers can be found in studies on entrepreneurs in the western countries that focus on three major areas for women entrepreneurs' success, namely, background factors and personal characteristics, psychological attributes and traits and situational factors (Dugan *et al.*, 1990). Carr (1996) reveals that women's employment decisions are often tied to family considerations including marital status, parental status and ages of children. Women may have different measurements of success-especially married women who may be looking for a way to balance family burdens. For example, a study by Al-Ismail *et al.* (1990), on women working in hotels in Saudi Arabia and UAE, reported that women with childcare or other caring responsibilities faced increased difficulty in managing work and life, which, in turn, linked negatively to job satisfaction. That is, the study showed that more negative effects with respect to job satisfaction, marital satisfaction and life satisfaction were experienced by married working women as opposed to unmarried women managers. This stream of logic lends additional support to the notion that married business women have to face dual challenges in relation to family and career.

It is also prudent to note that even though single women lead entrepreneurial growth, more married women are entrepreneurs (Patrick *et al.*, 2016). Thus, marriage encourages self-employment in general, but much more for women (Carr, 1996; Boden, 1999). Statistics show that even in developed countries, such as US, approximately 65.5% of self-employed women are married while only 52.3% of salaried women are married. Therefore, being married increases the odds that a woman will work for herself (MacPherson, 1988). In addition to the marital status, some authors have found that self-employed women are older, and better educated than their salaried counterparts (Devine, 1994). Another commonly reported reason for the entrepreneurial success of women is the availability of financial resources. In particular, family-to-business enrichment and support may be especially beneficial to female entrepreneurs' businesses as women tend to have less access to financial resources than male entrepreneurs (Morris *et al.*, 2006); therefore, the resources women acquire in their family domain may be more meaningful to their business success.

Previous studies have also identified entrepreneurial characteristics that significantly contribute to managerial success. For example, Say (1971) suggested that successful entrepreneurs possess outstanding qualities such as decision-making, internal *locus* of control (Rotter, 1966), self-confidence, independence (Hisrich and Gracher, 1995), an eye for

innovation and good communication skills (Cox and Jennings, 1995). While some researchers suggest an entrepreneur's success to be affected by his/her risk taking ability (Cox and Jennings, 1995), others identify high efficiency, opportunity recognition, perseverance and social skills as essential characteristics of successful entrepreneurs (Markman and Baron, 2003).

The current research extends this insightful and managerially relevant body of literature in two important regards, namely, first, most of the past studies have either employed a survey mechanism or used the census data (Carr, 1996) to profile women managers. Content analysis of magazine articles featuring women managers, on the other hand, allows themes to emerge that may not have been captured through either a survey mechanism or census data (e.g. the non-economic factors of success). Second, none of the past studies have analyzed the heterogeneity in women's managerial success factors including various individual, household and economic forces. It is hypothesized that at least some of the heterogeneity in women's challenges in the workplace can be accounted for by separately analyzing the factors for success associated with married and unmarried women managers and that by doing so it can be found as to how the challenges married women are faced with differ from those faced by unmarried women managers.

Method

Study procedure

Articles about women managers in the tourism and hospitality industry can be a good source for understanding the challenges encountered by women in this industry. It is suggested that these articles express such issues and that content analysis can reveal them. Therefore, an exhaustive search of magazines under the travel and hospitality was conducted, both in the directories of Yahoo and Google and also in the offline sources, to shortlist magazines that featured articles on women managers in the industry. By visiting a number of sources under the sub-categories such as "publications (or publishers)," "magazine" and "news and media," articles featuring women managers-related information were identified. With the intention to understand challenges related to women managers in tourism, features selected for the study were carefully identified and related solely to women managers in tourism.

As the tourism and hospitality business was selected for the setting of this study, four sub-categories of tourism and hospitality were identified for searching the source of information, namely, travel trade; travel magazines; travel guides; and travel blogs. At the time of study, *Hotelier Maldives* was found to be the leading bi-monthly magazine, which is a Maldives-based hospitality magazine and is represented digitally on hoteliermaldives.com along with a monthly print edition. The analysis thus, presented centers on *Hotelier Maldives* – a tourism and hospitality magazine that provides updates of the industry news since its inception in 2014. The magazine describes its readership as:

[. . .] the only circulation-audited media in the country, the magazine reaches a comprehensive and loyal audience on a bi-monthly basis. [. . .] readership of *Hotelier Maldives* consists of key decision makers including senior and middle management hospitality executives, developers and investors, travel industry professionals, hotel suppliers and logistical service providers.

The magazine *Hotelier Maldives* was chosen for two reasons. First, *Hotelier Maldives* features articles on managers from different nationalities working in the hotel industry in Maldives. Second, one of *Hotelier Maldives'* features was a section, "women in hospitality," which reported on women who became managers in this industry and which portrayed these female managers at work, describing their work content, work experiences and overall

work-life settings in Maldives hospitality sector. In line with common approaches in the qualitative analysis of media outputs (Bryman, 2004), “women in hospitality” feature of *Hotelier Maldives* magazine can be understood as presenting a purposefully shaped representation of women managers at work. As the analysis presented in this paper is exploratory, in the sense that the conceptual perspective (representation of women managers at work) is new, the generalizability of findings is not the main aim of the research. However, future research might fruitfully compare representations of women managers across several women’s magazines.

For the purpose of this paper, a qualitative approach was undertaken using a content analysis method, which is gaining prominence in entrepreneurship research (Ahl, 2007). Magazine articles were analyzed based on text analysis of articles’ content, allowing a systematic and rigorous description of its content. This type of analysis is particularly appropriate for mass media studies as it allows a precise description of a vast diversity of message content (Sparks, 2002). The process is divided into two steps, namely, qualitative and quantitative content analysis. The first step of qualitative analysis starts with coding, a process that brings similar data together according to themes, concepts, etc., and in which codes can be generated from the text or existing ideas (Lewins and Silver, 2007). Once the data is coded, depending on the focus of the study, identification of themes takes place. Thereafter, quantitative analysis will follow to examine patterns and structures of data (Bergman, 2010).

Each “women in hospitality” feature consisted of a picture of the female manager, and a series of questions seeking information about their job position, role in the industry, challenges faced in the profession and their professional achievements. The study commenced with a pragmatic intention, namely, to identify how women managers in the tourism and hospitality industry are represented in magazines. Furthermore, to achieve an interpretation of the text, the articles were analyzed based on the primary research question “to what do women managers working in the tourism and hospitality industry attribute their success to?”

Data was content analyzed from the articles appearing between July, 2015 and May, 2018 using NVivo 11, a software program that supports qualitative and mixed methods research. NVivo identifies words frequently used from each sub-category of the articles and these frequently used keywords are then coded into quantifiable data in statistical package for the social sciences for further quantitative analysis.

A total of 47 articles appeared in the magazine and were related to women working in the tourism and hospitality industry of Maldives from across 16 different nations. Of the conglomerate whole, nearly 55% of the women managers were above 40 years. Based on the sector, 20 of these women managers were part of the hospitality industry, 5 of the cases were in food and beverage, 7 were in marketing and sales while 11 of them provided outdoor tourism activities including aviation and wellness. In terms of marital status, 65% of the women managers were married and 35% were single. Finally, regarding qualification, 79% of the study’s sample comprised women managers with maters or bachelor’s education in hospitality and tourism.

Measurement of variables

Managerial success. Managerial success was operationalized as being attained by managers who used one of the following phrases in their narrative: “success,” “attainment,” “achievement,” “growth” and “accomplishment.” The text mining produced 42, 31, 25, 18 and 14 results, respectively, for these five words. A number of existing studies (Oliver *et al.*, 1997; Crotts and Magnini, 2011) provide theory-based justification for this operationalization. It may be noted that the text-mining software used in this study also detects and includes variations of these four phrases, such as “successful.” Thus, the

grammatical composition or structure of the phrase(s) should not intervene to influence the results of our content analysis.

Out of a sum total of 47 articles that were content analyzed, 6 articles did not contain a specific cause of the “success” and so were removed from subsequent analysis, resulting in 41 usable cases. The data were first saved into separate independent Word files (.doc files) and were coded according to each woman entrepreneur appearing in the magazine. For further content analysis, the text data were merged into separate files according to the theme, including demographic information and sector.

Drivers of managerial success. The text-mining technique used in this study applied content analysis of two sentences surrounding the success phrase (e.g. achievement). Dividing the text into small blocks such as this is consistent with travel blog research conducted by [Crotts et al. \(2009\)](#). Thus, within the context of this study, two sentences surrounding the achievement phrase were content analyzed and the explicitly stated cause of achievement was recorded by the researchers. In doing so, the following categories for causes of success emerged from the data, representing 100% of all narratives:

- Family and friends.
- Personality characteristics.
- Peer support.
- Mentors.
- Competencies.
- Work-family balance.
- Personal resources.

When coding these data, the domain of the “family and friends” category was operationalized as causes of success that specifically refer to managers’ family and friends as allies. This conceptualization is consistent with [Powell and Eddleston \(2013\)](#) research that argues that the family domain may supply various types of resources that assist managerial success. Excerpts from article narratives that comprise this category include “supportive parents” and “my best friend Anyu has been by my side since the beginning. She has always supported me to ‘be somebody’.”

Consistent with the findings of [Ahmad \(2011\)](#), the present study also conceptualizes “personality characteristics” variable of managerial success as including emotional skills and attitude. Compassionate and nurturing traits, hard work and commitment to the job, for example, were quoted as being the reasons for success.

Regarding “peer support,” this category emerged to include narratives that describe people in similar positions who share knowledge or experience and provide emotional, social or practical help to each other. For example, an article narrative coded into this category included “team/staff.” Another narrative coded into the peer support category included the following: “my biggest success is the people I work with: the support extended by staff, all industry partners and stakeholders during the initiation to the field.” It is prudent to note that the “mentor” category was operationalized as being distinct from the “peer support” category in that the former encapsulates a process of providing career development functions through coaching whereas the latter evidence the friends at work support. For instance, the phrase “. . .blessed to have met great teachers and mentors along the path who encouraged me on that aspiration” is categorized as mentorship. On the contrary, a narrative contained in the peer support category included the following: “[. . .] support of my team.”

Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013) developed a competencies model for women entrepreneurship and included four categories, namely, personal and relationship-based competencies (e.g. internal-personal skills and perseverance); business and management competencies (e.g. financial management); business venturing competencies (e.g. innovation and creativity); and human resource management competencies (e.g. leadership and managerial style). In line with this framework, “competencies” have been operationalized as those learned as a result of work experience, training and education (skills, knowledge and experience). An example from article narratives that comprise this category includes,

For me, it’s all about leadership. I would describe my leadership style as being based on trust and good people skills – I’ve got the trust of my team, the shareholders and the management.

One of the most consistent findings in the study of women workforce is the constraining effect of “work life balance.” Given the long and demanding working hours in the industry, the ability to strike a balance between the two most important facets of most adults’ lives – work and family, is a major predictor of success. Particularly, for women, defining success in terms of satisfaction in work and ability to make time for family is a relevant indicator of success (Fenwick and Hutton, 2000). This dimension was operationalized using the number of working hours worked as flexibility in working hours would lift the pressure and aide in maintaining the much needed balance. This was nicely captured in some narratives such as: “smart women can manage both a career and a family.”

One of the intrinsic factors of success – “personal resources” or the financial background of the family was operationalized as access to personal financial resources and its effect on opportunity recognition. Resources acquired in the family domain may contribute to professional success and may serve as valuable in the enhancement of business success. In particular, support of the family, especially resources women acquire in their family domain, may be meaningful and more positively related to women empowerment.

Study results

Drivers of managerial success

Analysis of 120 cases (found in 41 narratives) included in the study, as drivers of managerial success of women managers in tourism and hospitality are summarized in Table 1. Across the entire data set, the most frequently reported sources of success were internal competencies (27.5% of all cases), followed by family and friends (20.83%). It was also interesting to find that personality characteristics were the third most frequent stimulator of success among women managers (17.50%).

As competencies is a relatively broad concept, further language analysis was conducted on those 33 cases in an attempt to better define what aspects of competencies led to

Causes of managerial success	Frequency	(%)
Competencies	33	27.5
Family and friends	25	20.83
Personality characteristics	21	17.5
Peer support	16	13.33
Work-family balance	11	9.16
Mentors	9	7.5
Personal resources	5	4.16
Total	120	100

Table 1.
Overall causes of
managerial success

managerial success (Table 2). Although the determinants of competence are not mutually exclusive, as several could be combined with one another, there are words used by women managers providing deeper insights in the understanding of competencies. Clearly, the exhibition of leadership traits (16.83%), proficiency in change management (17.82%), having interpersonal skills (25.24%), being result-oriented (21.28%) and planning and organizing (18.81%) are considered as general competencies. Additionally, these general competencies encompass specific key competencies such as “being authoritative,” “motivating others” and “developing employees,” grouped as leadership competency. Such a classification has been established by Cameron (1997). Table 3 displays examples of excerpts from the narratives that appeared in the magazine *Hotelier Maldives*, describing various success factors attributed by women managers working in the hospitality and tourism industry in Maldives.

While these comprehensive findings point to some useful implications that have been enumerated in the discussion section, the following section reports group differences.

Drivers of managerial success: married versus unmarried women managers

Cross-tab analyzes were conducted on each of the seven causes of managerial success in the article narratives to determine if particular determinants of managerial success vary depending on whether the women manager is married or unmarried. Four of the categories (competencies, personality characteristics, mentors and personal resources) did not emerge as statistically significant between married and unmarried women managers, however three categories (friends and family, work-family balance and peer support) were statistically significant between the two groups. As reported in Table 4, “family and friends” is more likely to be cited as the cause of success by married women as opposed to unmarried women. Statistically, 62.9% of the married women managers indicated that “family and friends” was the cause of their success as opposed to 57.1% of unmarried women managers. The difference in the “family and friends as the cause of success” between married and unmarried women managers was found to be statistically significant ($p = 0.032$, $\chi^2 = 4.055$, $df = 1$). According to the odds ratio (Table 4), it can be stated that “family and friends” is 1.1 times more likely to be the cause of success among married women managers than among unmarried women managers.

General competency	Key competency	Frequency
Leadership	Authority	11
	Motivating others	15
	Developing others	8
Change management	Initiative	12
	Risk taking	5
	Innovation	9
	Flexible	10
Interpersonal skills	Communication	14
	Sensitivity	12
	Team work	25
Result orientation	Customer focus	25
	Learning orientation	18
Planning and organizing	Decision-making	20
	Planning	18
Total		202

Table 2.
Aspects of
competencies found
in article narratives

Managerial success dimension	Quotes exemplifying the dimension
Competencies	<p>“For me, it is all about leadership. I would describe my leadership style as being based on trust and good people skills – I have got the trust of my team, the shareholders and the management” – (<i>Prapaijit Thongma, General Manager at Centara Ras Fushi</i>)</p> <p>“..the experience..taught me to adjust my management style to that culture” – (<i>Fathimath Shaazleen, Resident Manager at PER AQUUM Niyama</i>)</p>
Family and friends	<p>“Luckily, my parents were very supportive, they never said no to me, they have never imposed anything on me” – (<i>Aminath Shaly, Director of Human Resources for Amilla Fushi, The Small Maldives Island Co.</i>)</p> <p>“Of course, parents, siblings and my husband are always my strongest backing and helps to retain focus” – (<i>Zeenaz Hussain, Dean, Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Studies</i>)</p>
Personality characteristics	<p>“I come from a very hard working and career-driven family that know how to work hard and play hard, so while I am completely driven and focused whilst on duty, I am a completely different character off the field” – (<i>Helen Bolton, Director of Sales and Marketing at Kanuhura Maldives</i>)</p> <p>“I would attribute my success to my work ethic” – (<i>Michelle Flake, Founder Koamas Travels</i>)</p>
Peer support	<p>“I must admit that three years ago I was a new entrant to the Aviation’s Industry and I have to acknowledge and appreciate the support extended by my staff, all industry partners and stakeholders during my initiation to the field” – (<i>Ibthishama Ahmed Saeed, General Manager of Addu International Airport</i>)</p> <p>“I have complete support and motivation from my General Manager, Resort Manager, DOSM and the Regional Director of Public Relations of Minor, which instils great degree of motivation to carry out my responsibilities and deliver beyond their highest expectations” – (<i>Deveekaa Nijhawan, the PR and Communications Director at Niyama Private Islands Maldives</i>)</p>
Work-family balance	<p>“I found it particularly difficult at the beginning to work away from home for such a long period of the day and having only the evenings for my family life, although I learned how to juggle that now and am as happy as I could be,” – (<i>Lamath Ali, Food and Beverage Clerk at the Hulhule Island Hotel</i>)</p> <p>“I am very blessed to be part of a team with management that values both work and family” – (<i>Aishath Zulfishan, Spa Manager at Kurumba Maldives</i>)</p>
Mentors	<p>“I met some good people and mentors on my road, some of my GMs to whom I am always grateful, who believed in me, perhaps, more than I did at that time and supported me to arrive where I am now” – (<i>Barbara Elkaz, Resident Manager at Constance Halaveli</i>)</p> <p>“ . . . blessed to have met great teachers and mentors along the path who encouraged me on that aspiration” – (<i>Renate Hermes, Group Spa Director/Co-Owner of Duniye Spas</i>)</p>
Personal resources	<p>“I left school in 2002, I joined Conrad Rangali Island . . . It provided me with the excitement and . . . it meant that I was earning to support my family” – (<i>Shafiyya Steinhilber, Associate Director of Sales at Hotel Jen</i>)</p>

Table 3.
Excerpts from
Hotelier Maldives
magazine

Also, indicated in Table 4 is the observation that unmarried women managers are more likely to attribute their success to “work-family balance” (50% report work-life balance as the cause of their success) than married women managers (14.8% report work-life balance as the cause of success). In other words, “work-life balance” is 3.4 times more likely to act as the cause of success among unmarried women managers than among those who are married. This difference is statistically significant ($p = 0.047$, $\chi^2 = 3.610$, $df = 1$).

Finally, “peer support” is statistically more likely to be the cause of managerial success among married women managers (40.7%) than among their unmarried counterparts (35.7%). This difference is also statistically significant ($p = 0.036$, $\chi^2 = 4.831$, $df = 1$). Stated differently, “peer group” support is 1.1 times more likely to be the reason for success for married women managers than unmarried women managers.

Discussion and implications

The notion that gender is an underlying criteria for occupying senior positions in organizations has been dealt with insufficient and fragmented theoretical understandings that have failed to fully capture the implicit mechanisms that restrict women from reaching senior management positions. The present study bridges this gap between theory and practice by considering the intertwined personal, as well as organizational characteristics that women attribute as factors for their success. For example, theory suggests that the abilities necessary for leadership is not gender determinative (Paustian-Underdahl *et al.*, 2014), yet this study provides evidence that women managers consider maintaining work-life balance as a challenge especially in the hospitality industry. Women are also expected to prioritize their role as wives, mothers and homemakers. These findings are relevant for policymakers and business experts who often point to involving women in managerial activities as a means of raising incomes and encouraging female entrepreneurship. However, relatively less attention has been paid to female tourism managers especially for countries such as Maldives. This is due to most research focusing on regional entrepreneurship in Asia-Pacific rather than country-level entrepreneurship (Otsuka and Natsuda, 2015). Although the situation of Maldives is unique in some ways, it seems to reflect a pattern that exists elsewhere, which can help policymakers in devising policies promoting the inclusion of gender equality in workplaces.

Using Maldivian hospitality and tourism sector as the context, this study established that typically women managers consider their inherent competencies, support of friends and family, peer support, good mentoring, work-family balance and personal resources as fundamental to their success in the industry. It is not surprising that possessing the right set of “competencies” is considered as primary to success. Women managers self-reported their competencies such as leadership, change management, interpersonal skills, result

Table 4. Significant influences on causes of managerial success for married versus unmarried women managers

Cause of success	Married	Unmarried	χ^2	p	Odds ratio
Family and friends	17 of 27 ^a (62.9%)	8 of 14 (57.1%)	0.032	4.055	Married/ unmarried: 1.1
Work-family balance	4 of 27 (14.8%)	7 of 14a (50%)	0.047	3.610	Unmarried/ married:3.4
Peer support	11 of 27 ^a (40.7%)	5 of 14 (35.7%)	0.036	4.831	Married/ unmarried: 1.1

Note: ^aDenotes higher chance of occurrences than the comparison group

orientation and planning as important to their success. However, it is noteworthy that the second major reported reason for success in this industry is support from friends and family. The reason this is noteworthy is because women in other Islamic states are still fighting hard to gain respectable status in the society where women have to live up to the social expectations of executing their traditional roles as mother and wife for long, while the more masculine role of being the bread-earner was left to the men in the family. However, the present findings highlight the steadily changing social outlook in the Maldivian society as a result of which several women have started gaining social support from family to venture out and overcome social inhibitions of working in a male-dominated industry. Results of the present study contribute in establishing that despite being a Muslim dominated society, Maldivian women are not only gaining acceptance in the workplace but have the support of their families. This finding goes a long way in establishing the role played by friends and family in supporting a women's career. The research results of the current study further suggest that a change in the mindset of the society regarding providing women with equal opportunities for education, formal training, encouragement from family and friends and provision of a pleasant working environment can prove to be the most important motives for the increased participation of women in the industry.

The study revealed personality characteristics to be the third leading factor of success among women managers, which is an important contribution of this research to our existing body of knowledge. Women are often represented by feminine words such as warm and nice (what society typically expects from women) as against competent and tough (what society typically expects from men). Nevertheless, the results of the study reveal women's wider acceptance in leadership positions because of their balancing act between being demanding yet caring, which is a win-win strategy. Results reveal that although women managers possess soft skills such as being sensitivity to customer needs, handling customer complaints and communicating with them, making them suitable for gender-typical jobs, it is also revealed that specific attributes associated with women's ability to handle leadership roles make them suitable even for senior positions. This draws major implications for firms that require "female" skills in an industry that is highly dependent on inter-personal relations but that also requires strong decision-making skills. Based on these findings, firms in the hospitality industry may look at hiring women managers not only at the middle management level but also at senior positions.

Another significant contribution of the present study is the analysis of different aspects of women managers' success in light of their marital status within the Maldivian tourism and hospitality industry. This is the first study to exclusively focus on finding that in the context of a Muslim dominated culture such as Maldives, the causes of success among married and unmarried women managers differ. [Rafiki and Nasution \(2019\)](#) measures the business success factors of Muslim women entrepreneurs in Indonesia and found that more married Muslim women entrepreneurs were going out to work partially due to the burgeoning need for a large work force and also because of economic necessity. Due to labor shortage, more married women have started returning to work. However, as long as social prejudice against women working in general will not change, not many women will be able to pursue a career. Among tourism researchers, it will not come as a surprise that having a supporting family has been fundamental to the progression of women employees beyond roles that are seen as being traditional for women.

Although the road to success in a demanding industry such as tourism and hospitality is extremely challenging and tough for all women, due to their dual roles, however coping with and juggling home life and office life becomes even more difficult for married women as compared to those who are single. A reasonable explanation for such a finding could be the

difference in the level of responsibilities that married women have toward their spouse and children that are far more demanding than the responsibilities of single women toward their parents and siblings. Such a finding is also supported by [D'Agostino \(2011\)](#), who found that a majority of working women who had progressed in their careers were unmarried/were not parents. Thus, it can be argued that, as married women are often associated with higher levels of responsibility toward home and family, they consider support from their family as a major contributing factor to their success as against single girls.

A similar line of reasoning can be expected for the finding that peer support is more likely to be attributed as a stronger reason for success among married working women than unmarried women. It is rather important to understand how the support of and relationship with coworkers may contribute to the success of women managers. While social support may be received from ones' family such as parents, spouse, children, siblings and other family members, in the work domain this support comes from ones' peer group. [Lazarus and Folkman \(1984\)](#) investigated how the social environment provides support in the form of social relationships with the peer groups, promoting improved organizational culture, and thus, better performance on the job. In most societies, women get married early and devote themselves to work later. Family constraints for married working women limit their involvement in duties who then try to find supportive help at their workplace. Resultantly, the amount of support she receives on the work front goes a long way in achieving the balance of work and life. As note previously, the research findings suggest that firms in the hospitality industry should offer strong support to the women workers in terms of both emotional support and encouragement to succeed to senior positions just as their male counterparts.

As work life balance literally means balancing domestic responsibilities along with work pressures, married working women, despite family support, encounter work-family conflict arising from factors within the work domain and family domain. As married women play more than one role, work-family balance is more difficult to maintain for them than for single women, affecting their ability to advance through the management ranks. Married women experience time pressures measured by the number of working hours and flexibility in the work schedule. This logic helps in explaining why work stressors coupled with demands from the family are more pronounced for married women than for unmarried ones. According to the research findings, long working hours resulting in insufficient time for household duties, family and children were the main work-related problems resulting in discontent. Under such conditions, families, relatives and friends can play a crucial role in easing things in the daily lives of the working women. Furthermore, it is suggested that organizations can try to make the work environment more women-friendly by offering flexible working hours, particularly for married women with children. Firms may also provide the facility of day-care centers for the young children of women employees.

Understanding factors that influence women managers' success is essential for policymakers concerned with economic development and the creation of employment associated with increased economic growth. Results of the study have important implications for firms within the hospitality and tourism industry that could benefit from examining their policies, especially those that are related with gender stereotypes. With an increase in women's share in the employment community, understanding of the factors affecting women's employment decisions becomes exceedingly important to attract the right kind of talent. Along similar lines, organizations also need to take advantage of the changing societal attitudes toward working women, encouraging the employment of progressive young women in the industry.

Revelation from the current findings that more married women are making their place in top managerial positions reiterates the fact that women are capable of efficiently juggling work and life responsibilities, clearly indicating the contributions that women can make to the workforce. Unfortunately, women are still stereotyped as a homemaker that does not do justice to the capabilities that women have displayed through centuries. It is hoped that the results of the present study help bring awareness among decision-makers, managers and practitioners about the indispensability of women in the hospitality industry.

Conclusion

Although the contribution of women in businesses has increased with an increase in the number of women who work in the industry, yet it is not easy to generalize about women managers and their role in tourism employment. This study revealed the overall representation of women managers within the hospitality and tourism industry in Maldives, as reflected in magazines and confirmed that although women managers are underrepresented in management, there has been a broad increase in the participation of women within the industry. The study further falsified the perception that gender is a limiting factor to rise and hold senior positions in the hospitality industry and that the increased participation of women managers may be driven by the changing social and cultural contexts. This may especially be evident in a traditionally Islamic country such as Maldives where Maldivian women's status is flourishing leading to reduced gender gaps (Fulu, 2007). The religious and cultural background of women managers in Maldives, who have their own distinct characteristics, may differ from other groups of women managers suggesting that the findings of the present study may be influenced by social, cultural and religious factors.

The study also looked at the representation of women managers in a male-dominated hospitality and tourism industry in Maldives and the reasons these women managers attribute their success to. In her role as a manager in the industry, a woman has several limitations including how their roles are represented in the media. The approach taken in this study was one of content analyzing "interviews" appearing in *Hotelier Maldives*, a hospitality and tourism magazine, to better understand the representation of successful women managers in mass media, which can help create role models, influence peoples' attitudes, reflect changing social ideals and break socially created barriers to the entry of women in a male-dominated industry. Notwithstanding the domination of men in this industry, women managers have earned their place not only in managerial positions but also in the media space that narrates stories of their success.

Limitations and future research

Notwithstanding the contributions of the present research, there are some inherent limitations to this study. The present study uses content analysis, which is exploratory in nature and relies on subjective judgments to a certain extent. There are alternate modes of analysis, such as surveys and census, but it is argued that the responses, thus generated make it difficult to understand the underlying motivations, which can only be captured using an interview method. In this way, the present study has established a benchmark for future work, and for future ways of analyzing writings in the business media.

Furthermore, the generalizability of the study is limited due to the use of only one media type-the print media and in only one country-Maldives. The choice of the magazine for data collection, i.e. *Hotelier Maldives*, may be a limiting factor in this case, as the findings of the study cannot be generalized to all magazines featuring articles about women managers. However, the magazine selected is one of the most popular in hospitality and tourism, and

can therefore, provide a fair representation of major trends in the industry. In future studies, coverage from other magazines or newspapers could be included for a better understanding of women managers. Furthermore, it is important to remember that representation of women in media is context specific; therefore, the results cannot be attributed to all cultural contexts. As the socio-cultural context within which a manager operates has a significant impact on managerial outcomes (Welter, 2011), a comparative study may be undertaken to include women managers' narratives from across different nations to better understand the representation of women within different cultures. Furthermore, it would be interesting to find out how women managers are portrayed in other media forms, such as television or even in movies.

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