

**Title: Occupational Segregations by Gender in the Hospitality Industry: The Case of a
Luxury Hotel**

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Occupational Segregations by Gender in the Hospitality Industry: The Case of a Luxury Hotel

Abstract:

This paper explores the different patterns of occupational segregation by gender in a luxury hotel in the UK. The purpose of the paper is to present the challenges hotels face by neglecting female talent. A mixed-method approach was used for this paper, with in-depth interviews conducted in a luxury hotel in London triangulated with secondary data. The findings suggest that women were prevalent at low level jobs and underrepresented in management. They were more likely to be found on casual-hour contracts and dominated departments such as sales, marketing, and HR. The HR managers were largely unaware of the way in which occupational segregation by gender was manifested within their business, despite the evidence of diversity management strategies. This paper provides some HRM practices to address gender occupational segregation in the luxury hotel sector.

Keywords: Occupational Segregation, Gender, Horizontal, Vertical, Luxury Hotels

1. Introduction

Within hospitality in the UK women currently occupy 49% of operational roles, but only 11% of management roles (People 1st, 2017). The lack of women in hospitality management can be seen as a symptom of the challenging work conditions in the industry. Male and female career paths follow the same pattern between the ages of 22 and 33, after which women's career trajectory falls dramatically. It is suggested that one of the primary factors influencing this decline is the inability to successfully reintegrate post-maternity leave (People 1st, 2017). In a time in which the hospitality industry faces uncertainty regarding the ability to recruit enough staff post-Brexit (Ahmed, 2017), it is important that businesses effectively utilise all available skills and human capital.

Occupational segregation and career outcomes of women have been documented to be associated (Reskin & Bielby, 2005; Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Ropero-Garcia, 2011). Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Ropero-Garcia (2011, p.91) define occupational gender segregation as the "unequal distribution of men and women among different jobs". Although hospitality and tourism are important employers of women gender issues remain under-researched (Figueroa-Domecq, Pritchard, Segovia-Pérez, Morgan, & Villancé-Molinero, 2015; Kogovsek & Kogovsek, 2012). The aim of this paper is to provide an overview of existing literature on gender occupational segregation in hospitality and to explore its forms in the luxury hotel sector in the UK. The purpose is to identify human resource management strategies to address this phenomenon.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Occupational Gender Segregation

Occupational segregation by gender refers to the phenomenon of men and women to occupy different job roles, sectors, workplaces and employment contracts (Burchell, Hardy, Rubery & Smith, 2014). Further to this is the

propensity for occupations predominantly held by women to be lower paid and lower valued (House of Commons Trade and Industry Committee, 2005). The negative impacts of occupational segregation by gender has encouraged a large volume of literature to be produced in a variety of academic fields), however there is little research in hospitality (Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Roper-Garcia, 2011).

A study by Blackburn, Jarman & Brooks (2000) found that occupational segregation can be categorised into two distinct orientations: “horizontal”, which refers to the distribution of men and women into different functions within an organisation; and “vertical”, the distribution of men and women within different responsibility levels within an organisation. The empirical literature often confuses these types of segregation (Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Roper-Garcia, 2011, p.92). For the purpose of this study horizontal segregation refers to the uneven distribution of men and women in different departments, whereas vertical segregation refers to the inequalities in gender distribution at different levels of responsibility in the same organisation.

2.2. Occupational Segregation in the UK Hospitality Industry

The UK hospitality sector is one of the few areas in which the proportion of men and women is roughly equal (Bosworth & Kersley, 2015). However, these jobs are unevenly weighted towards the bottom of the organisational hierarchy (Biswas & Cassell, 1996). The majority of job opportunities disproportionately filled by women are low-status, low paying and are often offered as part-time or casual contracts (Santero-Sanchez, Segovia-Pérez, Castro-Núñez, Figueroa-Domecq & Talón-Ballester, 2015; Campos-Soria, García-Pozo & Sánchez-Ollero, 2015; Brownell & Walsh, 2008). According to Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Roper-Garcia (2011) the hospitality industry is particularly at risk of both horizontal and vertical occupational segregation due to the nature of the sector. Women in the hospitality industry are likely to encounter “complex and acute” gender-linked dilemmas, as such the role of women in the hospitality industry has been heavily researched (Brownell & Walsh, 2008, p.1).

Literature shows that many job roles within the hospitality industry contain ‘female’ characteristics (Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Roper-Garcia, 2011). Traits such as care, empathy and servility can be seen as integral in some positions, particularly at an operational level; this has led to some roles becoming dominated by one gender (Greenlaw & Grubb, 1982). Women are hired for roles based on their “inherent aptitudes” of “caring for the comfort of other” and “serving food” (Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Roper-Garcia, 2011, p.92). Shrestha (2013) takes this one step further and suggests that this serves to perpetuate the gender stereotypes and roles expected of women, effectively promoting occupational segregation. Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Roper-Garcia (2011, p.92) state that “personality tends to be used as a synonym for sexual attractiveness”, hence implying the existence of occupational segregation by gender. The sexualisation of women is commonplace in the hospitality industry (Brownell & Walsh, 2008), often it forms an implicit or explicit part of job specifications. Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Roper-Garcia (2011) suggest that the industry’s focus on hiring staff based on personality rather than on education and qualifications, is a misnomer, where personality is a byword for sexually attractive. By hiring women based on the perceived benefits of their sexuality, instead of on their skill sets, employers are potentially missing out on benefits of valuable intellectual capital, and side-lining women in the process. The three facets described above – labour price, sexuality and gender – form the basis for what Purcell (1996) and Doherty & Manfredi (2001) suggest predispositions employers to recruit women for specific roles in the hospitality industry.

Burrell, Manfredi, Rollin, Price & Stead (1997) cite the education gap between men and women, suggesting that women are poorly qualified compared to their male counterparts, as one of the causes for women failing to move into roles with greater responsibility. Recently however, within top hospitality schools, women form at least 50% of the student body (Vanderbroeck, 2014). Women also graduated with higher classifications than men, 75% of women completed their undergraduate degrees with a 2:1 or higher; 4% higher than men (Haslam, 2017).

Legislation plays an important role in the creation of occupational segregation in the hospitality industry. In a comparative study of work regulations in the UK and Italy, the relatively deregulated UK labour market allowed for higher rates of female labour force participation (Doherty & Manfredi, 2001). However, much of this labour

within the hospitality industry comes in the form of part-time and casual contracts (TUC, 2014). While full and part-time labour are provided maternity leave, those on casual contracts are often not covered (Maternity Action, 2017). Women working in these contracts are at a much greater risk of forced unemployment during times of economic hardship and are more likely to be in positions with little responsibility and low pay (Doherty & Manfredi, 2001; Pinar, McCuddy, Birkan & Kozak, 2011). While flexibility plays an important role in helping women enter and re-enter the labour market, the quality of work available in the hospitality industry with this flexibility is concerning. With the high and rising cost of childcare in the UK (TUC, 2017), women, now more than ever, are facing pressures to contribute to family's finances as well as to carry the burden of childcare and housework.

2.3. Horizontal Segregation in the Hospitality Industry

Due to the nature of the hospitality industry, gender roles and further societal pressures, there are a number of departments within hotels and the wider hospitality industry in which gender imbalance is a major issue (Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Ropero-Garcia, 2011; Brownell & Walsh, 2008). Doherty & Manfredi (2001), Ng & Pine (2003) and Cave & Kilic (2010) identify housekeeping as one of the primary departments in which women often dominate where part-time jobs are prevalent. For women struggling to balance home and work life, this flexible way of working provides a source of income without overshadowing their other duties. Housekeeping, front office and operational food and beverage roles are dominated by women for different reasons (Ng & Pine, 2003; Cave & Kilic, 2010). A study of staff in luxury hotels by Jung & Yoon (2014) found that women possess a greater ability to process and understand other's emotions. This skill was most utilised by those working in front of house roles with lots of customer contact, such as the front office. The lack of men in these areas could be seen as the result of gender socialisation, which discourages the display of emotion by men, thus stunting emotional growth and placing a lower importance on the emotional well-being of others.

Despite home cooking being a job dominated by women in the home (ONS Digital, 2016), women are rarely seen in professional kitchens in the UK (Doherty & Manfredi, 2001; Ng & Pine, 2003). This environment is found to be hostile to women as kitchens are notorious for their long hours, and are found to be aggressive and stressful (Giousmpasoglou, Cooper, Marinakou, 2018). The horizontal segregation of women in the hospitality industry can be seen as the result of external factors which limit women's availability to work, as well as the sexualisation and stereotyping of women in the workforce.

2.4. Vertical Segregation in the Hospitality Industry

Vertical occupational segregation by gender can be clearly seen within the hospitality industry. Kogovsek & Kogovsek (2012) suggest that vertical segregation is sometimes called 'glass ceiling', which refers to barriers that lead to absence of women to climb in the career ladder. Baum (2013, p.59) states that women remain marginalised in the workplace and have limited access to promotion and leadership roles. Ng & Pine (2003) suggest that the lack of women in management is due to the anti-social hours of the hospitality industry in combination with the greater difficulties women face to balance work and home life.

One major contributor to the relative scarcity of women in management roles in the hospitality industry, is the gendering of management and leadership as a skill. Women are seen not to have the skills required to succeed in a management role (Heilman, 2001). Additionally, when women do demonstrate these characteristics they're at risk of being seen to break gender stereotypes and face the possibility of societal repercussions (Marinakou, 2014). In her study, Marinakou (2012) found that when rated by others, women are rated as significantly more effective leaders in hospitality than men. Thus, the socialisation of gender attributes may also play a role in limiting women's progression.

2.5. Strategies for Addressing Occupational Segregation

A large portion of the strategies to minimise the impact and presence of occupational segregation falls on human resources departments and their recruitment policies. Doherty & Manfredi (2001) identify that particularly for

smaller, independent businesses there is a lack of training in employment law and interview techniques. Organisations must have policies and training in place which limit the biases and preconceptions of individuals, in order to reduce segregation (Biswas & Cassell, 1996). In doing so, recruiters are more likely to hire based on the merits of any given staff member based on their relevant experience and qualifications regardless of their gender. Due to high employee turnover in hospitality, hotels should consider flexible contracts across all job levels. In doing so, the industry will become attractive to professional women looking to re-enter the labour market, but without the availability to work full time hours (Marinakou, 2014).

By evaluating and analysing levels of occupational segregation within their own organisations, managers are able to make conscious efforts to correct gender imbalance. By increasing the number of women in “male” jobs, stereotypes are broken down, and women are more likely to train towards and work in these areas (Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Roper-Garcia, 2011). By making departments more accessible to women, recruiters open the doors to a new pool of staff who could fill vacancies. Equal treatment of men and women in terms of salary is needed to increase job satisfaction (Kara, Uysal & Magnini, 2012).

3. Methodology

A mixed method approach was adopted for this research project. Secondary data were acquired by the luxury hotel to be used for triangulation and analysis purposes. The qualitative approach used for this study was a case study of a luxury hotel in London. For this purpose, nine in-depth interviews were conducted with managers in the HR department. The semi-structured interviews contained 15 pre-determined questions covering the topic, for example some questions focused on gender issues, recruitment and others on policies currently used in order to prevent segregation by gender. The focus was on the perceptions, actions and meaning these managers attach to occupational segregation in their hotel. Although, Bryman (2008) claims that it is almost impossible to establish how many interviews may be needed for a study, giving a minimum of 12 and 20, this study is focused on only 3 interviews as the participants hold the key positions and have access to the relevant information in this hotel, hence convenience sampling was used. Moreover, these interviews were used as a pilot for the design of a larger study which aims to include other departmental managers and employees. Interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researchers.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was adopted to analyse the data from the interviews. Thematic analysis was used to determine, analyse and report patterns (themes) in the data. Six (6) stages were utilised to identify the themes. Data was transcribed, and then through reading initial ideas were noted. Coding then took place, putting them into sub-themes. Each sub-theme was reviewed based on their meaning and relationships with focus on segregation by gender. Naming themes was next and finally each theme was refined with its relevance to the project and agreed between the two researchers.

4. Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis revealed 4 key areas. Firstly, horizontal and vertical segregation were discussed and identified. Then recruitment was linked with the numbers of men and women employed in this hotel and finally development opportunities provided to both genders.

4.1. Patterns of Occupational Segregation

Secondary data was used in order to identify patterns of occupational segregation in the hotel. This is shown in table 1.

Table 1: Table of Gender Balance by Department in Hotel X

Department	Total Positions	Percentage Male	Percentage Female	
Engineering	19	100	0	
Security	8	100	0	Operational
Housekeeping, Laundry & Cloakroom	68	43	57	Support
Back of House	21	81	19	Guest Facing
Kitchen Incl. Pastry & Bakery	104	70	30	Equal
Pastry & Bakery	27	52	48	Female Dominated
Kitchen Excl. Pastry and Bakery	77	77	23	
Sales / Event Sales and Marketing	29	10	90	
Accounting & Revenue Management	25	56	44	
Human Resources	6	17	83	
Switchboard	22	23	77	
Other Executives	6	67	33	
Other Admin	4	0	100	
Restaurant	78	55	45	
Bar	33	79	21	
Events Operations	33	55	45	
Room Service	24	88	13	
Butlers	9	78	22	
Food and Beverage - Total	177	71	29	
Front Office & Guest Relations	20	35	65	
Concierge & Luggage Porters	27	96	4	
Spa	6	0	100	
Retail	8	0	100	
Guest Facing - Total	238	40	60	
TOTAL	550	54	46	

It was evident that the hotel employed roughly equal number of men and women, however when the data was broken down horizontally the situation changed. When *horizontal segregation* was explored it was clear that men outweighed women in all departments except for front office and guest relations, confirming Ng & Pine (2003) and Cave & Kilic (2010) that identified front office and operational food and beverage roles as roles which are likely to be dominated by women. Moreover, switchboard, HR, and sales and marketing were among the roles and jobs dominated by women. Interestingly, none of the participants acknowledged this detail, for example Participant 2 felt that “*females are very well represented*” in the hotel’s kitchens, although the data coming from HR showed the opposite, confirming the studies by Doherty & Manfredi (2001) and Ng & Pine (2003) who identified professional kitchens as one area dominated by men.

Housekeeping was mentioned by Participants 1 and 3, both suggesting that the department was female dominated. Participant 3 further specified, “*Room Attendants tend to be female, whereas Housekeeping Porters tend to be male because of the nature of the role: carrying and things like that*”. Cave & Kilic (2010) found that housekeeping is often one of the areas which women dominate. Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Ropero-Garcia (2011) suggest that this can be because housekeeping is seen as an extension of duties in the home. A statement by Participant 3 summed up well how the duties involved in housekeeping can be come gendered in line with traditional work allocation in the home, “*Where naturally, if you look at some of our Room Attendants, they can get into some of the nitty gritty details of cleaning a room, but they wouldn’t be able to move a whole bed... sometimes you just need a bit of man power because our jobs are quite physical*”.

Moreover, the findings suggested that arguably both room attendant and housekeeping porter’s jobs are incredibly physical jobs that require the masculine trait of strength to lift and move heavy objects. The hotel’s recruitment website confirmed that the ability to “frequently lift and carry up to 30lbs” was a requirement for female dominated room attendants, but not for male dominated linen porters.

In terms of *vertical segregation*, the data showed that women in the hotel occupied mainly hourly paid jobs or low-income jobs as shown in table 2 which affirms the study by Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Ropero-Garcia (2011) who also identified that women are often hired in low-income and part-time work.

Table 2. Contract type by gender

Contract Type	Male	Female	Total	Percentage	
				Male	Female
Casual	6	20	26	23%	77%
Part Time	6	10	16	38%	63%
Reduced Hour Full Time	1	7	8	13%	88%
Total	13	37	50	25%	76%

4.2. Recruitment

All three participants discussed recruitment and selection in reference to the discussion on segregation. They all highlighted the importance of personality over skills, particularly when hiring at an operational level. Participant 1 for example stated that they were looking for candidates who *“fit into our hotel, somebody who’s going to represent our values and be an ambassador for our brand”*. Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera & Ropero-Garcia (2011) highlight the potential for “personality” to be a byword for “sexuality”, particularly affecting recruitment of customer facing positions. All those employed in customer facing departments were required to demonstrate skills such as high levels of emotional intelligence, a skill more likely to be found in women (Yung & Joon, 2014). Petrović, Jovanović, Marković, Armenski & Marković (2014) and Groves (1992) also found that women working in customer facing roles experience higher levels of job satisfaction. It is therefore not possible to determine, without further study, the reasons behind personality-based hiring decisions in this case. Participants explained that the recruitment process changed recently at the hotel to address gender and other diversity issues. They no longer encourage candidates to add photos on their application form and/or their cv. Similarly, their online platform has no space to upload photos or images. Nevertheless, Participant 2 felt that having a candidate’s name *“tells us their (the candidate’s) origin”*, but also recognised the potential for bias as suggested, *“if we gave not everyone the same name, but if everyone could be addressed in a similar way, so that everyone is considered equally”*.

When asked to explain the gender imbalance they saw across departments in the hotel, all of the participants felt that it was through no fault of the recruitment process, but on the number of applications they receive for each position, as shown with the following statement by Participant 3: *“if we say we need 50% male in housekeeping, we’re not actually going to get those applications to fill that position, and then we’re without 50% of the team. If we could, that’s great, but it’s not something we consciously go, “right, we’re going to fill a role with all male now”, it’s: let’s see what candidates we get, let’s interview, let’s find the best process. And we have levels of interviews to make sure we are hiring the right candidates, so the manager sees them, HR sees them and the Hotel Manager sees them to make sure we are all on the same page, and to make sure we get the best candidate for the role”*. Participant 2 suggested they should be advertising and hiring people for example females to work as plumbers to balance the gender gap. And continued that *“it’s a lot to do with the educations at school and at home, more than what we require, from a hotel perspective”*. Interestingly, when asked none of the interviewees provided any information on guests’ expectations on the gender of people working at different departments except the spa due to the intimacy of the service provided in this department.

4.3. Equality and Leadership

Gender equality was led by the new CEO and communicated in their website as shown in table 3.

Table 3. Advertisement from hotel’s website

We all have a role to play in creating a world of gender equality and it is all our responsibility to challenge stereotypes and gender bias. Here at the we #pressforprogress and today we have seen celebrations in all our departments dedicated to the incredible women we have in our hotel #internationalwomensday

Nevertheless, none of the participants felt that gender equality was a real focus for the hotel in general, or HR and recruitment specifically, and as such no equality policy was in place, although this was identified as the main point of discussion at networking HR events. Despite this they offered the ‘Step up Women in Leadership’ training programme to promote and encourage diversity in the hotel. Still, though women in this hotel were found in managerial roles in traditionally female dominated areas as discussed above such as housekeeping and front office. The findings suggested that the company was making an effort to address gender diversity issues, but no clear policy was in place.

4.4. Career development and barriers to progress

Participant 2 did not feel there were any barriers for the development of women’s careers within the hotel. They did however mention the challenges faced by parents “*in some departments in the hotel where people work more than 40 hours, sometimes up to maybe 60, 70 hours*”, but praised the recent changes in parental leave legislation, which now allows men and women to split parental leave in whichever way they saw fit. Participant 1 also discussed how childcare impacted on career development, “*again if a woman goes away and chooses to have a family, then that will have an impact as well. Because some of them might decide not to come back, some of them would obviously set them back in their career in terms of progression*”. Despite equal rights to parental leave, gender stereotypes place the burden of childcare on women more often than men, even when both parents are working (Horne, Johnson, Galambos & Krahn, 2017). For parents returning to work, the hotel was willing to discuss flexible returns, however, it was not guaranteed, and had to be analysed on a case by case basis. Participant 3 felt that the biggest barrier to women’s professional development “*is themselves more than anything*”. They suggested that the different way which men and women think disadvantages women, hence they introduced the leadership training programme.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Conclusion

This paper explored occupational segregation by gender in a luxury hotel context. The findings suggested that there was a lack of consensus between the participants as well as a lack of depth of knowledge in reference to gender discrepancies in employment at this hotel. The disparity between the responses of the participants and the reality of the gender balance within the hotel’s staffing suggested that gender balance is not an important metric for the hotel. This was also expressed in responses from each of the participants. The results of the secondary data show a significant level of horizontal segregation, largely in line with what is expressed in current literature, with a few notable exceptions. Conversely, vertical segregation is much less prevalent within the hotel than suggested by literature. However, the relationship between the level of horizontal and the level vertical segregation is an important statistic for measuring the effectiveness of subconscious bias training.

Heilman (1983, 2001) discussed the impact of gender stereotype on shaping women’s career decisions, as well as the hiring behaviour of organisations. The authors suggest that there are policies which can be put in place to help to mitigate the impact of gender stereotypes on the recruitment process, and on de-gendering the job roles, ultimately a societal shift in attitudes held by and towards women is required to eliminate occupational segregation.

This study proposes that hotels should advertise jobs in genderless job titles in order to attract a more diverse range of applicants. In view to this, when including pictures in recruitment advertisements, companies should take the opportunity to use images which promote minority genders in a given job role. Moreover, personal data identifying gender should be eliminated at the process such as photos,

gender identification, including names when they are very representative of a gender. Recruiters should be thoroughly trained to avoid gender bias in the recruitment and selection process. The effectiveness of training should be measured in order to put in place better practices, further training or even exclude people who were not successful. Clear personality traits, skills and other guidelines should be clear to recruiters including specific and published diversity and equality policy, setting targets and objectives against which they can measure the success of recruitment. Data should also be recorded and regularly monitored to avoid any gender related segregation.

Finally, this study proposes that hotels should provide such training to enhance women's progression and careers, developing leadership skills which may contribute to decreased levels of vertical segregation. Practices such as childcare are important especially for women hence different organisations operating in the same area could collaborate to provide such facilities to their staff. This in conjunction with flexible work patterns may encourage for example women to return to work after having a child to avoid loss of talent. Other ways to address such gender challenges could include practices such as the involvement of professional bodies in launching and promoting initiatives to connect aspiring women in the industry with role models and mentors, or even promote hospitality careers as a field for all young children regardless their gender in order to attract future talent.

5.2. Limitations of this study

As this study was limited to one case, further research should be conducted to establish any link between levels of vertical and horizontal segregation within an organisation and employee satisfaction and staff turnover rates. If studies were able to provide a demonstrable economic impact resulting from occupational segregation by gender, a greater number of organisations would be willing to take action to minimise its presence.

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