

# Determinants of career progression for women in the Hospitality Industry: Reflections of women managers in Five Star hotels in India

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of career advancement strategies on the career progression of women managers in five star hotels in India. Although armed with appropriate education, training and development, and years of experience in the industry, women have not made much progress in reaching higher echelons of management in Indian hotels. Through this study, some light has been shed on the organizational initiatives and support mechanisms needed to assist women managers which positively influences their career progression.

This is a descriptive study and a mixed research methodology was employed. The study reveals that highly qualified, experienced women managers are not able to make progress in a career in the hotel industry. It is evident from the results that, despite high qualifications and long years of service, many women are not able to attain even middle-level leadership positions. To break the traditional stereotypes, women managers have recommended new strategies like such as hiring of career counsellors, compulsory development programs, provision for shadowing and which allows taking risks. These factors may help women managers grow in their careers and succeed in the male-dominated environment in the Indian hospitality industry.

**Key words:** Career Advancement, Career Progression, Promotions, Learning, Women managers,



Source: <http://blogs.ft.com/beyond-brics/files/2011/05/Taj-Mahal-Palace-and-Tower-Hotel-reception.jpg>

## Introduction

“The more senior and well-paid the post, the more likely it is to be filled by a man, despite women’s numerical predominance in the industry” (Purcell, 1996). Research consistently indicates that women are clearly the minority in top leadership positions within the private sector and government services (HVS, 2013). Catalyst (2013) found that twenty of the Fortune 500 chief executive officers are women, and in 2011, women occupied only 14 % of C-level positions at these companies. Of the thirteen hospitality related companies on the Fortune 500 list, no women held CEO title in 2012 (HVS, 2013). The Confederation of Indian Industry released a report indicating that women comprise only 16 % of junior managers, four per cent of middle and senior managers and a meagre one per cent of organizational leaders (Centre for Social Research, 2013) in the organized sector in India. In India, the glass ceiling appears in different forms: unfriendly organizational policies, under-representation women within the corporate hierarchy, exclusion of women from informal networks and lack of opportunities. The TV channels like BBC, CNN and the most recent literature available in print form as well as online stresses the need to monitor the progress of women in management and leadership positions worldwide including India. The results of the recent Lok Sabha election revealed the startling fact about gross under-representation of women in the Indian parliament. As per the election results, only 11 % women are part of the parliament as against 89 % of men and there was a debate at the national level regarding the necessity of introducing job reservation for women. This may have been the case at a very broad level; unfortunately the same situation persists even in general employment. It is an indication that Indian organizations need to pay far greater attention towards the specific career needs of women by breaking the glass ceiling that exists. The element of diversity which is instrumental in changing the dynamics of the workplace due to the presence of women cannot be ignored. It is required that the workplaces to be free of any kind of discrimination and that there is a vigorous encouragement to include both sexes when

there is decision making and the offering of job promotion possibilities.

## Career Advancement Strategies

Managerial women in the hotel industry work in complex, changing and challenging environments that require perseverance and constant efforts are made by them to advance in their careers. The development needs and approaches change over the course of their professional careers and become the base for further development. They have to be self-directed, active learners who initiate conversations and collaborations and learn through hard work. The development strategies most suitable for women’s career advancement as per the existing literature are: (a) Self-directed learning, (b) Career related continuous learning (c) Internal Networking, (d) Formal Mentoring, and (e) Career Tracking (Jackson, 2001; Schmeer & Reitman, 2002; Zane, 2002, Liddell, 2007; Rowold, 2008). Regardless of their educational foundations, organizational learning is the key process allowing managers to sustain development.

The important questions that need to be considered here are:

- Whether the strategies mentioned above positively affect the career advancement of women?
- Are the Indian hospitality organizations providing an opportunity to use a variety of these resources (formal and informal) that are significant for women’s advancement to management positions?

## Literature Review

Despite the impressive increase of women in the workforce, women continue to be underrepresented in managerial positions in the hospitality industry (Catalyst, 2013). This gender gap is very evident in especially the senior management and executive levels. The field of hospitality is generally male dominated at higher levels and the shrinking number of women continuing careers in the industry affects the number of women at higher levels. In India, many women in mid-

career are leaving their hotel jobs and opting for careers in small businesses like restaurants, bakery and confectionary or work some serve as consultants. According to Eagly (2002), the three types of barriers that have obstructed women's advancement are: 1) concrete wall 2) the glass ceiling and 3) the labyrinth. But contrary to the exiting notion of organizational barriers to women's advancement, the HVS report of 2013 reveals thought-provoking findings about self-imposed barriers whereby women gave priority to personal life over advancement opportunities. The most common self-imposed barriers involved family and domestic responsibilities holding a higher priority and the most visible organizational barriers were lack of mentoring and career planning (Boone, 2013).

### **Career advancement of women in management**

According to Burke (2002), education, training and development can be conceived of as being either or both challenges and support. The existing literature on career related aspects of women, has addressed several factors that have contributed to women's advancement in organizations. The existence of management learning (Bryans & Sharon, 2003), organization support systems (Culpan & Wright, 2002), mentoring (Mattis, 2001; Allen & Ebby, 2002), networking (Wirth, 2001), training and development programs (Loutfi, 2001; Wirth, 2001), and organization cultures that support women (Bajdo & Dickson, 2001) have been found to be very important for women's advancement to management positions. An important factor contributing to women's development and participation in managerial work is their access to education and training & development initiatives (Wirth, 2001). McKeen and Burke (1991) reported that training and development opportunities, and visible and challenging assignments, had direct effects on job satisfaction and indirect effects on career prospects.

Women's involvements in organization's informal networks are also significant for their gaining invaluable information and visibility as well as contacts with powerful leaders and support for their gaining higher-level jobs (Chen, 2007). The career success of women

is dependent upon some of the important characteristics of networking that includes informal interactions involving favours, deals, persuasion and connection to important people (Ackah, 2003). Wirth (2001) mentions the significance of career tracking as one of the most useful strategies for women to achieve higher management levels. Bierema (1999) in her study of eleven corporate executives comments about the progressive development of women through three stages. The stages according to her are related to self-learning through higher education and company training courses and also informal learning through relationships, mentors, peer feedback, and new responsibilities. Women are more collaborative in their learning and leading with more interaction and participation as well as shared power and information which indicates a positive relationship between self-directed learning and attainment of higher positions (Liddell, 2007).

At the same time, research reveals the challenges of mentoring for women. It is learned that it is difficult for a woman to be recognized into the "old-boys network," which is predominately male dominated (Ho et al., 2002) and men are more comfortable with other men and are less comfortable with women whom they may perceive as intruders. But mentoring also has a positive impact on both male and female managers to understand the differences between masculine and feminine management styles as well as the importance of accepting both approaches in an organization (O'Neill & Blake-Beard, 2002). Bryans & Sharon (2003) highlight the social learning approach that emphasizes practice over theory and the social over the individual, and mention that learning in the workplace is dependent on tacit knowledge and embodied skills. Ford and Orel (2005) conclude that managers have to engage in continuous learning in order to keep up with the ever increasing job requirements in addition to career advancement and achievement of organizational goals.

### **Objectives of the study**

The key objectives of this study were to:

- explore the impact of career advancement strategies on women's mobility from lower management levels to higher management levels
- discover women manager's perceptions of usefulness of these strategies for their career advancement
- identify the additional promotional/growth strategies women have employed in Indian hospitality organizations for career growth.

### **Research questions and hypotheses**

Based on the review of literature and general information collected through conversations with some of the experienced women managers, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

Research question 1: What are the relationships between a set of five advancement strategies and women's career advancement to higher management levels in five star hotels in India?

The research hypotheses that lead this research question were;

H1: There is a significant relationship (correlation) between a set of five advancement strategies and women's career advancement to senior level positions (promotions)

H1a: Self-directed learning has a significant relationship with the promotion rate

H1b: Career related continuous learning has a significant relationship with the promotion rate

H1c: Formal mentoring has a significant relationship with the promotion rate

H1d: Networking has a significant relationship with the promotion rate

H1e: Career tracking has a significant relationship with the promotion rate

Research question 2: What are the associations between demographic variables and women's career advancement to higher management levels in five star hotels in India?

The research hypothesis that leads this research question was;

H2: The demographic variables have a significant relationship with women's career advancement to senior level positions (promotions)

### **Research Methodology**

The target population for this study was 87 managerial women from five star hotels in India. Five star hotels here represent both luxury and five star categories. The participants were a convenient sampling of women in managerial positions in these organizations. These managers were sought at middle hierarchical levels and in early and mid-career stages. The questionnaires were administered to 115 women and 87 fully completed questionnaires were returned with the participation rate of around 76%.

### **Statistical tool**

This study is basically a quantitative research study and to some extent qualitative in that it involves analysis of existing literature and open ended questions are answered by the respondents. The researcher selected the survey questions based on existing literature and the questionnaire developed by Chen (2005) to ensure validity and reliability as they have been used in earlier studies. The women managers from hotels were also personally consulted to get the first hand information regarding the topic under study for further validation.

Correlation analysis was used to determine the strength and degree of relationships between variables while multiple regression analysis was used to determine whether the independent variables in the study predict the dependent variable and to determine the magnitude of the contribution. In this research career advancement (promotion) is the dependent variable and the independent variables are (a) Self-directed learning, (b) Career related continuous learning (c) Internal Networking, (d) Formal Mentoring, and (e) Career Tracking. The second set of independent variables comprised of five demographic variables (age, level of education, present professional title, years of service with present employer and total

service in the profession) and the dependent variable was promotion rate. The demographic variables were also considered important for this study because they seemed to have an impact on the career progression of women managers in the hotel industry. The respondents were asked to reveal the total number of promotions that they have attained in their entire career to get an objective measure of advancement. Promotion here is defined as “any increase in level and/or any significant increase in job responsibilities or scope” (Siebert, et al., 2001). Individual promotion rates were calculated by dividing the number of promotions by the number of years in a certain occupation.

The survey questionnaire used in this study had three sections: 1. Demographic section

2. Promotion rates section and 3. Career Advancement strategies section. The demographic section provided the background information of respondents. The second section provided information about number of promotions and the third section was aimed at determination of effectiveness of five strategies to career advancement. This section had 20 items about five career advancement related strategies. The researcher used **five-point Likert scale** with the possible responses of strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The open ended question asked the respondent's opinion about the best strategy that the women managers found useful for career advancement and that helped them to break through the glass ceiling.

### Analysis of results

**Table1:** The descriptive analysis of demographic variables is shown below.

Variables	Frequency (N=87)	%ages
<b>Age of respondents</b>		
20-25 years	9	10.3
26-30 years	31	35.6
31-35 years	31	35.6
36-40 years	5	5.7
41-45 years	3	3.4
46 & above	8	9.2
<b>Educational qualification</b>		
Diploma	8	9.2
Undergraduate	13	14.9
Post graduate	66	74.9
<b>Current title</b>		
Asst. Manager	22	25.3
Manager	36	41.4
Senior Manager	10	11.5
Head of the Department	18	20.7
Top Management	1	1.1
<b>Service with the current employer</b>		
0-3 years	44	50.6
4-7 years	24	27.6
8-11 years	10	11.5
12-15 years	4	4.6
16-19 years	1	1.1
20 & above	4	4.6
<b>Total service in the profession</b>		
0-3 years	14	16.1
4-7 years	28	32.2
8-11 years	24	27.6
12-15 years	8	9.2
16-19 years	7	8.0
20 & above	6	6.9

As shown in table 1, most of the respondents were in the age group of 26-30 and 31-35

years (36% and 36%). 75% of the women are postgraduates and 15% are undergraduates.

Currently 41% of the respondents are holding the designations “manager”, 12% are Head of the Departments and 21% are assistant managers. The table also shows that 28% of the respondents have 4-7 years of service with the current employer and 51% have 0-3 years’ service. It is an indication that movement of people has taken a different shape and they don’t believe in continuing in one job for a long period of time. As a result the attrition rate in the hotel industry is substantially higher compared to other service industries. 32% of the respondents have a total of 4-7 years’ service in the profession followed by 28% with 8-11 years and 16% with 0-3 years.

### Survey Items and factor loadings

The Cronbach Alpha reliability of the data for the survey instrument was 0.931 which indicated a high level of internal consistency for the scale used.

The chosen determinants/strategies are multidimensional growth oriented and largely relevant to the women working in the hotel industry considering the predominantly male centric nature of the industry. Table 2 and 3 provide the glimpse of the sample items used for the five career advancement strategies with their descriptions and factor loading of each item.

**Table 2: Dimensions and descriptions**

Dimension	Description	Sample items
Self-directed learning	A process in which individuals take initiative to learn with or without the help of others	I have taken initiative to invest personally in education and training to increase my scope of managerial advancement
Career related continuous learning	It is a self-initiated, proactive learning at the individual level that focuses on job and career related experiences	To focus on learning at the individual level, my organization uses career related training and development modules
Formal mentoring	“It is a process in which experienced managers provide coaching and support to younger employees with the potential to grow to higher levels”	Formal mentoring has helped me to remove organizational barriers and increased my upward mobility
Networking	Formal and informal networks are critical in gaining invaluable information and visibility as well as contacts with powerful people and support for obtaining high level jobs	Informal networks played an important role in gaining valuable information and visibility as well as contacts with leaders in order to obtain higher level jobs
Career tracking	It involves “identifying women with high potential and helping them gain visibility and experience through challenging assignments”	Special training and coaching sessions provided by the organization as part of career tracking program were important to my career advancement

**Table 3: Items loading on career advancement strategies**

Factors	Items	Loading
	I make use of learning resources like books, journals, conferences, workshops for self-development	.752
	I have taken initiative to invest personally in education and training to increase my scope of managerial advancement	.741
	I take initiative to diagnose my learning needs and plan appropriate learning strategies	.677

Self-directed learning	Self-directed learning has is an important factor that helped me to attain high level position in my organization	.731
Career related continuous learning	I always accept demanding and challenging assignments which will help me to develop skills and increase my exposure and visibility	.768
	To focus on learning at the individual level, my organization uses career related training and development modules	.674
	My superiors encourage me to utilize and transfer the learning outcomes in my regular work in order to progress in my career	.867
	The professional development opportunities provided by the organization enhanced my knowledge and self-confidence to succeed in my career	.778
Formal mentoring	Formal mentoring has helped me to remove organizational barriers and increased my upward mobility	.603
	My organization has provision for peer mentoring and mentoring circles as career strategy tools	.743
	I have received the knowledge and skills that are important for obtaining higher level position through mentoring	.760
	The role of mentoring was very important in my career advancement	.737
Internal & external networking	I have established good contacts and relationships through networking with others in order to advance in my career	.795
	Informal networks played an important role in gaining valuable information and visibility as well as contacts with leaders in order to obtain higher level jobs	.896
	I am able to modify my communication style and behaviour through Informal networking within and outside my organization	.855
	Conversations and collaborations played a major role in my career for growth and advancement	.863
Career tracking	The organizational support through career tracking helped me to gain visibility and identified me as a high potential employee	.628
	My organization supports me to get career guidance for advancement from superiors in the organization	.694
	Special training and coaching sessions provided by the organization as part of career tracking program were important to my career advancement	.680
	My organization encourages women to move into powerful positions through career tracking.	.639
Cronbach's alpha		.931

**Table 4: Descriptive analysis of career advancement strategies**

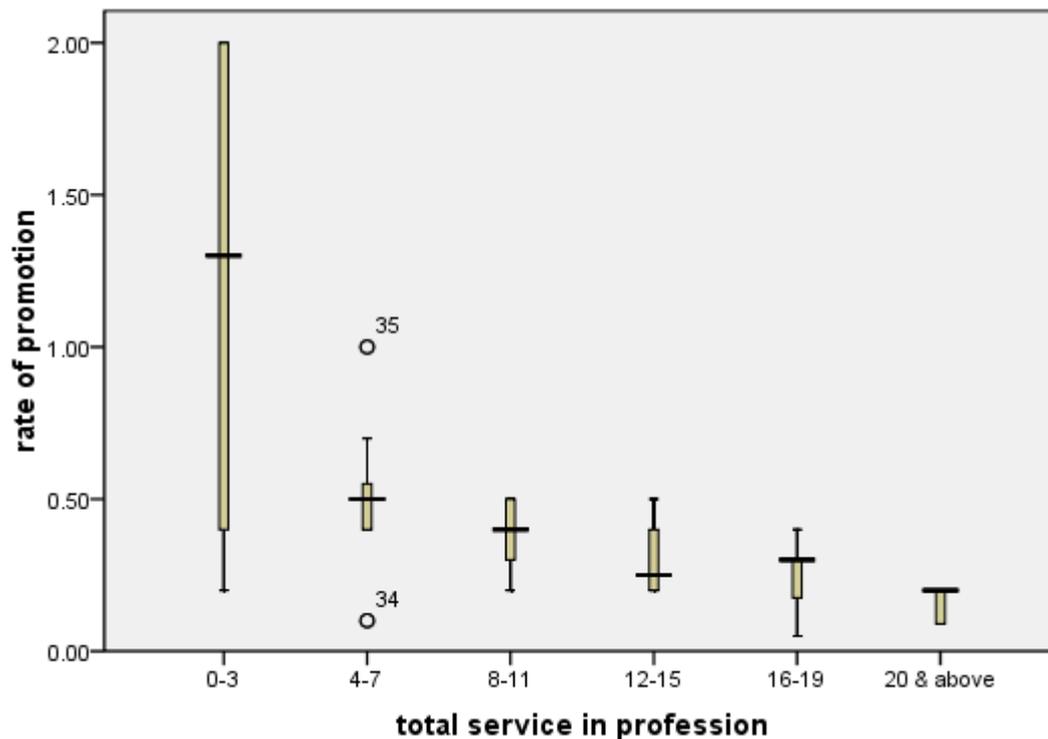
Determinants	Mean (N=87)	Std. D
Self-directed learning	4.24	2.46
Career related continuous learning	4.01	3.36
Formal mentoring	3.65	3.34
Networking	3.99	3.88
Career tracking	3.78	3.58

The descriptive analysis of independent variables including the five advancement strategies is presented in table 4. The mean values show that the respondents have given very high ratings for self-directed learning with a mean of 4.24. The rank orders of the importance of these determinants are as follows: Self-directed learning, Career related

continuous learning, Networking, Career tracking and Formal mentoring. Even though the mean values of all the variables in general are high, the important question to be answered is about their impact on promotions and subsequent effect on the career progression of women managers.

**Univariate analysis of socio-demographic variables with promotion rate**

Figure 1: Total service in the profession and promotion rate



**Table 6: Educational qualifications and promotion rate**

Educational qualification	Median (IQR with promotion rate)
Diploma	0.7 (0.16, 1.00)
Undergraduate	0.4(0.3, 1.25)
Post graduate	0.4 (0.3, 0.5)

Total years of service and educational qualifications were taken as sample variables from the demographic variables to inspect the trend. As depicted in table 5, with increasing years of service, the median promotion rates are decreasing. But as shown in Table 6, educational qualification was not found to be statistically significant in achieving promotions. Is it this trend affecting their

career path or is it the demanding nature of the hotel industry and the premature departure of people from the industry responsible for slow growth rate? Or is it an indication that women’s and men’s corporate experience and career paths diverge soon after entering the workforce? This research tried to draw conclusions based on further analysis.

**Table 7: Partial correlations between ratings on advancement strategies and demographic variables**

	S1 Self- directed learning	S2 Career related continuous learning	S3 Mentoring	S4 Networking	S5 Career tracking	S6 Age	S7 Educational qualifications	S8 Current title	S9 Service with current employer	S10 Total service	S11 Promotion rate
S1	1.000										
S2	0.677	1.000									
S3	0.62	0.526	1.000								
S4	0.297	0.315	0.097	1.000							
S5	0.727	0.728	0.766	0.337	1.000						
S6	-0.034	-0.115	-0.046	-0.01	-0.079	1.000					
S7	0.177	-0.091	-0.067	0.273	-0.066	0.11	1.000				
S8	-0.016	0.088	0.057	0.148	0.175	0.287	0.197	1.000			
S9	0.052	0.002	0.037	-0.098	0.055	0.621	0.15	0.288	1.000		
S10	0.039	-0.082	-0.02	0.069	0.057	0.909	0.137	0.411	0.696	1.000	
S11	0.093	0.047	0.056	-0.107	-0.07	0.493	-0.156	-0.225	-0.321	-0.572	1.000

Note: \* Significance level=0.01

The correlation analysis in table 7 reveals that the career advancement strategies per se were in most cases significantly associated with each other, showing high to moderate effect sizes. In specific, it can be noted that the strongest correlations are between career tracking and self-directing, career related

continuous learning and mentoring. However, the ratings on career advancement strategies had no relation with age, total service and promotion rate; the coefficients are non-significant and there is no association. This discloses the fact that in spite of the presence of career advancement strategies, women are not able to achieve career progression.

### Regression Analysis

**Table 8: Multiple regression analysis (N=87)**

R square = .437  
 F=5.904  
 p=0.000 \*\*

Determinants of career advancement	Beta weight	Significance
Self -directed learning	.490	.002 **
Career related continuous learning	-.149	.316
Formal mentoring	.082	.586
Networking	.039	.710
Career tracking	-.389	.006**
Age	.131	.587
Educational qualification	-.244	.003**
Current title	.165	.121
Service with the present employer	.186	.147
Total service in the profession	-.865	.003**

Predictors: Self-directed learning, Career related continuous learning, Formal mentoring, Networking, Career tracking, Age, Qualification, Current title, Service with present employer and Total service

Dependent variable: Promotion rate

\*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* shows the significance level when  $p$  value is  $< 0.05$

As per the results of multiple regression analysis for null hypothesis H1 and H2, the R square value was 0.437. This indicates that the set of independent variables accounted for 43.7% of the variance of the dependent variable. The individual effect of independent variables on the dependent variables was also determined through multiple regression analysis.

As indicated above, there were significant relationships between advancement strategies, demographic variables and the Promotion Rate. The independent variable, self-directed learning had a positive effect ( $B = .490$ ,  $p = .002$  and  $B = .605$ ,  $p = .024$ ) on the dependent variable. It was found to be statistically significant accepting the research hypothesis H1a. The independent variable, career tracking had a negative effect ( $B = -.389$ ,  $p = .006$ ) on the dependent variable. It was found to be statistically significant accepting research hypothesis H1e. Analysis also revealed that self-directed learning was the most effective promotional strategy adopted by the women managers in Indian hotel industry. The research hypotheses H1b, H1c and H1d must be rejected as they were not showing any significant relationship with promotion rate. This indicates that only a few aspects of workplace based advancement strategies have an effect on women's career

advancement. Precisely it can be concluded that self-directed learning and career tracking are significantly affecting the career progression of women managers in Indian hotel industry. Even though these strategies together are intertwined and affect each other to some extent, according to the present study results, the important factors like mentoring and networking does not have a major impact on career advancement of women in the Indian hotel industry.

The independent variables, including age, current title and service with the present employer had a very small positive effect ( $B = .131$  &  $p = .587$ ,  $B = .165$  &  $p = .121$ ,  $B = .186$  &  $p = .147$ ) on the dependent variable. However these variables were not statistically significant (table 6). The other independent variables, including educational qualification and total service in the profession had a negative effect ( $B = -.244$  &  $p = .003$ ,  $B = -.865$  &  $p = .003$ ) on the dependent variable. Among the demographic variables educational qualification and total service in the profession were found to be statistically significant indicating that there is a significant relationship between qualification, service and the promotion rate accepting the research hypothesis H2.

### Analysis of the open-ended survey question

Qualitative information collected from the answers to the open-ended survey question provided the researcher with additional information about the most effective strategy that helped women managers to advance in their professional career. Some of the distinctive responses are cited in table 7 below.

**Table 9: Responses to open-ended question**

1	The most critical tool was that I would want to learn from all experiences in my professional life. Be it learning from a Senior or Junior. Secondly a good Mentor and being an avid reader assisted a lot
2	Learning to keep up with the times in the culinary world is a self-learned thing with inputs from peers and superiors. It is not a class room study or module learnt online but that which is learnt practically by self-discipline and motivation
3	Organization should hire employee Career Counsellors as part of Career Development for women
4	Mentoring. It not only gives you guidance but also gives you a 'readymade' network through your mentor of influential people inside and outside the organization.
5	My previous organisation had given me the opportunity to be a mentor to my juniors which would help them grow.
6	I was and am extremely passionate about my field and wanted to be thorough and hands on, before taking on a higher role, so that it would be easy for me to coach and guide my subordinates from time to

	time. My thorough and on-going knowledge and skill also helped me to take care of any situation. I continuously try to build my knowledge and skill. One needs to be hands on and know the facts and skills oneself, in order to expect it from the team under him/ her.
7	Each individual has his/her own strategy, what works best for me might not work best for others. However, inter-personal skills with the stakeholders and within the organisation play a vital role. Also, information and case studies on internet is vast, one should make use of that.
8	I believe the most effective learning strategy is by experience (learning is at its best when you do it make mistake and solve the problem and learn). Self-learning and need based learning are best ways of learning. Some professional development programmes are not customized so doesn't cater to individual learning needs but helps overall learning
9	Self-learning. When you are put in a situation you are forced to deal with is the most effective way to suit the circumstance
10	Open mindedness to change and a true striving for constant improvement
11	"To attain knowledge about what your team is doing so that u can give solutions n suggestions in terms of improvement.. To gain incredible knowledge about the job, learning from the supervisors"

The primary objective of inclusion of this question was to understand the real/actual opinions of women on the impact of learning and the advancement opportunities that supported their career progression. Some of the responses by the women managers matched with the questions addressed in the survey. A detailed description of self-directed learning was given by many respondents because they opined that each individual has his/her own strategy, what works best for him/her. From the responses to these questions, the researcher identifies other important career advancement strategies called "Applied and Experiential learning" and "Focus Groups". These strategies have helped them to gain more experiences and learning skills for further mobility towards higher career levels.

## Discussion

The study was piloted with the purpose of identifying the career advancement strategies that have most positively impacted the career advancement of women to higher level positions. The findings identified self-directed learning as the primary dimension followed by career tracking as the most effective strategies adopted by women among the five selected strategies.

This agrees with what is mentioned by the literature on women in chief academic positions, education was a key factor in their career advancement, among other factors, such as strong work ethic, flexibility, commitment, experience, personal characteristics, and political perspicacity (Moreton & Newsom, 2004).

Although women have opined that all the five advancement strategies are important for career growth, when matched with the number of promotions, the results do not show very significant relationship between the two. Surprisingly the speed of promotion is not keeping pace with the length of service for most of the women who responded in the study. It matches with the research outcomes of Chenevert and Trembley (2002). In this study it was found that seniority had a strong negative impact on women's promotion speed. It also matches with the findings of Burke (2006) about the advancements and promotions of women in hospitality industry happening during their 40s. It seems as though most women change focus, from their family to their job once they reach middle age.

It is evident from the results of second research question that, in spite of statistically significant relationship between demographic variables and the promotion rate, the education qualifications and total length of service had a negative and significant effect on the promotion rate. It stresses the reality that women in the hotel industry in spite of high qualifications and long years of service, have not been achieving success in their chosen careers.

As mentioned in the literature review, there is extensive evidences on the role of mentoring in women's career advancement and breaking the glass ceiling. The study by Tharenou (2005) on 3220 Australians from public sector and business service industry, reveals that mentors' career support increases women's promotion more than men's '. But mentoring according to the results of this study gets the

least mean (14.6) and there is no significant relationship between mentoring and promotion rate ( $p=.586$ ).

Responding to the open-ended question, some women stated that learning is an integrative part of their career and personal growth. While their opinions varied regarding the method of learning, all of them mentioned about the importance of learning and felt that organizations should accept active role in assisting women through training and development programs and by hiring employee career counsellors to encourage women's participation. One of the respondents mentions that, although the compulsory development programs organized by the corporate office of the company has helped her to advance in her career, at the unit level no further career related trainings were held to support her current position. Another respondent feels that the organizations should have provision for shadowing and strong sponsorship especially for women employees.

The researcher suggests that the new strategies recommended by the respondents may yield better results if adopted appropriately by the organizations. The focus groups consisting of experts from different organizations involving in sharing of ideas critical for efficient/effective performance is the need of the hour. The formal and informal discussions in these groups also help to build strong networks between organizations that may indirectly support organizational causes and success. The time tested method of mentoring along with these new approaches may help proactive women achieve success.

Learning by doing, was a time tested method of improving skills and competencies. Women should be encouraged to take up challenging assignments by identifying their potential which helps them build confidence and perform better to create visibility among the community at different levels.

### **Limitations and Further Research**

Due to very low male: female (approx. 15%) ratio at the managerial level in the Indian hotel industry, the possibility of having large sample size, which may have helped the researcher to get better results as well as wider scope of

getting enhanced ideas could not be achieved. Moreover, the trends observed in this study is restricted to only five star hotels and therefore may not generalize to other category of hotels in India. Replications are required to validate the findings with larger sample size as well as to gain better understanding of the issues concerned and dynamics involved. The researcher is planning to further develop a career development model specific to women managers by identifying additional factors related to advancement and barriers to growth.

The recent research by HVS and Cornell University highlights the facts related to women's attitude towards giving priority to personal choices as they grow older. They tend to become more settled in their lives with family, career paths as well as geographic preferences. Research can be done on exploring further information about the role of self-imposed barriers on the career progression of women managers in Indian context.

### **Conclusion**

A recent OECD report on the reversing of gender inequities in education predicted that by 2020 women will make up 76% of all graduates in Sweden, 74% in the UK, 56% in Korea and 54% in Japan (Hou, 2014). The researcher's personal experience of 23 years with the hospitality education/industry in India, contradicts the above trend. The number of female students pursuing hospitality education and joining the hotel industry in India is declining over a period of time. Currently the male-female ratio of students in one of the top hospitality colleges in India is only 8:1. May be the slow progress made by women and pro-men work culture prevailing in the hotel industry is now having some negative effects on women's view of this profession as a career. Generally speaking, prospective candidates consult senior students regarding the various opportunities available in the hospitality field as well the attractiveness of the courses concerned. As the possibilities of spreading a negative image of the industry is high among the students who have worked in the industry during their internships, the number of students entering the program may

have been reduced, despite efforts by hospitality colleges to attract more female students through special scholarships in India.

From the results of the study, it is suggested that the Indian hotel industry should foster the creation of more equitable work environment for both men and women which leads to better career opportunities. The first recommendation for practice is to design programs that support management development within the executives' current workplace challenges. Learning while working provided women managers with the credentials needed for further growth and gave them a sense of achievement. Most of the women managers participated in this study have considered themselves lifelong learners who use every opportunity to learn new things that they could incorporate into their professions. Women may be encouraged to enhance their visibility by joining professional association's networks and form their own networks. The best example for this is the initiative by the Accor hotel group called *Women at Accor Generation (WAAG)*. Its activities are based on mentoring, sharing of experiences and training, as well as creation and collaboration through networks, with the aim of promoting greater access to women into managerial positions.

This study in general provided a new insight into the various support systems that helped/affected women to advance. Future research may focus on the new perspectives identified through this study and their impact on career advancement of women in Indian hotel industry. As Coughlan (2002) proposes, the businesses should create environments that attract the most talented women and empower them to reach their full potential. Therefore it can be suggested that, organizations should recognize gender diversity as a valuable business strategy and implement useful and effective programs to enhance diversity and promote women for further development.

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