

Workforce woman empowerment: Transforming challenges into opportunities in Karma Royal Bali as a timeshare hotel

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ABSTRACT

This study identifies strategies to enhance women's empowerment in the workplace at Karma Royal Bali and examines how these efforts contribute to guest satisfaction within the timeshare hotel system. The research focuses on three properties: Karma Royal Candidasa, Karma Royal Jimbaran, and Karma Royal Sanur. This study used a qualitative methodology through in-depth interviews with women leaders and workers; the study explores themes of gender bias, work-life balance, and career development barriers. Findings highlight effective techniques these women implement to overcome challenges, including training programs, mentorship, and supportive workplace policies, ensuring high service quality and improving guest experiences. Therefore, this study implies that women's empowerment is vital in providing guest satisfaction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past two years during the pandemic, the industry's biggest challenge has not been attracting customers but finding ways to retain staff (Gursoy & Chi, 2020). Compared to past crises, the scope of this one and its significant effects on operations, staff, and clients in any industry are unmatched. The pandemic has disproportionately affected women, who often face increased burdens at home and work, leading to higher turnover rates and barriers to career advancement. This issue underscores the importance of empowering women in the workplace, especially leadership roles, to ensure workforce sustainability and enhanced organizational performance and guest satisfaction. The pandemic has passed, and the hotel industry is growing in terms of the number of accommodations and services offered (Oktavio et al., 2023). Therefore, management must think about strategies to maintain guest loyalty. When customer expectations and perceptions of service quality are aligned, the quality of the

service provided is insufficient and becomes guest loyalty (Almasarweh & Harb, 2024). Hotel managers feel that client satisfaction can help businesses boost earnings (Sustiyatik et al., 2024). From a theoretical perspective, social exchange theory provides a relevant framework for understanding how investments in employee empowerment through training, mentorship, and supportive policies result in reciprocal benefits, such as improved service quality and guest satisfaction (Avecilla et al., 2024). However, research has shown that satisfying customers is insufficient, as satisfied customers are not guaranteed to purchase again. Customer loyalty is now commonly regarded as significantly more significant than customer satisfaction in the success of a business (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000).

Currently, the development of technology for obtaining information is speedy. From information obtained through social media, customers can imagine what they will get before buying a product or service (Adityaji et al., 2023). Online travel reviews are one of the primary sources of information, and they are a pre-evaluation for guests when choosing a hotel in a tourist destination (Vo et al., 2022). Online evaluations have the potential to be a helpful tool for businesses to get real-time customer feedback and adjust how they provide services (Angkasa et al., 2023). Online review sites can give enterprises a highly insightful source of consumer feedback, allowing them to identify critical areas that require staff training and corrective action (Browning et al., 2013).

Due to its long-term adverse effects on guest loyalty, hotel reputation, and service quality, it is a crucial component in the hotel industry. If guests are dissatisfied with the service provided, they may leave negative reviews on online review sites. Negative reviews can reduce the trust of potential guests and hinder the possibility of booking (Candra et al., 2024). High-quality services are essential in timeshare hotels like Karma Royal Bali because guests typically return yearly, and consistent and individualized service is ensured. Good quality services match your ability to determine your preferences and ensure correct property maintenance is performed to the highest standard (Maier & Gursoy, 2020). Timeshare entered Indonesia in 1985 and became known to the Indonesian tourism world in 1992. Karma Group is the only timeshare-based accommodation provider in Bali. Karma Group has five properties located in several areas in Bali. Karma Group first opened its property in 1996. Four other properties followed this. The first three properties, namely Karma Royal Candidasa, Karma Royal Jimbaran, and Karma Royal Sanur, are open only to tourists who have become members of the Karma Group. At the same time, the other, namely Karma Jimbaran and Karma Kandara, are allocated half for members and half for general tourists.

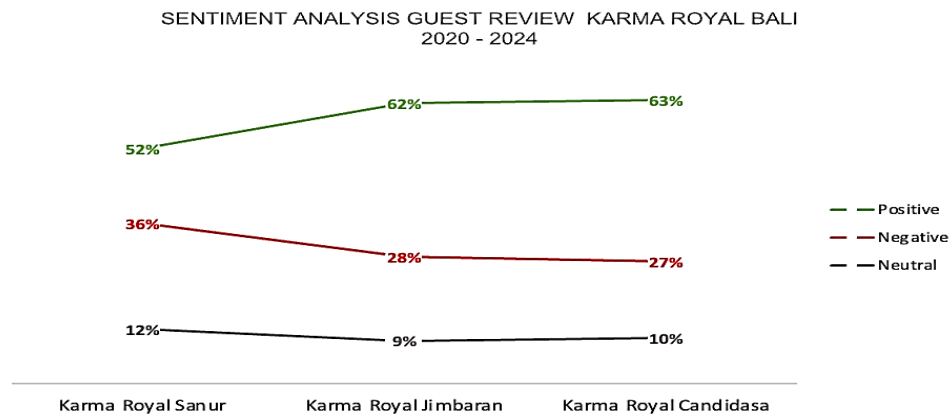


Figure 1. Sentiment Analysis Guest Review Karma Royal Bali

Source: Research Observation Result (2024)

Figure 1 shows the sentiment analysis results based on data pulled from Trip Advisor from three Karma Royal Bali properties. Sentiment analysis is closely related to Natural Language Processing (NLP), which is the ability of machines to understand human language using computer algorithms, mathematics, and computational linguistics (Chandradev et al., 2023). After conducting sentiment analysis, the negative value of reviews is above 20%, and the highest Karma Royal Sanur is 36%. Here is an example of a negative review left by a guest at Karma Royal Sanur in 2023: "Nothing significant can be said about the property, as Karma Group is seen as a trap, with clients being charged excessive amounts and deceived. It is portrayed as a luxury experience, yet it doesn't even compare to OYO rooms. The reception staff at the hotel are described as rude, responding to requests with unpleasant expressions, as if guests are staying for free. The place is said to be shabby and located right on the road, leading to noise throughout the night. Karma membership is strongly advised against it, as it is considered a trap". The statement said the reception staff at the hotel were rude. Still, other reviews said the reception staff were invaluable during guest stay and mentioned the staff by name. An example of a positive review: "The staff was awesome, with friendliness and attentiveness being displayed. Not enough can be said about how nice they were. The rooms were considered comfortable. Although the location is on a busy street, the experience was described as relaxing. It is acknowledged that there is no lift (elevator), which should be noted for those unable to climb. The food was considered good". The staff clearly plays an essential role in the guest evaluation process. The services offered can result in good feedback to management. Out of the three Karma Royals, only Karma Royal Sanur employs women as Resort Managers, and even though more than 20% of women employees who have worked for more than ten years and are still in rank-and-file positions, women employees have won best employee of the year for multiple times.

On the other hand, women's contribution to the hotel industry is rather significant. Many women have essential jobs, ranging from executive positions to non-essential work like front

desk, restaurant, and housekeeping. While women's leadership embodies various perspectives and inspires innovation, their deliberation on the margins ensures mutually beneficial outcomes (Calinaud et al., 2021). The examination of multidisciplinary research findings suggests that, in general, women may be better suited than males in executing and supervising various tourist and hospitality occupations (Trisanti et al., 2022). In addition, women's skills also contribute to creating a more diverse and open environment at work by fostering a positive vibe and aggressive agenda in the hospitality sector. The hospitality experience is incomplete without women's charming smiles (Abba et al., 2024). A feminine touch really brings elegance to the hotel industry. Women's contribution is essential for hotel operations and economic and social development, strengthening their role as local community leaders and pillars of support. Understanding the barriers to women's career advancement, exploring potential strategies for their development, and assessing women's views on gender equality in the workplace can help identify the key factors that influence women in non-senior managerial roles to pursue career growth (Deiana & Fabbri, 2020).

This study aims to identify and analyze the specific experiences of women's employees at Karma Royal Bali and how those experiences contribute to improving hotel service quality. This study addresses the gap in fostering guest loyalty in a post-pandemic environment, focusing on empowering women as key players in service delivery. Women often form the backbone of the hospitality workforce, yet their roles and contributions remain underexplored in strategies for achieving loyalty. By investigating this dynamic, the research highlights how empowering women in the industry can lead to more innovative, inclusive, and practical approaches to guest retention. This topic is crucial for tackling workforce challenges and advancing global goals of gender equity and sustainable business development.

This research gathered information on the specific skills of women employees in various departments using in-depth interviews and passive observation methods. The study highlights five key themes: gender barriers, which continue to hinder career advancement opportunities for women; work-life balance, where flexible policies are essential in addressing the challenges faced by women employees in managing both personal and professional responsibilities; guest satisfaction, which improves significantly with women leadership, mainly through strong interpersonal skills and responsiveness; skills development, as targeted training programs empower women and open pathways for career growth; and organizational effectiveness, which is enhanced through increased diversity in leadership, leading to better communication, productivity, and overall performance (Chung, 2018).

Subsequently, this study assessed through individual feedback, operational work processes, and analysis to evaluate its impact on service quality. This study also identified the need for training and development and a mentoring program to assist women's employees in

improving their own performance. Recommendations for policies and implementation strategies are made based on research findings to enhance hotel management to improve service quality through the development of women employees. The questions in this research are: how can workforce women empowerment transform challenges into opportunities at Karma Royal Bali timeshare hotels? How about the five key themes in Karma Royal Bali? What are the impacts on guest satisfaction and organizational effectiveness?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative methodology to explore gender bias, work-life balance, and barriers to career development among women in the hospitality industry. Qualitative research aims to gain a deep understanding of human and social problems, not to describe the surface of reality as quantitative research does with its positivism. The researchers interpreted how subjects obtained meaning from the surrounding environment and how this meaning influenced their behavior. Research is conducted in a naturalistic setting, not by treating or manipulating the variables involved (Fadli, 2021). Participants were carefully selected based on their direct involvement in maintaining service quality at Karma Hotel, which was chosen due to its reputation as a prominent timeshare hotel that actively employs women in key leadership and operational roles. To strengthen these research, in-depth interviews were conducted with women managers, resort managers, and women employees in various departments to obtain more comprehensive and objective data.

In qualitative research, in-depth interviews are beneficial for exploring complex phenomena related to how women as leaders and staff change challenges into opportunities in a timeshare hotel. Interviews also provide an opportunity for interviewees to express their words in a personal way, which makes it possible to capture a unique and authentic perspective regarding training and development and develop a mentoring program to assist women's employees in improving their own performance. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to ensure a comprehensive and objective understanding. This method facilitated the identification of consistent patterns and themes concerning gender equity, work-life balance, and career advancement within the hospitality sector. By combining narrative data with systematic analysis, this study provides insights into empowering women employees and enhancing service quality.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's findings reveal several critical insights into the empowerment of women in the workforce at Karma Royal Bali and its impact on the organization. The discussion centers around five key themes: gender barriers, work-life balance, guest satisfaction, skills

development, and organizational effectiveness. Based on the findings of the resort manager interviews conducted at Karma Royal Jimbaran and Karma Royal Candidasa, women contribute to addressing services when check-in, during their stay, and handling guest complaints. A timeshare hotel, where guests feel as though they are the real owners as they have paid a significant amount to use all the amenities for several years to come. To keep their ownership, individuals also have to pay annual maintenance expenses. The stake of guest ownership and the subsequent nature of the guest experience are the primary distinctions between regular hotel resort management and timeshare resort management. The experience of a timeshare resort differs in many respects from that of a regular hotel resort. Most timeshares have multiple-bedroom unit arrangements, fully functional kitchens, and laundry facilities. Facilities and services are designed with extended stays in mind because timeshare owners typically stay for a week or longer, impacting what they are concerned about services from the staff during their stay (Maier & Gursoy, 2020).

The General Manager of Karma Royal Candidasa stated that the opportunities for learning and career advancement are equal for both women and men at the resort. Employees who demonstrate willingness and enthusiasm to grow are encouraged and given opportunities to advance their careers. Established in 1987 as the first timeshare property in Indonesia, Karma Royal Candidasa has built a legacy, attracting repeat guests over the years. The General Manager, set to retire in 1.5 years, expressed his hope that one of the current employees would take over his position. Among the team, three women supervisors representing departments such as Front Office, Accounting, and SPA are seen as strong candidates for the role of General Manager. These women possess distinct advantages, including attention to detail in their work, proficiency in English, the ability to adapt quickly to shifts in guest demographics, calmness in resolving guest complaints, and an intuitive understanding of guest needs. According to the General Manager, women are well-suited to contribute to the resort's success in increasing earnings and driving guest satisfaction. Regarding tourism and hospitality, a kind smile and friendly demeanor during service interactions can boost sales and encourage repeat business when women handle the services (Koc, 2020). Karma Royal Candidasa exemplifies how empowering women in the workforce can transform challenges into opportunities by removing barriers, fostering creativity, and unlocking the potential for both individual and organizational growth.

Firstly, gender barriers were identified as a significant challenge for women, particularly in terms of career advancement. Many women employees expressed frustration at their difficulties securing promotions, often feeling that their male colleagues had more opportunities to advance. In terms of the vertical hierarchy, the results show a sexually orientated perspective that assigns male personality qualities to higher posts (like head of reception) and

women personality traits to lower positions (like floor maid or receptionist) (Silva & Couto, 2023). However, Karma Royal Bali has started addressing these issues by offering women leadership training and mentoring programs. These initiatives aim to provide women with the skills and confidence they need to succeed in leadership roles, helping to level the playing field and reduce the gender gap in career advancement. In Karma Royal Bali, women are given the same opportunities to advance their careers, where they are provided with training to enhance their knowledge and skills; however, it goes back to the individual. Not all employees at Karma Royal Candidasa are interested in advancing their careers, as some feel content and comfortable in their current positions. However, the resort stands out for having a higher proportion of women employees than similar establishments, creating a unique dynamic in its workforce. While some employees prefer to remain in their current roles, others are eager to explore new career opportunities and willingly embrace challenges to progress in their professional journeys. This contrast highlights the diverse aspirations among the staff, reflecting both stability and ambition within the organization.

Secondly, work-life balance has become a significant concern for women in the hospitality industry. The nature of the industry, characterized by long hours and demanding workloads, often poses challenges for women in managing their professional and personal responsibilities (Gebbers et al., 2020). Recognizing this issue, Karma Royal Candidasa has implemented flexible working policies to support its employees. These initiatives include adjustable work schedules tailored to individual needs and family-friendly leave options to accommodate personal commitments. These measures have helped women employees better balance their work and personal lives, improving job satisfaction and higher retention rates among female staff.

Furthermore, research indicates that work-life balance is crucial in shaping organizational commitment. A strong correlation exists between women's sociodemographic characteristics, work-life balance, and organizational dedication (Liu et al., 2021). This highlights the importance of fostering supportive workplace policies to enhance employee well-being and organizational loyalty.

The study also revealed that women in leadership roles positively influence guest satisfaction. Women managers were frequently commended for effectively addressing guest complaints and fostering a welcoming atmosphere (Cai et al., 2024). Their strong interpersonal skills, coupled with attention to detail, contributed to higher levels of guest satisfaction, demonstrating the value of promoting women into leadership positions. This finding underscores the importance of gender diversity in management, as women leaders bring unique strengths that enhance the guest experience and operational success (Abou-Shouk et al., 2021). An example of this can be seen at Karma Royal Sanur, the only resort in the group

led by a woman resort manager. She began her career as a front office staff member and has worked with Karma Group for 13 years, climbing the ranks through dedication and perseverance. Her journey reflects women's challenges and opportunities in achieving leadership positions within the hospitality industry. The impact of women's leadership on the sustainability of corporations and the intermediary function of business and organizational competence (Dewi et al., 2023). This finding emphasizes the importance of supporting women's career progression, not only for individual success but also for the overall growth and sustainability of the organization.

Karma Royal Bali has also made significant strides in developing its women employees' skills. The resort has invested in various training programs to improve technical and managerial skills. These programs have empowered women to take on more responsibility and pursue higher-level organizational roles. The availability of these training opportunities has boosted employee confidence and expanded their career prospects, making skills development a key factor in women's empowerment at the resort.

Table 1. Summary of Key Research Findings in Karma Royal Bali

Main Themes	Initiatives/Attributes	Outcomes/Examples
Contributions of Women	- Ability to effectively handle guest complaints.	- Increased guest satisfaction through attention to detail and warm service.
	- Training in technical and managerial skills every 3 months.	- Women prepared to take on larger roles within the organization
Gender Barriers	- Leadership training and mentoring programs every 4 months.	- Boosted confidence and promotion opportunities for female employees.
Work-Life Balance	- Flexible work schedules and family-friendly leave.	- Improved job satisfaction and higher retention rates among female employees.
Guest Satisfaction	- Interpersonal skills and attention to guest needs.	- Enhanced guest loyalty through improved hospitality experiences with the Karma Experience Programme.
Skills Development	- Technical and leadership training programs every 3 months.	- Female employees equipped with skills for managerial roles.
Organizational Effectiveness	- Improved interdepartmental communication.	- Increased efficiency and productivity in operations.
	- Gender-equal policies.	- Workforce stability and a more cohesive work environment.

Source: Research data (2024)

Finally, the empowerment of women has had a positive effect on organizational effectiveness. Increased representation of women in leadership positions has improved interdepartmental communication, resulting in smoother operations and greater productivity. Furthermore, the introduction of gender-equal policies has reduced female employee turnover rates, fostering a more stable and effective workforce. This has not only benefited employee

morale but also contributed to the overall success of the resort by ensuring a more cohesive and efficient work environment.

4. CONCLUSION

Workforce women empowerment at Karma Royal Bali timeshare hotels can transform challenges into opportunities by addressing gender barriers, fostering leadership, and creating a more inclusive and supportive work environment. Empowering women opens doors to career development, enhances work-life balance, and promotes a culture of equality that benefits both employees and the organization.

In conclusion, women's empowerment at Karma Royal Bali has transformed gender-related challenges into opportunities for growth. Through targeted training programs, flexible work policies, and increased leadership opportunities, women have overcome obstacles related to gender bias and work-life balance. The positive effects on guest satisfaction and organizational effectiveness further demonstrate that empowering women is beneficial for the employees and the organization as a whole. These findings highlight the importance of promoting gender equality in the workplace, particularly in industries such as hospitality, where diverse leadership can significantly enhance employee and guest experiences.

Impacts on Guest Satisfaction and Organizational Effectiveness: Empowered women employees, particularly in leadership positions, bring empathy, responsiveness, and strong communication skills to guest interactions, enhancing guest satisfaction. The implications of these findings are significant for the hospitality industry and beyond. They highlight the value of investing in gender empowerment initiatives to improve employee satisfaction, operational efficiency, and guest experiences. However, the study is limited by its focus on a single organization, which may not fully reflect the dynamics of other timeshare hotels or industries. Additionally, the qualitative approach used in the research may introduce subjectivity in interpreting the results. Future research should explore gender empowerment initiatives across multiple organizations and sectors to validate these findings and consider quantitative methods to assess their long-term impacts on retention, guest satisfaction, and financial performance metrics. Research could also examine how cultural and regional factors influence the implementation and success of such initiatives. The demonstrated benefits improved organizational performance and employee well-being, suggesting that similar approaches could be successfully applied in various contexts.

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