

## **Strategic Human Resource Management and Managing Gender Diversity in Hotel Industry: Southern Province – Sri Lanka**

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The growth of the hospitality and tourism sector has been rapidly growing in recent years and therefore, an increase in tourism business has become increasingly popular with it. The tourism industry is estimated to be worth over 183.98 USD million annually. Employment generated in the tourism sector (both direct and indirect) increased to 359,215 in 2017. Yet currently women account for less than 10% of those employed by the tourism sector. Further, with its exponential growth, the business owners pay much concern on Human Resource Management practices and managing gender diversity. Consequently, the need to manage their human resources effectively and efficiently in order to achieve economic significance is recognized. Hence, this study set out to examine how gender diversity affects in managing employees, to see whether strategic human resource management practices can provide a solution to manage the gender diversity problems, to identify the current Human Resource strategies can be effectively use in hotel industry and to investigate gender diversity problems demarcated in the hotel sector. Qualitative data analytical method was employed and the collected data were transcribed and analyzed by using Thematic Analysis. Primary data is captured at selected above 3-star hotels with twelve employees at HR management level and 10 employees randomly selected from each hotel located in Down-South area. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the hotels (90%) are practicing Strategic Human Resource Management and identified limited evidence of managing gender diversity based on Strategic Human Resource Management practices. Further, the recommendations of this study support the view that the importance of implementing Strategic Human Resource Management practices and how they improve the managing gender diversity problems of the organization.

**Keywords:** Hospitality industry; Strategy; Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) practices; Gender diversity