

Executive Summary

FEMALE & THRIVING

The Business Case for Women's Empowerment and
Retention in the Hospitality and Tourism Sector in Nepal



GIRLS
ADVOCACY
ALLIANCE



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgement	ii
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations Used	iv
Overview of the Hospitality and Tourism (H&T) Sector in Nepal	1
Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA) Program	2
The Business Case Research	2
Research Questions	
Research Approach and Design	
Background of Women In the H&T Sector in Nepal	4
Key Findings in Accessing Jobs and Career Advancement in the H&T Sector	6
Key Findings on the Benefits of Supporting Women’s Empowerment in the H&T Sector	8
Conclusions	12
Recommendations to Move Forward	12



ACRONYMS

CBA	Cost-Benefit Analysis
GAA	Girls Advocacy Alliance
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HAN	Hotel Association of Nepal
H&T	Hospitality and Tourism
KAP	Knowledge Attitude Perception
NPR	Nepalese Rupee
REBAN	Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal
ROI	Return on Investment
TAAN	Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal



OVERVIEW OF THE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM (H&T) SECTOR IN NEPAL

¹ UNWTO (2019). International tourist arrivals reach 1.4 billion two years ahead of forecasts. Retrieved from <https://www.unwto.org/global/press-release/2019-01-21/international-tourist-arrivals-reach-14-billion-two-years-ahead-forecasts>

² Kathmandu Post (2018). Travel, tourism pumps Rs195b into economy. Retrieved from <https://kathmandu.post.com/money/2018/03/28/travel-tourism-pumps-rs195b-in-to-economy>

³ World Bank Group (n.d.). World Development Indicators. Retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

The Asia-Pacific Hospitality and Tourism (H&T) sector is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. Driven by rising household income, low-cost transportation options, and infrastructure to facilitate international visit flows, the region grew by 6 percent and recorded over 300 million international visitors in 2018.¹ Pre-COVID19 estimates a sustained growth rate for the sector and double the number of visitors by 2030.

In Nepal, the H&T sector has been considered as the backbone of the economy for the past decades. In 2017, the sector contributed to 7.8 percent of the country’s GDP (NPR 195.0 Billion) and is pegged to increase in the next years.² International arrivals have also more than tripled in a span of 15 years, reaching 1.2 million in 2018.³

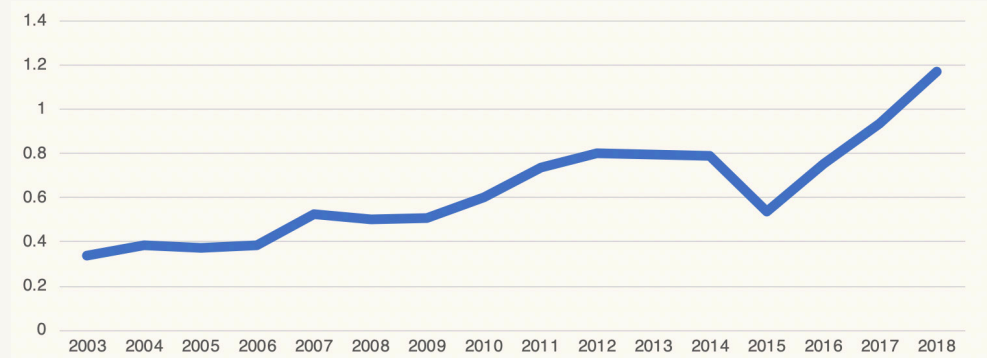


Figure 1. International tourism arrivals in Nepal, 2003-2018 (in millions)⁴

⁴ Ibid.

While at the surface level, the female-majority composition of the workforce suggests huge strides have been made to achieve gender parity in the hospitality sector, deeply entrenched barriers continue to impede women from accessing and thriving in the workplace. This manifests in many ways, such as massive underrepresentation in senior and leadership positions, wage gaps, gender segregation, harassment, and discrimination.

H&T directly supported 3.2 percent of total employment in the country and a total contribution (including indirect employment) of 6.6 percent of total employment. However, in the 3.2 percent employed who were employed in 2018, only 15 percent were female. Among the women employed in the sector, over half were in housekeeping, 30 percent are in front desk and food and beverage, and only 10 percent in managerial and executive level positions. Similarly, in the trekking sector, only 5 percent to 10 percent are female employees with a few of them as guides or trekking assistants.⁵ Women are mostly involved in office work for the trekking companies, engaging customers and facilitating bookings and payments.

⁵ Dolma Impact (n.d.). A report on market data for private sector investments in Nepal. Dolma Development Fund and UKAid. Retrieved from http://www.dolmaimpact.com/pdf/DIF%20-%20Tourism%20Market%20Report_Final_1-10-2014.pdf

GIRLS ADVOCACY ALLIANCE (GAA) PROGRAM

The Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA) program aims to contribute to building a society where young women and girls are free from gender-based violence and economic exclusion. Through Plan International Nepal and the GAA Asia regional component, Plan International advocates for corporate policies and practices that support the economic empowerment of women in the hospitality and tourism sector. To do so, Plan International engages hospitality and tourism sector employers and private sector alliances in South and South East Asia and requires robust, local evidence to help employers make informed decisions on how they can support women’s economic empowerment in their workplaces.



THE BUSINESS CASE RESEARCH

In spite of a growing body of literature around the business case for women's empowerment in the sector, the relevance of these studies to GAA is limited because there is few evidence contextualized to Nepal's hospitality and tourism sector. Plan International commissioned a hospitality and tourism sector business case research in Nepal which would help to develop the business case for supporting women's economic empowerment in the sector. The research was carried out from 23 September 2019 to 22 December 2019 in the cities of Pokhara and Kathmandu of Nepal.

Research Questions

The purpose of the research was to determine the business case for supporting young women's career progression and access to decent work opportunities in the hospitality and tourism sector of Nepal.

To achieve this purpose, the research aimed to (1) identify local corporate practices that have promoted access of young women to decent work in the H&T sector; (2) determine replicable strategies and approaches; and (3) assess the costs and benefits, as well as return on investment of these practices to employers themselves.

The research questions to achieve these objectives are:

1. What impedes young women in Nepal from accessing decent work opportunities and advancing in the hospitality and tourism sector?
2. What motivates employers to invest in young women's empowerment in their companies?
3. What have employers done to support young women's career progression and access to decent work opportunities?
 - a. Why are these interventions successful? How do these go beyond compliance with existing laws and regulations?
 - b. What have been the returns of investment for the employers?
 - c. What needs to be considered by other employers replicating these interventions?
 - d. What resources and tools are available to support the replication of these interventions?

Research Approach and Design

Selection of Research Locations

The cities of Pokhara and Kathmandu were chosen as primary sites due to being prime tourist destinations. The two locations have the highest concentration of H&T-related businesses in Nepal and consequently register high numbers of tourism visitors.



Selection of H&T Businesses

Table 1 describes the different categories of H&T businesses that have participated in the study: star hotel, tourist standard hotel, trekking agency, homestay, and restaurant.

Table 1. Categories of H&T Businesses

BUSINESS TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Star Hotel	The accommodation is more comfortable but more expensive compared to the other business types. It provides exquisite cuisine, room service, and other amenities.
Tourist Standard Hotel	A commercial establishment that provides lodging, meals, and other services to tourists at an affordable price than star hotels.
Trekking Agency	These are private agencies that organize trekking for tourists which offers an experience of the exotic experience of the Himalaya destinations.
Homestay	A private house offering accommodation to paying guests.
Restaurant	A place that serves food and drinks.

Source: Author of this business case (2019).

Methodology

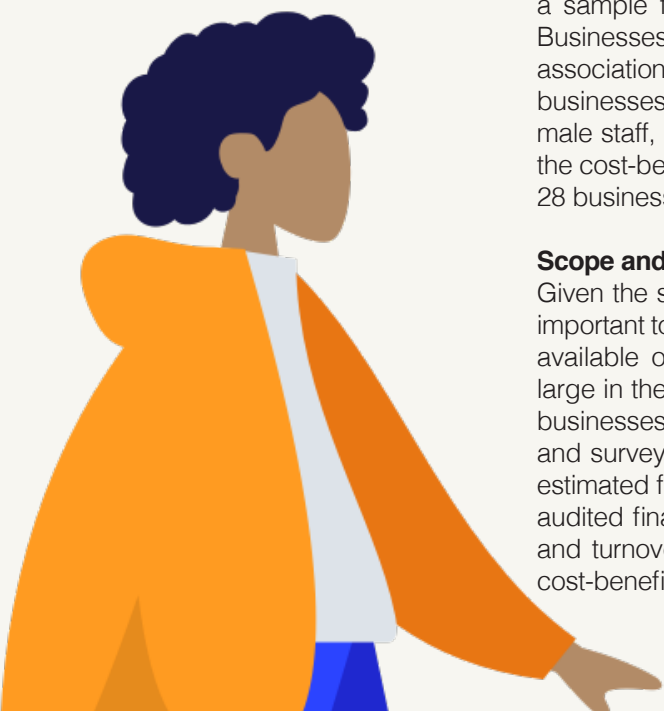
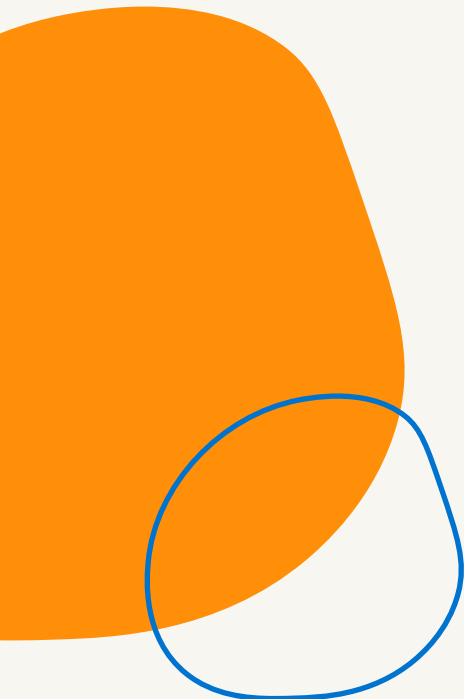
Desk research was initially conducted to review secondary data on young women’s career progression and access to decent work opportunities in the H&T sector of Nepal. The research team then conducted in-depth interviews with 28 key informants from all five categories of H&T businesses in the cities of Pokhara and Kathmandu. The key informants interviewed were proprietors, general managers, operation managers and human resource managers of these businesses. Furthermore, six representatives from different H&T industry associations were also interviewed, including the Hotel Association of Nepal (HAN), Trekking Agencies Association of Nepal (TAAN), Restaurant and Bar Association of Nepal (REBAN).

Using a Knowledge, Attitude, and Perception (KAP) analysis tool⁶ to assess the different factors that affect the employability and advancement of young women in the H&T sector, the research team conducted six focus group discussion with young women who were unemployed, trainees, or employed in H&T businesses. The businesses for cost-benefit analysis were selected from a 3 percent sample size calculated from a sample frame of 300 registered businesses for each of the two research sites. Businesses were purposively selected through consultations with the H&T industry associations using one or more of the following criteria: (1) cover at least three H&T businesses categories, (2) have at least 20 percent female staff, (3) have a majority of male staff, and (4) businesses owned and operated by women. Quantitative data for the cost-benefit analysis were gathered through survey forms that were completed by 28 businesses.

Scope and Limitation

Given the scope of the research as outlined in the previous sections, it is important to note that this study had several limitations. There was a dearth of literature available on women in the H&T sector and women’s economic empowerment at large in the context of Nepal. Due to limited resources and time constraints, only 28 businesses from both Pokhara and Kathmandu have been reviewed through interviews and survey questionnaires. Financial data collected for this study was based on the estimated figures provided by the respondents of the different businesses rather than audited financial statements. Finally, keeping accounts of the costs on absenteeism and turnover were not practiced by the participating businesses, which limited the cost-benefit analysis section of this report.

⁶ A KAP survey is a quantitative method using predefined questions formatted in standardized questionnaires that establish the baseline of respondents’ knowledge, attitude and perceptions regarding a specific thematic area.



BACKGROUND OF WOMEN IN THE H&T SECTOR IN NEPAL

The Hospitality and Tourism (H&T) sector is one of the largest employers and job creators across the globe.⁷ In Nepal, the Hospitality Association of Nepal (HAN) estimates the H&T sector to be directly responsible for providing employment to one million people, 20-25 percent of whom are women.

Women’s participation in the sectors is primarily concentrated in lower skilled occupations such as clerical, housekeeping, food service and cooking. These are stereotypical roles of women commonly present in patriarchal societies that limit women’s progress in the workplace.⁸ Among the women employed by the sector, 60 percent work in housekeeping, 30 percent in reception or the front desk, 10 percent in food and beverage, and the remaining 10 percent hold managerial or executive-level positions. Among the different H&T businesses, more women work in homestays.^{9 10}

⁷ World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTc). (2019). *Travel & Tourism: Driving Women’s Success.*

⁸ Ibid.

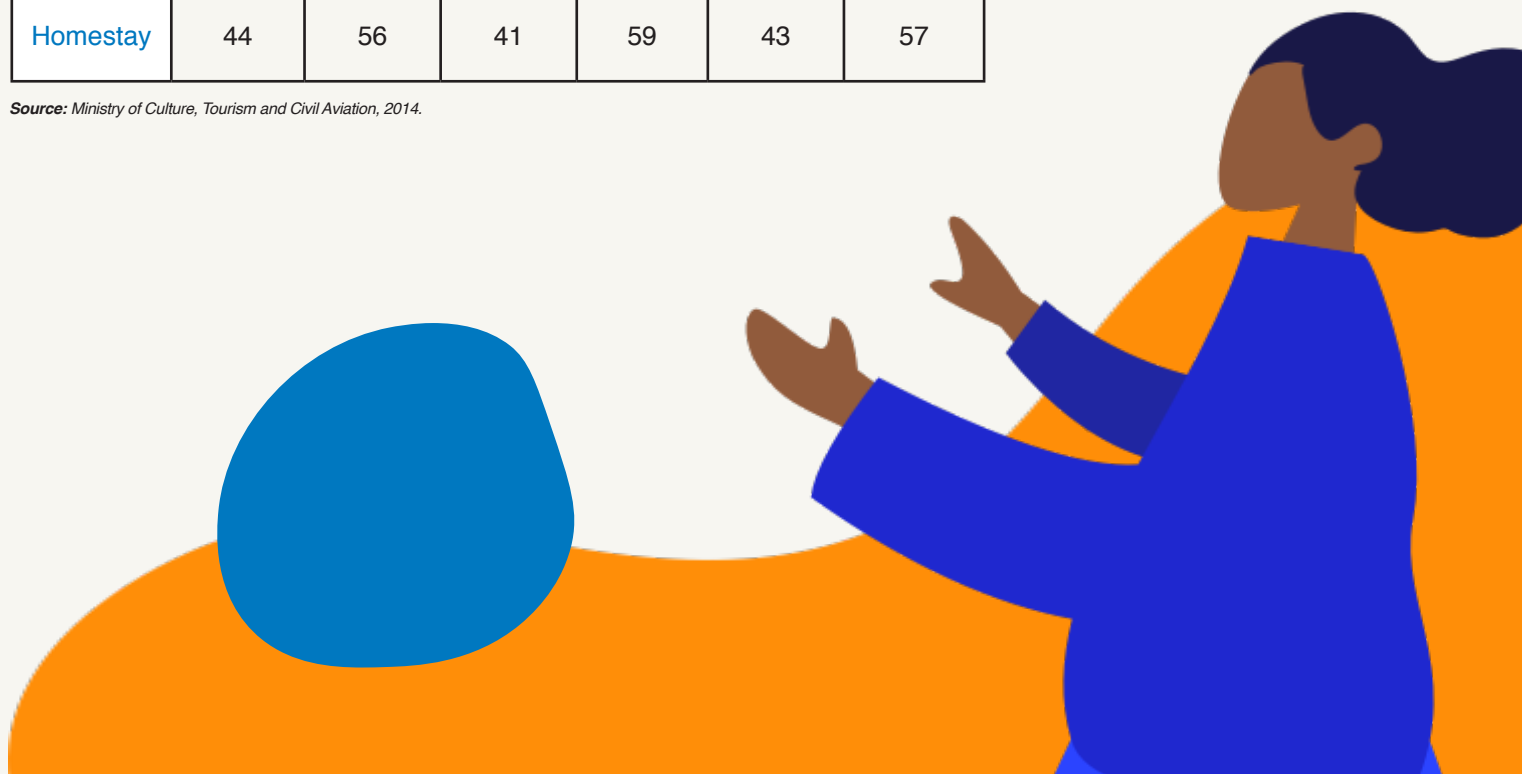
⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Acharya, B. P., & Halpenny, E. A. (2013). *Homestay as an Alternative Tourism Product for Sustainable Community Development: A Case Study of Women-Managed Product in Rural Nepal.*

Table 2. Proportion of Workers in Selected Business Categories, by Nature of Employment and by Sex.

BUSINESS CATEGORY	NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT					
	REGULAR		SEASONAL		TOTAL	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	<i>In percentage (%)</i>					
Star Hotel	78	22	75	25	78	22
Standard Hotel	75	25	65	35	74	26
Trekking Agency	78	22	91	9	90	10
Homestay	44	56	41	59	43	57

Source: Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation, 2014.



¹¹ Kathmandu Post. (2018). Minimum wage raised to RS 13,450 per month. Retrieved from <https://kathmandupost.com/money/2018/07/10/minimum-wage-raised-to-rs13450-per-month>

¹² Exchange Rate set by Central Bank of Nepal for US\$ 1 = NPR 113 as of reporting date.

Nepal's H&T sector offers a more competitive salary for female staff compared to other sectors. The Government of Nepal has recently adjusted the minimum salary for full-time workers at NPR 13,450¹¹ (US\$119¹²). Formally registered H&T enterprises are required to comply with this provision. Star and standard hotels offer the highest salary range to female workers, followed by trekking agencies, restaurants, and lastly, homestays (Table 3). Restaurant employees also receive a portion of the service charge collected from diners.

Interestingly, among the studied H&T businesses, no explicit wage difference between male and female workers was found. While this may suggest that wages were accorded based on experience, this may also be attributed to limitations to presented data or because the topic is in the periphery of the research focus. Furthermore, data from participating businesses were inconsistent to the 2017/2018 Report on the Nepal Labor Force Survey¹³, which stated that median monthly earnings of females is two thirds of the earnings of males. The national gender pay gap meant that women only earned NPR 0.66 for every NPR 1.00 earned by men.

¹³ Government of Nepal (2019). Report on the Nepal Labour Force Survey 2017/2018. National Planning Commission, Central Bureau of Statistics. Retrieved from https://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/NLFS-III_Final-Report.pdf

Table 3. Salary Ranges for Female Employees in the H&T Sector (2019)

BUSINESS CATEGORY	Housekeeper / Helper		Front Desk / Assistant		Supervisor / Officer		Manager / Executive	
	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max	Min	Max
	<i>In NPR per month</i>							
Homestay	-	-	4,500	8,000	3,000	16,000	12,000	30,000
Restaurant	3,500	14,500	11,500	14,500	12,000	35,000	12,000	35,000
Trekking Agency	8,000	13,000	12,000	20,000	15,000	35,000	15,000	40,000
Standard Hotel	10,000	14,000	10,000	17,000	14,000	30,000	40,000	50,000
Star Hotel	12,500	16,000	16,000	25,000	22,000	40,000	30,000	60,000



KEY FINDINGS IN ACCESSING JOBS AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT IN THE H&T SECTOR

“Women can access jobs in the H&T sector in general but have **fewer opportunities for leadership positions.**”

Majority (75 percent) of the respondents expressed that the female staff were very competent and quite capable of performing the duties given to them. The staff had the necessary skills and knowledge coupled with a professional attitude. Employers had a high preference to recruit female workers mainly due to their sincerity, loyalty, dedication, trustworthiness, reliability and attention to detail. However, the remaining respondents identified gaps in the practical skills of female employees. It should be noted that in Nepal, short-term training graduates lacked practical skills since their training is limited to in-door tasks.

Many women in the H&T sector were limited to lower rungs of the ladder. A third of the female staff surveyed, who were a mix of both locals and internal migrant workers, were found working mainly in housekeeping, front desk management, sales and marketing and food serving positions. Only 7 percent have advanced to a managerial level position. Survey respondents were getting a minimum salary of NPR 3,000 (US\$ 50) to maximum NPR 60,000 (US\$ 500) per month, depending on position and hours. Employees that made less than the minimum wage were only working part-time, a common occurrence in homestays and restaurants. The reasons cited for low representation in leadership roles included societal and cultural barriers, limited education, and lack of self-confidence.

“**Societal expectations** are chief among barriers for access to employment in the H&T sector.”

Some societal and cultural norms hindered the economic empowerment of women in Nepal and subsequent employment in the H&T sector. Different forms of discrimination existed based on gender, caste, ethnicity, physical ability, geographical location, class, age group or religion and these have created a barrier for citizens to enjoy equal rights. Nepal’s women, on the whole, have a lower status than men and are less well-off.

In spite of showing a keen interest to work in the H&T sector, young women were still reluctant to seek employment due to society’s negative perception towards the industries where women were employed. This perception mostly prevailed among traditional and lower educated societies in Nepal. There were no restrictions for females to join the industry amongst more educated families. In fact, many were obtaining H&T related degrees and certificates. However, when these young women get married, their work productivity sharply declined as they were required to spend more time doing care work. These burdens increased young women’s time poverty, resulting in the choice to do flexible or part-time work.

Moreover, it was common practice in the H&T sector to recruit talent by headhunting or through referrals from different industry insiders, lowering the cost of recruitment for employers. However, many young women didn’t have the necessary social networks and connections with formal and informal recruiters and were unable to take advantage of training and recruitment opportunities.

“Limited education and lack of self-confidence impeded career advancement in the sector.”

Many of the study’s respondents were unable to advance their career despite the growth of the H&T sector in Nepal. Balancing work and care responsibilities, especially after marriage, led to increased absenteeism and a lack of confidence to take on bigger roles at work. Unlike their male counterparts, female employees rarely put themselves forward for promotion or more benefits. In some cases, the lack of family support caused women to eventually resign and stay at home full time.

Limited education and international professional exposure also prohibited women to advance their careers. Many housekeeping staff were either uneducated or under-educated and entered the workforce after dropping out from school. They were often unable to progress into more skilled positions even after working in the industry for more than a decade. The lack of English language skills also hindered their ability to switch towards more customer-facing roles. This was in contrast to educated women who only worked in Nepal to gain industry experience before being lured by overseas employment.

Unlike other professions, female trekking guides were mainly deterred by the physical strength and fitness required by the job. They also cited the lack of separate toilet facilities and rooms during the trek as one of the factors that placed them in a vulnerable situation.

“Female entrepreneurs experienced challenges competing in a male-dominated industry.”

Female entrepreneurs who run their own H&T business also faced difficulties. Compared to other economic sectors, there were very few women entrepreneurs engaged in hospitality and tourism. There was a lack of confidence to take the risk in starting a business among women due to a lack of skills and knowledge such as marketing and finance. Women also faced a lack of control over assets, agency and had minimal support from their families. Their inability to grow their business was mainly due to the lack of access to adequate capital and financing options. It was also tough to compete in a male-dominated sector. Furthermore, limited networking opportunities compared to men resulted in less chances to generate more revenue.

“Good practices of H&T businesses in empowering women workers.”

Some H&T businesses in Nepal implemented several good practices towards increasing access to employment and allowing young women to thrive in their careers in the sector. Most businesses provided separate lavatory and changing room, giving a sense of security and safety for their female staff. Flexible working schedules allowed women to be assigned to shifts that fostered balance between work and home care duties, leading to higher retention rates even after they get married. Transportation service from the workplace to residence was also provided to those working the evening shift. This permitted women the option to work up to ten in the evening without compromising safety. Several star hotels offered up to three months paid maternity leave to new mothers. While Nepalese law mandates a total of 98 days of maternity leave, not all establishments were compliant. And though almost all of the business provided training and skills upgrade, some establishments took it further by providing on-site job coaching and counseling to motivate female staff, especially those in junior positions. Recognition from the company in the form of appreciation letters, awards for best staff, and birthday tokens was also effective in motivating female employees.

KEY FINDINGS ON THE BENEFITS OF SUPPORTING WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT IN THE H&T SECTOR

H&T businesses that implemented different interventions for female staff experienced increased revenue generation. Businesses were aware of the worth in investing in female staff because their performance were up to par with the requirements of the job. Female staff were seen to be loyal, dedicated, trustworthy and provided warm hospitality and customer care to their guests.

Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA)¹⁴ was calculated to compare the different interventions for female staff by the employers. Cost-benefit ratios, with or without discount, that were less than 1.0 were assessed to be favorable. Values closer to zero were deemed to be more favorable, as it generated more benefit for every NPR spent.

The following assumptions were used in the computation:

- Discounting rate applied at 12 percent on capital investment;
- Business operational and revenue have taken 2016 as the base year and 2018 as end year;
- Operational costs are assumed to increase at 8.6 percent of the base year and 11.1 percent of the succeeding years;
- Sales revenue-generating i.e total benefits assuming to decrease at 3 percent of the base year and 5 percent of the succeeding years.

¹⁴ A cost-benefit analysis is the process used to measure the benefits of an investment decision minus the costs associated with taking that action. Cost calculations are based on direct and indirect costs, and might include intangible costs, opportunity costs, and costs associated with risks. The calculation of benefits are mainly from revenue or sales and might include intangible benefits or market share gains. Values that are less than 1.0 indicates that the benefits outweighs the costs, and are therefore favorable to the organization.

The figures below present the consolidated cost-benefit analysis for the different H&T businesses, with the first chart showing an analysis without discounting while the second chart took into account the time value of money through discounting.

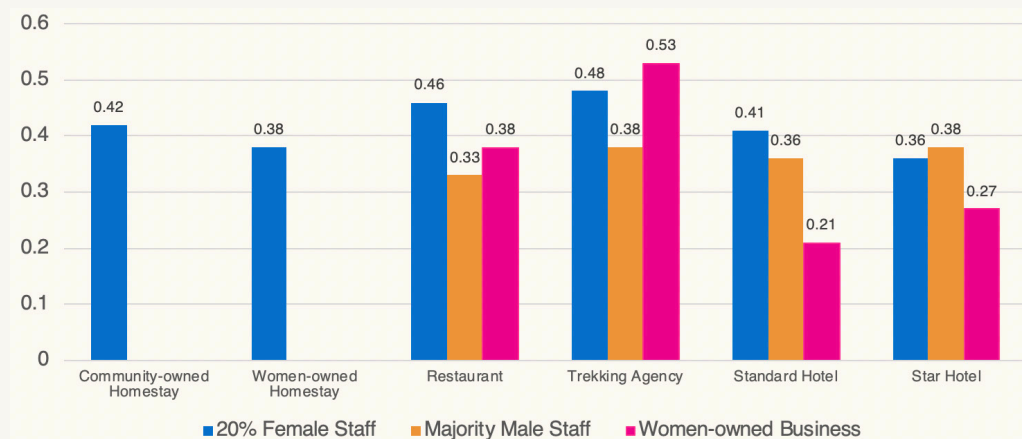


Figure 2. Consolidated cost-benefit analysis for H&T businesses without discounting

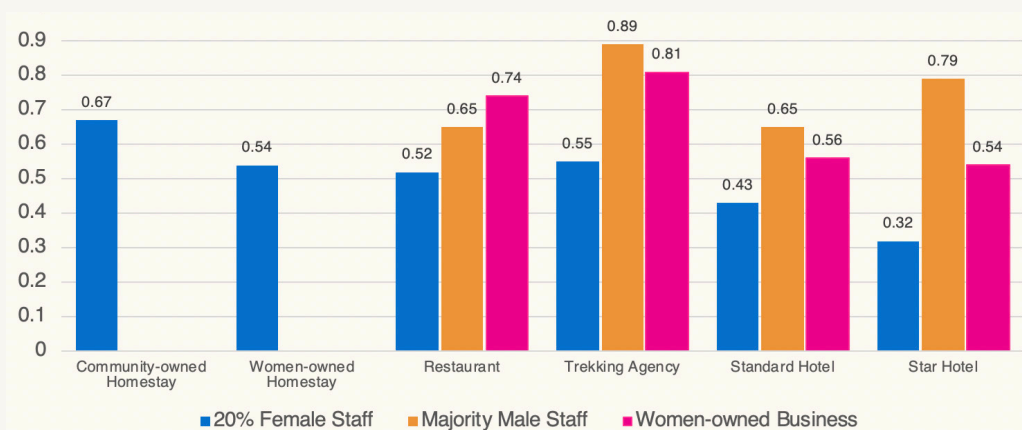
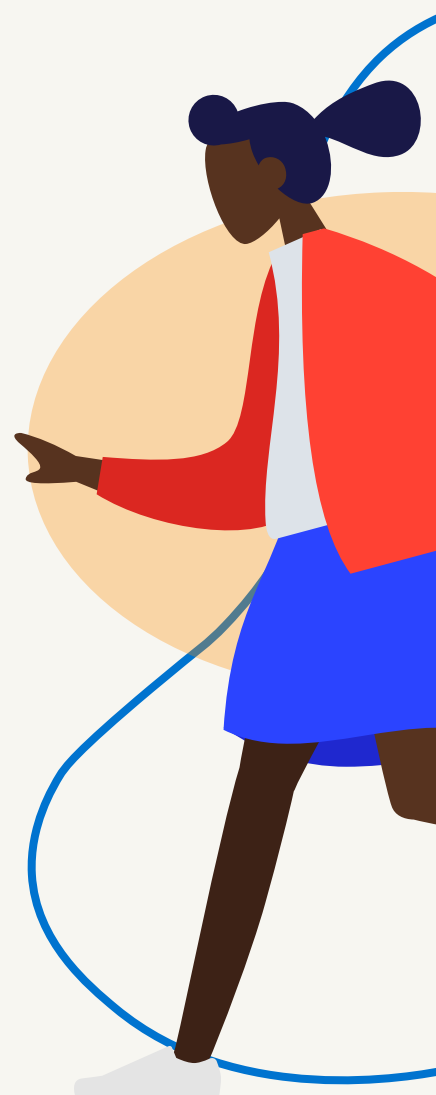


Figure 3. Consolidated cost-benefit analysis for H&T businesses with discounting



CBA for businesses having at least 20 percent female staff

All CBA calculations for the different H&T business categories resulted in favorable cost-benefit ratios for the establishments. This indicated that having at least 20 percent female staff have contributed to increased direct income for the companies. Star hotels, with a CBA value of 0.36 without discounting and 0.32 with discounting, had the best cost-benefit ratio compared to other businesses that had at least 20 percent female staff mainly due to high sales revenues. Among calculations with discounting, star hotels with at least 20 percent female staff outperforms all types of businesses featured in the study. This higher cost-benefit ratio is attributed to the 10 percent growth of the contribution of the female workforce to the total revenue of the hotel from Year 1 to Year 3 of the CBA calculations due to the excellent performance of women in their respective jobs within the hotel.

CBA for businesses with a majority of male workers

All CBA calculations for the different H&T business categories were less than 1.0, resulting in favorable cost-benefit ratios for the establishments. This indicated that having a majority of male workers contributed to generating benefit for companies with every NPR spent. Restaurants outperformed the other business categories while trekking agencies generated the least amount of benefits for every NPR spent. It was also interesting to note that in the absence of discounting, businesses with majority male workers had lower cost-benefit ratios compared to establishments with at least 20 percent female staff. However, when time value of money was considered in the discounted calculations, businesses with at least 20 percent female staff outperformed establishments with a predominantly male workforce by a significant margin.

CBA for women-owned and operated businesses

Women-owned and operated tourist standard hotels and star hotels showed the best cost-benefit ratios without discounting. In fact, tourist standard hotels that were owned by women performed the best among all calculations that did not consider the time value of money. With discounting, both types of businesses still offered the best cost-benefit ratios. On the other hand, women-owned trekking agencies had the worst cost-benefit ratios. Interviews revealed that women trekking guides were perceived to have less strength compared to their male counterparts.

Return on Investment (ROI)

ROI is represented as a ratio of the expected financial gains of a business divided by its total costs invested. All categories showed favorable financial position with ROI values greater than 1.0. Business with at least 20 percent female staff exhibited the highest returns on investment, whether calculated with or without considering the time value of money. Star hotels with at least 20 percent female staff was the only category that showed more than 100 percent ROI. Discounted ROI values for female-owned restaurants and tourist standard hotels were the lowest, emphasizing the challenges for women entrepreneurs.

Table 4. Summary of ROI values for the selected businesses

BUSINESS TYPE	At least 20 % of Female Workers		Majority of Male Workers		Women-Owned and Operated	
	ROI in %		ROI in %		ROI in %	
	Without discounting	With discounting	Without discounting	With discounting	Without discounting	With discounting
Restaurants	81.04	63.48	57.42	29.14	51.55	26.16
Trekking Agencies	76.29	59.61	48.08	23.40	51.33	37.07
Tourist Standard Hotels	98.04	75.64	60.62	34.45	58.95	21.63
Star Hotels	129.42	103.03	51.99	27.76	62.98	28.83
BUSINESS TYPE	Women-Owned		Community-Owned			
	ROI in %		ROI in %			
	Without discounting	With discounting	Without discounting	With discounting		
Homestays	57.96	38.54	71.51	46.99		

CONCLUSIONS

How are employers empowering women workers in the hospitality and tourism sector?

Several businesses in the H&T sector have recognized the contribution of women in the growth of their businesses and the industry. They have implemented practices that allowed women to have easier access to employment opportunities, thrive in their workplaces and advance into leadership positions. Separate facilities for women, flexibility work shifts, transportation services, on-the-job coaching and paid maternity leave were some of the good practices that have already been implemented.

What have been the costs and benefits of these good practices?

The cost-benefit calculations done for this study have all resulted in values that are less than 1.0. This implies that the benefits of investing in programs that enable women to access H&T jobs or motivate them to advance in the sector have outweighed the cost of implementing these kinds of programs. Star hotels with at least 20 percent female staff had the most provisions in place for women and was the only category to show more than 100 percent return on investment, implying a correlation between these programs and organizational performance. However, the results also indicated that there were significant barriers for women-led enterprises as these businesses experience the lowest return on investment.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MOVE FORWARD

Improved job matching system will help address the gaps in access to employment opportunities.

Developing a job matching system that provides up-to-date information on relevant employment opportunities help address crucial gaps in how young women access work in the sector. Industry-wide recruitment programs, spearheaded by associations such as HAN, TAAN, and REBAN, which extend to communities outside of urban centers, are needed to assure that there is adequate workforce supply in the pipeline.

Changing the perception of women and families about working H&T jobs will increase female participation in the H&T labor market.

Promoting the benefits of working in the H&T sector such earning a decent salary and working in a conducive environment for females can help alter the negative perception of women being employed in hospitality and tourism. Outreach to communities and family members to encourage support for women's employment in general, and in the H&T sector is critical to enabling young women to pursue opportunities. Family members are key influencers in career and changing their perception as well is critical to fostering a family support system for these young women. Furthermore, the government as well as industry associations should carefully regulate and monitor the working conditions of the H&T sector so that more women are enticed to seek employment.

Quality skills development programs are needed to upskill women, especially those who lack formal education.

Female staff can move up into larger roles or more skilled positions within their organizations if they are able to receive training that would enable them to grow professionally. The H&T sector can partner with relevant government agencies, private and non-government service providers in delivering quality programs that would either prepare women seeking employment for jobs in the sector or upskill those that already employed by the hotel and tourism sector. Furthermore, internships or on-the-job training programs at would enhance practical skills, improve interpersonal skills, allow the trainee to gain more confidence. This should be complemented by having mentors and peers to coach and provide support to access opportunities. It also assures that a pipeline of competent staff will always be available to the sector.

There is a need to take a closer look at the gender-pay gap in Nepal.

While this research did not do a deep dive on the gender-pay gap in the H&T sector, it was a recognized issue on a national level with women making a third less than men. More research on the gender-pay gap in Nepal is needed to identify the different squeeze factors that hinder equal wage distribution between men and women. Closing the gender-pay gap will make employment in the H&T sector more attractive to women.



Recognize women's empowerment as investments, not costs, and emulate the good practices of star hotels in investing in women.

Most of the current good practices such as flexible work schedules, paid maternity leave, separate lavatory and changing room for women, job counseling, performance recognition, and provision of transportation facilities for those working the late shift, were mostly implemented by star hotels. The ROI calculations showed that these initiatives were not considered as costs, but as investments, since they provided returns. By investing in women, star hotels enjoyed the highest ROI values. While star hotels have more resources to mobilize, other H&T businesses could invest in their female staff by emulating one or more of these practices. They can start with the solutions that are lower in cost and easier to implement such as a monthly recognition for stellar employees.

Proactively recruit women into leadership positions.

Managerial and leadership positions in the H&T sector are still predominantly male. Human resource heads must keep an eye out for female talent and groom them for promotion. Leadership programs specifically for women in the H&T sector can prepare them to take on leadership roles in the future. At the same time, commitment from the top is needed to address the underlying issues hindering from women to advance their careers. This includes tackling wage gaps setting quotas to always include women in shortlisting for promotions and improving work conditions to be gender-responsive to the needs of both men and women.

Mentorship and coaching from the women who have broken the glass ceiling.

Mentorship and coaching from thriving female entrepreneurs and female employees who have reached managerial positions within their organizations serve as role models to help motivate young women to aspire for similar successes. With other women guiding the way, young women will be less hesitant to climb the ladder.

Foster women entrepreneurs by providing ways to access financing.

Many women-owned enterprises such as hotels and homestays were unable to compete alongside male-owned businesses because they lacked the right networks to access financing options. Access to networks, which industry associations, non-government organizations and governments can support, and easier access to loans or credit options specifically for women would go a long way towards helping women entrepreneurs grow their businesses.

Addressing women's time poverty will be critical balancing career growth with family responsibilities at home.

A leadership program can be in place, but women's time poverty needs to be addressed, and this happens not just in the office but at home as well. This requires involving men in the discussion and having more equitable share of household responsibilities, support for women's career advancement and participation in the world of work. This can begin by advocating male leaders and colleagues to also take action on gender inequality and women's time poverty both at work and at home.

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organization that advances children's rights and equality for girls.

We believe in the power and potential of every child. But this is often suppressed by poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination. And it's girls who are most affected. Working together with children, young people, our supporters and partners, we strive for a just world, tackling the root causes of the challenges facing girls and all vulnerable children.

We support children's rights from birth until they reach adulthood. And we enable children to prepare for – and respond to – crises and adversity. We drive changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels using our reach, experience and knowledge.

We have been building powerful partnerships for children for over 80 years, and are now active in more than 71 countries.



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