SOSHUM

Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora [Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities]

Volume11, Number 3, 2021 p-ISSN. 2088-2262 e-ISSN. 2580-5622 ojs2.pnb.ac.id/index.php/SOSHUM/

Women's Significant Roles in Pursuing Hotel Revenue: Case of Bali, Indonesia

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Article History Received: August 2021 Accepted: Oct. 2021 Published:

Article Info

Keywords:
hotel revenue; woman
employees

Nov. 2021

ABSTRACT

This research aims to understand and explain how significant the women's role in the hotel industry. It is an advanced study which is explores from the previous one discussing the women acceptability in the hotel industry in Indonesia, particularly in Bali, with their varied educational background. In fact, this study found that women have significant role in increasing the hotel income through divisions of front office, food and beverage service, and sales. This research was approached qualitatively by conducting depth interviews based on the data that were obtained in 2018 and 2019. As a result, the women in this case tend to have so more hospitality skill that guests feel more comfortable to communicate with them. In addition, the women are also more capable to manage their heart-feeling and to put themselves well according to situations they are in. This capability is then able to persuade the hotel guests to come to the hotels and to have the services. It finally impacts the increasing hotel revenue.

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INTRODUCTION

Studies on women's roles in the tourism industry have been widely carried out by both national and international researchers. This study aims to provide information about the role of women who work in hotels in carrying out their duties to help increase hotel revenues, as well as how they play a good role in their families so that their public and domestic duties can be carried out properly. The number of female graduates is increasing by years from vocational high school, diploma and also bachelor graduates. It makes the tourism industry become one of the favors to seek job opportunities, especially in the hotel industry. In line with the number of female graduates, the number of hotels also continues to increase following the developing tourism trend. This situation then impacts the women's desire to get higher education (Widiastini, Prayudi, & Andiani, 2019). It is so much reasonable because they are eager to pursue a better position in their

SOSHUM *Jurnal Sosial dan Humaniora* [Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities] Volume 11, Number 3, 2021 p-ISSN. 2088-2262 e-ISSN. 2580-5622

work. A higher educational background shall strengthen up the women's capabilities which at last will lead them to have more chances to hold better work positions.

In the tourism industry, women have proved for being able to contribute to the development of the industry (Darma Putra, 2014; Oka, 2015; Suardana, 2010). Balinese women in particular have been actively participating in the development of tourism (Darma Putra, 2014). They are even able to create job opportunities for the surrounding society and for the women themselves. In the hotel industry, female employees who graduated from tourism subject which consist of varied education levels, are in fact capable to gain job opportunities and positively contributing to the hotel's development in Bali (Suartama et al., 2017; Widiastini, Prayudi, & Andiani, 2019). On the contrary, most of the job opportunities in the tourism industry are widely open for everyone with tourism education backgrounds without considering the gender but the capability and the company needs. Nevertheless, there are several positions that are generally not available for women employees due to professional reasons.

Based on the research conducted in 2018, women's acceptability in the tourism industry is quite good. Their flexibility and complex problem-solving skills are the most reasons why the hotel companies recruited them to fill particular positions (Widiastini, Prayudi, Wirata, et al., 2019). Moreover, according to the interviews with the hotels' PICs, it is found that in addition to their good-looking factor, women are also considered more loyal to the company, capable to manage self-emotion, and capable to communicate well in every situation. The female employees possessing well grooming (good appearance) are preferable to be placed as front liners both in Food and Beverage Service (25%) and in Front Office Division (21%) (Widiastini, Prayudi, Wirata, et al., 2019). Good appearance, in fact, generates the first impression.

Good appearance, which in this case is represented by the combination of the physical appearance and attitude of an applicant is the main consideration in recruiting employees in addition to their work experience. The mixture of the good appearance and the good work experiences also become the key factor for the women to be hired by hotel companies. As explained by (Uli, 2005) that hotel companies recruited employees by considering the candidates' capability and competency at most instead of the gender. On the other side, the Indonesia Statistic Center's database says that the percentage of female employees in the hotel industry is still low which are 35,11%, for the bachelor level, 30,06% for the diploma level, and 31,36% for the high-school level (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2018, p. 13). Moreover, (Putri et al., 2015) conducted an observation towards 12 hotels in Pekanbaru and found that the percentage of female employees is still at 38,19%. It shows that there is still an imbalance in employee composition based on gender, particularly in the hotel industry.

Although female employees' number is much fewer than the male employees', those less female number can contribute significantly to hotel revenue. It was also stated by a head department at the Oberoi Hotel that in general, female employees have so extraordinary abilities that they can reach important positions at the hotel. In line with the statement, Freed (2019) as a Managing Editor at Duetto wrote an article entitled "Revenue Management Roles Elevate Woman in Hospitality" explaining that women's roles are very important in increasing hotel revenue. It is very interesting to be investigated deeper because it means that the role of female employees is very central as the backbone of the tourism industry, especially in the hotel industry. Female

employees in fact have an individual duty as revenue hunters to bring the hotel business to success regardless of any position such as sales, front office, or accounting they have. Furthermore, the marital status that has been possessed by some of the employees does not so reduce their contribution and professionalism at work that they are able to reach important positions in a hotel such as sales managers. The women's natural ability to play multiple roles well is very interesting to investigate. On one hand, women have a role to be able to manage their family harmony and on the other hand, they are also required to be professional, even successful in their careers. This situation will look even more severe when some of them are the backbone of the family, and on the other hand, are also the backbone of the hotel they are working in, to get the maximum possible revenue.

METHODS

This research is conducted by employing the ethnographic approach as one of the qualitative approaches. This approach is considered very powerful to gain both analysis and descriptions deeply regarding the target culture through intensive field research (Barker, 2005). In practice, this research also employs in-depth interviews as a follow-up to the data collection that was previously conducted through Google Forms. On the occasion, some of the respondents were selected by using the Tremblay approach. There are specifically three kinds of information that will be explored through in-depth interviews, which are 1) the reasons why hotels see women as their revenue generators; 2) the process that women must take to gain a position as front liners, and 3) the implications of women's careers on their social life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Women as The Hotels' Revenue Generators

As a service industry, customer loyalty is a fundamental thing that has to be built and so well maintained by hotels that it will lead to customer satisfaction and also the good image of the hotel as well (Kandampully & Suhartanto, 2000; Rao & Sahu, 2013). In order to actualize it, the hotels' employees have to be able to provide their best performance to generate excellent services. Following Baudrillard's statement in Suyanto (2014), every human being wants to get pleasure and one of them is when they buy a product -hotel service-, they have a hope of getting pleasure from the product they buy. Furthermore, according to Kotler (2000), each service industry should be able to implement five dimensions of service quality to gain customer loyalty, which will finally impact the increasing hotel revenue, namely *reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy* dan *tangible*. By conducting excellent services, the hotels will surely gain the customers' satisfaction and loyalty as well and it will finally lead to their increasing revenue. Customer satisfaction is the main factor for optimizing profit.

Excellent service can only be provided by people who truly understand the meaning and essence of service itself deeply. Hotels in fact really need to hire people who have both hard skills and soft skills to be able to implement the meaning of excellent service optimally, as in the aspect of responsibility (Kotler, 2000). The previous statement is also agreed by Maryono (2009) who explains the importance of recruiting good employee candidates. The companies including hotels will push their employees to work as well as possible in order to gain the expected revenue and even more. In this case, as a system, hotels must be able to survive all conditions in balance.

Hotels must be able to gain revenue so that their operational activities can keep running and the employee salaries can be paid accordingly, also the hotel's objectives can be achieved as well (Wirawan, 2012). Within the situation, hotels a system has to be able to achieve the targeted objectives in order to maintain its existence in the middle of the increasingly fierce tourism business competition.

Regarding the explanation above, the hotels have carried out a very good and strict employee recruitment process. The goal is to get employees who match the needs of the company. Furthermore, researchers in this case also conducted a survey towards several starred hotels in Bali and found that women who have the capability to provide excellent services have an impact on increasing their hotel's revenue. Front-liners are very important for hotels since the position will initiate the hotel image in the customers' view. A front liner has to always give the best performance including physical appearance, attitude, and way of communication as well (Supomo, 2018). In this context, a woman as a greeter in a hotel, has to provide her best physical appearance and the way of communication to be able to give the best greeting to customers.



Picture 1: Appearance of a Front Office Staff at a Hotel Source : personal documentation (Komang Krishna Darmawan, 2020)

Appearance is not only related to the face, make up, costumes, and accessories worn. More than that, appearance in this case also concerns how to communicate with colleagues, especially customers. Those things are a series of packages that must be fulfilled by a front officer to generate an excellent service towards the customers. The vital role of a front liner with the demand to always be in the best performance in providing excellent services to customers is the main consideration from the hotel management to give this position to female employees. In this context, hotel managements believe that women are capable of professionally providing excellent services for hotel customers.

It was once explained that apart from having an attractive appearance (Widiastini, Prayudi, Wirata, et al., 2019), women are also able to manage their own self-emotions so that they are still able to communicate well in any situation (Darsono, 2011). Based on Chart 1 above, good communication skill is the main reason for hotel management to place their female employees in vital front office positions. Good communication skills, in its implementation, is really supporting the physical appearance of a woman as a front officer. The ability to communicate does not only come from talent but is also influenced by various experiences and training. It was previously also known that many females of the Balinese hotel employees with both high school and vocational school education levels continue their education in the hotel sector to improve their

professional abilities and competencies (Widiastini, Prayudi, & Andiani, 2019). Education is able to create human resources who have quality communication skills (Cheung et al., 2010). Quality communication, especially verbally, will provide opportunities for someone, especially female employees who are in front-line positions to develop their careers in order to get a better position.

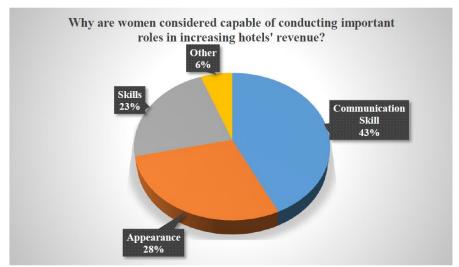


Chart 1: The Reasons Why Women Are Considered Capable of Conducting Important Roles in Increasing Hotels' Revenue

Hotels in fact really need human resources who have excellent and professional communication skills. By having good communication skills, consumers will get excellent services that will finally lead to customer satisfaction. Based on a survey about important positions occupied by women that have real impacts on the increasing hotel revenue, 57% of respondents gave their choice in sales and marketing position. It is arguably since the sales and marketing department is an important element of the hotel management that handles the sales and marketing of the hotel products and services. Thus, the female employees in this position must understand the hotel products and services where they work comprehensively, and offer them to potential customers in order to help hotels achieve their revenue targets (Sihite, 2000). The following chart provides an overview of information about the appropriate departments for women in order to increase hotel revenues. This survey was conducted by using Google Forms.

Female employees have recently occupied many important positions in the hotel industry (Marinakou, 2014), particularly in starred hotels, where women are believed to have good communication skills the hotel industry badly needs. Female workers (Marinakou, 2014; Soehanovic´ et al., 2000), tend to be more wise, attentive, and careful in making decisions in order to maintain the hotel image in front of the customers and it is finally beneficial for their careers (Napasri & Yukongdi, 2015), including for the hotel where he works. Based on interviews conducted with female employees who hold positions as sales managers in starred hotels, it was found that women have a so higher sense of responsibility that they tend to perform their best to achieve the sales targets they have compiled.



Chart 2: Most Appropriate Departments for Women in Hotel Management in Order to Help Increase Hotel Revenues

The vital position and important duty in increasing hotel revenue carried out by female sales employees in hotels encourage them to always give their best performance by developing various marketing strategies. In fact, during the current Covid-19 outbreak, the female sales marketing staff are still able to carry out their duties properly by adopting health protocols to generate revenue so that the hotels where they work keep running. As a system, hotels must be able to survive all conditions in a balanced manner. In this case, hotels must be able to gain revenue so that their operational activities can continue and the employee salaries can be paid accordingly (Wirawan, 2012). In order to be able to retain the employees, the sustainability of the hotel's business must also be pursued, one of which is by making sales calls (telemarketing) during this current pandemic.

This Covid-19 pandemic has had a very bad impact on the continuity of the hotel industry, especially in Bali. Currently, tourist visits in Bali have decreased dramatically so that it also has an impact on the decline in the number of guests at hotels in Bali. This situation was felt very hard by the hotel managers and they had to fight very hard to just survive in the middle of this attack. One of the department heads who was interviewed by telephone explained that in order to keep his hotel operational, every employee had to work the extra mile, including by selling rooms at a basic price (interview, 5 September 2020). This must be done so that hotels can still provide salaries to their employees properly. In addition, Wirawan (2012) also said that a hotel as a system must be able to maintain its internal coordination among the various divisions within it. The hotel has to maintain its solidity to keep the system running in balance.

The sales and marketing department takes the responsibility to promote and sell the hotel products and services to consumers, to achieve the revenue targets. Refusing the idea expressed by Jordan (1997) that female employees in the tourism sector are underpaid by the company, they in fact play a very important role in shaping the marketing image of tourist destinations, including the hotels. Women, in general, have excellent communication skills which are very useful for approaching target consumers (Masadeh, 2013). The idea is in line with Kusumayanti and Karina's explanation as staff at a starred hotel in Bali which was obtained through an interview. Both explained that female employees play significant roles in upselling by using a personalized

service approach (interview June 9, 2020). Women are believed to have the ability to more understand the consumers' needs and wants better than male employees. Women (Bristor & Fischer, 1993), are more open to forming good relationships, including understanding the needs of hotel guests. In this case (Bristor & Fischer, 1993), women develop a tendency to form and maintain relationships not only on their own behalf but also as part of their role in the domestic sphere. Practically, women who are accustomed to playing their domestic role at home in providing services to their families and receiving guests, and instinctively applying them in the workplace, so that this actually makes them very capable of providing services to consumers in a professional manner.



Picture 2: A Hotel Sales Manager Makes a Sales Call during This Covid-19 Outbreak

Working as both sales marketing and front officers in fact badly needs verbal communication skills, both Indonesian and English. As it was explained by Chamnankit (2015) that verbal communication skill is the most required by those working as front officers in order to be able to generate effective communication between them and the customers so the messages are well delivered to each party. The quality of the services generated by the female workers in both sales marketing and front office positions is in fact, able to bring customer satisfaction and also the repeater guests which at last will affect the increasing revenue of the hotel (Kotler, 2000; Tjiptono, 2008).

How women can afford the significant position in the hotel industry

According to the explanation from Rivai (2004) and Subekhi & Jauhar (2012), practically, employee recruitment is conducted through a series of predetermined process which is adjusted to the standard operational procedure in each company, including hotels. Based on the idea expressed by Widiastini et al.(2019), the employee recruitment process is very attentive toward the candidates' competency and experiences (Manullang, 2004) which are possessed by the candidates without seeing the gender aspect at all. As its development, hotels are seeking employees who truly match the company's needs based on the criteria, competency, and

experiences as well that have been previously compiled. Furthermore, through the open and professional recruitment process, hotels are trying to give the opportunity fairly to whoever possesses the matched professional competencies needed without any subjective aspect. The job opportunities shared by the hotels are no longer seeing the gender aspect of the candidates, even in the kitchen staff position. Both male and female candidates have equal opportunities to fulfill any position as long as they possess the professional competency needed. Even more, practically, several hotels have implemented to let the positions as department managers occupied by female employees. As it is explained in the previous parts, women are believed for having the capability of good multitasking sense (Widiastuti, interview, 2019).

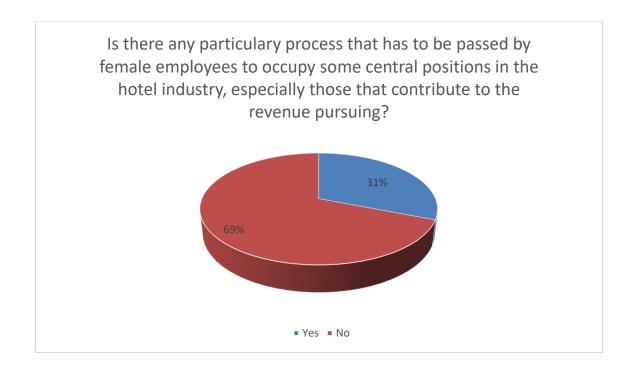


Chart 3: Women Has No Particular Process to Occupy the Central Positions in the Hotel Industry

As the recruitment process of the sales department position, women tend to have bigger opportunities to fulfill the position. Moreover, this position has a big responsibility to keep or even to pursue more and more revenue. Sales officers also have another role as the hotel's Customer Relationship Management (CRM). This position has a considerable responsibility to formulate a strategy that can be implemented systematically to attract, acquire, and retain customers (Lin & Su, 2003). According to the survey involving seventy-nine hotels in Bali regarding the female employees' acceptability (Widiastini, Prayudi, Wirata, et al., 2019), it is found that more than 21% occupied sales, marketing, and front-office positions. Most of them even have occupied the manager and supervisor positions. Moreover, by conducting a survey investigating the possibility of a particular process or criteria needed by female employees in order to be able to fulfill some higher position in the hotel industry, it is found that most (69%) responded by explaining that there is no particular process or criteria for women to occupy the central positions in the hotel industry. The following chart will show you a clearer overview.

As the tourism industry continues to develop, both male and female employees actually have the equal opportunity to occupy some central positions in the hotel industry, particularly the positions which are strategic to increase the revenue. A sales officer, in practice, uses a mix of sales strategies that is aware of the room availability (Choi & Cho, 2000). In this case, the decision to set room rates is influenced by internal factors including marketing objectives and promotional activities. Price in practice is not only to determine profitability, but also a powerful way that marketers can use to achieve business strategy goals (Middleton & Clarke, 2001). Thus, in providing last-minute room rates, a hotel salesperson must be aware of the lowest and highest room rate ranges, in order to quickly sell rooms at the last-minute quotation. Apart from that, a sales officer should be able to identify various market segments accurately which in this case, women are much more conscientious in working than males are (Sasongko & Wijayati, 2014). The sales and marketing position needs the accuracy and the precision as well in conducting the duties and those two criteria tend to be possessed by female employees. That idea is in line with Mr. DP's statement as a HRD manager of a five-star hotel in Bali which is shown below.

"Women tend to naturally have better accuracy than the males have in general. When the women's genetic gift is combined with good education and enough experiences, they will grow as an excellent marketer which will surely contribute to the increasing revenue. (Interview, DP/22/08/2020)".

Previously, an interview had been conducted with a female sales officer at a hotel. She told that by implementing the sense of discipline and accuracy in working, women are opening the opportunity widely to occupy the central positions and also to contribute to increasing the hotel revenue (Wulandari, July 21, 2020). The precision in the appearance and the communication toward the customers possessed by the female sales marketing and front officers is influencing the hotel management's decision in placing their female workers into those positions (Kuntjara & Lie, 2000; Prayitno, 2009). In short, the female hotel staffs have the same chance to pursue higher positions as long as they can provide their best performance professionally.

The picture below depicts the career path of a female employee at a five-star hotel in Bali. his career started from the position of a supervisor who later became one of the division managers. The career journey obviously took quite a long time at around twelve years. A study on the role of women as world-class managers in global competition, found that women face tremendous challenges and resistance to gain positions as international level managers (Jelinek & Adler, 1988). Nevertheless, in its development, Simpson & Altman (2000) revealed that women's career development is faster than men's, as evidenced by the fact that women are able to occupy high positions such as managers at a younger age than men. This condition is possibly because women tend to be more active at a young age than men. Furthermore, based on findings possessed by Setiawan & Woyanti (2010), it is known that the gender regression coefficient is 1.281 which indicates that the job-seeking period for women is 128.1% faster than the men's. This situation can be the reason why young women are faster in occupying important positions in their work. In this context, women get jobs according to their competence early, work diligently, and finally are able to quickly reach certain positions.



Picture 3: The Process of a Balinese Woman Gaining an Important Position in a Hotel

In this study, in-depth interviews were also conducted with several women who had occupied high positions in hotels. The explanation that women are able to occupy high positions at a young age is proved by the information obtained through the in-depth interviews that the women have held positions as managers at the average age of 28 to 32 years old. In this case, Santrock (2003) explained that in general, women are more mature and are able to manage their self-emotion than men who are about the same age. This provides a good opportunity for women to gain positions at the managerial level more quickly. In practice, the maturation process that a woman goes through is not only in the domestic sphere at home but also in the public sphere. In this context, a workload that is done well and disciplined by a female staff will provide opportunities for them to reach certain positions. On the other hand, employees' performance is always assessed periodically by the hotel management, which has implications for the provision of rewards, punishments, or even promotions that employees will receive.

Implications of the women's significant roles in hotel management on their social life

Balinese women have a strong character in facing problems, the ability to survive well, and the balance in carrying out both domestic and social roles (Rini & Indrawati, 2019; Rosmawati, 2017; Widiastini et al., 2018; Widiastuti & Suryanata, 2020). These values are manifested from the philosophy adhered by the Balinese Hindu society, namely sesana manut linggih-linggih manut sesana (behaving as the position). Practically, within a particular situation, Balinese women are required to be able to act and behave in accordance with the space in which they are at that time (Giddens, 2010). When carrying out duties as an employee at a hotel, a Balinese woman is obliged to behave professionally like other staff in her workplace. Meanwhile, when she returns home, she must position herself as a wife, a mother, and a daughter-in-law for those who are married. Balinese women who in this context are surrounded by customs, culture, and traditions like patriarchy and purusha. Purusha (Pradnya, 2017) in kinship law is closely related to the problem of the kinship system or the system of lineage, family and kinship, based on male descent. The term purusha has a meaning social related to status/position or function. Purusha has a broader meaning because it includes men and women with status/domicile as a man. Practically, women must be able to carry out their roles properly according to time and space, such as at work, at home and in society so that they can be well respected. In general, the soft skills of Balinese women in playing their roles according to time and space have implications on their good careers without neglecting their domestic duties.

Regardless of the strong patriarchal system adopted by the Balinese people, in its implementation, women still, in fact, get good space for a career (Fagertun, 2017). However, the women still have to understand their social status in society, especially those who are married. Patriarchy, in practice, is often seen as the basis for legitimizing men's power over women (Bhasin, 1996). Considering these conditions, career women must be able to carry out their roles separately in balance both in the domestic and society including in building good communication to create good understanding within the family (Wulandari, interview, July 9, 2020). Balinese women, especially those who are married, not only have good communication skills at work, especially to hotel customers in this case, but also to their families to ensure the harmony of the families they build.

This double role results in the emergence of a double burden that must be taken by a woman, which is being responsible for maintaining the family's harmony and also for managing her professional performance in the workplace (Hidayati, 2015). In this context, women must be able to carry out both roles well, as a consequence of choosing their dual roles. In addition, the function of the family to meet physical, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual requires women, especially those who are married and become mothers, to be able to balance their lives (Lestari, 2012). Based on the idea argued by Sanderson (2010), in this context, a woman who works to help her husband adequate the economic needs of the family, must share mutual support in order to achieve the goals of family life she has built.

"My family really supports me as a hotel career woman, with the role of Front Office Manager in particular. To maintain family harmony, I try to find important time in my family, especially family time, so that my family and society will still give some respect on me (Kusumayanti, June 9, 2020)".

Currently, having a steady job for married women has received a good response from the society in Bali. Moreover, when Balinese women are able to contribute to improving the family economy which at last has an impact on increasing social status in society, they will get a better image in the family (Oka, 2015). In fact, if career women are able to perform both domestic and public duties accurately, their image will be even better. Balinese women always try to maintain work-life balance by properly carrying out their various roles as housewives and as workers, in this case as hotel staff (Widiastuti & Suryanata, 2020). As in the current reality, most Balinese women have carried out their dual roles after marriage, both as housewives and as workers, including as hotels employees in this context.

The main factor that causes Balinese women to decide to work after marriage is the economy, where they are also involved in fulfilling the economic needs of the family (Tjaja, 2000). As a woman, the desire to be respected as an individual who is able to help the family economy and the desire to contribute to society are also meaningful reasons for a woman to decide to work despite staying home as fully-fledged housewives. In this case, fulfilling the needs of the family requires humans to work, in which despite only earning money to buy various goods and services in the market, working also gives a chance to humans to actualize themselves in both social and professional environments (Atmadja et al., 2012).

CONCLUSION

An excellent communication skill which is supported by an attractive appearance will provide a very good professional career opportunity for female employees in hotels, especially in Bali. The ability of female sales and marketing officers to build good communication with the hotel customers is able to convince them to accept offers related to hotel products and services. The situation then impacts the emerging of the customer's satisfaction that finally affects the hotel's capability to achieve the revenue target. To reach certain positions such as supervisor or manager, women have the same opportunities as men. In this regard, hotel management will certainly determine the officials in each position based on the competence and performance shown professionally, regardless of gender and marital status. Having a high position in hotel management does not necessarily make women ignore their nature as women, especially those who are married. In fact, Balinese women actually always try to conduct all their domestic and social roles, in order to generate harmony between the family and work environments. This research is still limited from the sample and is still global in nature about women who have an important role in increasing hotel income. Therefore, it is hoped that there will be further research that specifically examines the role of the hotel product sales department in-depth, so that it can show the strategies taken to help increase hotel revenues, especially in the current tourism recovery situation.

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