

Best Practises in Employing Differently able peoples in Indian Hotel Industry – A Case Study of Lemon Tree Hotels

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Abstract

Employing differently able people (DAP) or people with infirmities is difficult to deal with in the Indian societal structure as it is still treated as a taboo. In India 26.8 million people are people with infirmities, 30 per cent of whom live in urban areas, while 70% live in rural India, in accordance to the 2011 Population Census. Employment status of DAP in India is very disheartening, the Census 2011 report shows that only 36% are working. There are 47% male workers while only 23% of females are working in all over India. The RPWD Act, 2016 reserves for 4% jobs of Indian Government and PSU's in identified posts. Employability in Private sector by improvement of proper skills is being encouraged now among persons with disabilities. People with infirmities have been motivated to pursue skill training in light of the emerging number of job opportunities in the service sector. Market specific skill training set up has been designed by Skill India Council for the disabled. Numerous hotels in India are running as an element of their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) activities for various social causes but Lemon Tree Hotels has adopted this policy of employing DAP as a diversified manpower enlistment policy. This case study is trying to discover the possibilities and impact of employing DAP in Lemon Tree Hotels and how other hotel can use it as role model for employing more DAP and making them feel inclusive in the society.

Keywords: Differently Able People, Employment, Hotels.

INTRODUCTION

Disabilities are a part of mans proviso. At certain point in life, almost everyone may be momentarily or permanently disabled, and those who live to old age will find it increasingly difficult to work. Most extended families have a disabled member, and many people with no disabilities would be in charge for taking care of relatives and friends with disabilities (1-3). The UN set of laws on the "Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities" included rights for persons with disabilities, resulting with the adoption of the United Nations 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)' in 2006. In Report of World's Disability by WHO there are about 15 out of every 100 individuals are having infirmities in the globe and among them 4 have brutal disabilities (4). In India 26.8 million people are differently able people, 30 percent of whom live in urban areas, while 70 % live in village areas, as per the 2011 Population Census. In accordance with the 2011 census, the share of the disabled population in the 10-19-year age group is 17 percent, and 16 percent are in the 20-29-year age group, which is mostly the working population. It was again divided in ratio to their incapacities as in the maturity cluster of 0-19 years, 20% are having disability in hearing followed by 18% with disability in seeing, 13% in movement, 9% in speech and 9% has multiple disabilities. Among the disabled in the age group 20-39 years, 22% are having disability in movement and 18% has disability in hearing followed by 15% in seeing, 9% in speech and 6% has multiple disabilities. Employment status of DAP in India is very disheartening, the Census 2011 report shows that only 36% are working. There are 47% male workers while only 23% of females are working in all over India (5).

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Research about the employment state of disabled people in the hotel industry around the globe have acknowledged many arguments or presumptuous by managers of hotel and workers as to why people with infirmities are less employable than people in general. Main arguments consist of soaring expenses of supervision and of willing to help any fussy needs of persons with disabilities (6,7), their limited multi-tasking skills, and their restrictions on movement that could have a detrimental effect on night and shift work (6; 8). The first choice of the hotel industry for workers with visual and self-presentation skills is also evident as a primary barrier to disabled workers' jobs (9). Regardless of these employment challenge for those with disabilities, Lemon Tree Hotels, India has engaged a standard of more than 15 % of individuals with disabilities in its operations (10). Using the 'Lemon Tree hotels' as the target organization for study, the aim of this paper is to see if the above mentioned point of view for the limited employability of those with disabilities are justified or not.

Review of Literature

A case study on a group of German hotels employing differently abled peoples revealed that the misconceptions perceived by managers for this new pool of employees has turned out to be inaccurate. They perform every job with a lot of dedication and sincerity and prove their capability to be employed in the hotel industry.(Groschl, 2011 & 2012).

Researcher studied eight different hospitality companies employing differently abled people in their establishments to explore the out-comes of this practice. The results were exhibited and explained as a guide line for other hotels for deciding their inclusion policy and increase the employment opportunities of this otherwise deprived sect of people. In another paper Kalargyrou used inclination of many hotel chains towards social services as a tool for employment of differently abled people in the hotel industry. This type of services can be used as a marketing tool to attract guest for unique services and invoking other stakeholders in the market to follow this inclusive culture by accepting the disabled people in the workforce. Kalargyrou also studied customers view point and comfortability with differently abled service staff, in a first of its kind of research in USA. The study shows a positive approach and increase in sales in selected dining options with family and friends but not during romantic or business meets. (Kalargyrou et.al, 2014,2018 & 2014)

The reassess supports the engagement of differently abled peoples in various departments of hospitality sector but similar studies were not prevalent in Indian context.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To learn about the real-world problems of hiring differently abled individuals through a case study of 'Lemon Tree Hotels'.
- To estimate departmental preference for this alternative manpower is also investigated through a case study of different departments of the hotel.

METHODOLOGY

Given the explorative nature of this project, the most appropriate research style seemed to be a case study approach. Semi structured in-depth interviews were chosen as the key method for the purpose of data collection. Interviews conducted with the hotel directors and head of departments with incorporated questions about individual and company backgrounds, organizational performance results, HR related activities and procedures regarding the attraction and integration of their staff, the rapport among all workers and the obstructions and opportunities of operating an integrative hotel. To analyse the data, researcher have used the

interview queries as the basis for category creation. Processing of information and analysis of data have been done manually, creating a strong association that confirm to be the basis for interpretative treatment of the information. With clear methodological justifications and appropriate, multiple research methods the truthfulness of the project's findings was assured and the interpretative validity of the data was provided (11).

Case Overview - 'Lemon Tree Hotels' - A Refreshing Concept (Strategies & Specifications)

'The Lemon Tree hotel' chain was established in September 2002 and now operates 55 hotels in 32 cities across India. The chain operates in three segments to cater guests across different levels:

- Lemon Tree Premier Upscale segment
- Lemon Tree Hotels Midscale segment
- Red Fox Hotels Economy segment

The Lemon Tree Hotels sustainability policies are based on a triple bottom line that is Planet, People and Profit. They are firm on ethnicity and on keeping people engaged. LTH is an equal opportunity employer and is constantly encouraging those with deformities to apply for jobs. The corporate ethos are that persons with infirmities should have the same opportunity as others to realize their full prospective.

According to the Horwath Report, bright, strong-willed and young at heart, Lemon Tree Hotels (LTH) is India's largest mid-priced hotel chain and the third largest overall, based on guarded interest in self own and leased rooms as of 30 July 2017.

In May 2004, this award-winning Indian hotel chain opened its first hotel, which had 49 rooms and now it operates 55 hotels in 32 cities with 5400+ rooms and over 5000 employees (As on January, 2019).Lemon Tree hotels are positioned all over India in metro cities including the NCR, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai, as well as cities of Tier I and Tier II such as Pune, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Jaipur, Indore and Aurangabad.

1. Lemon Tree Premier

'Lemon Tree Premier's' plush and cosy interiors amp up the excitement. This upper midscale business and leisure hotel chain elevates the Lemon Tree experience while preserving its brightness, eccentricity and creativity. Personalized facilities, premium room amenities, eminent restaurants, and enjoyable experiences pamper the style conscious and cheerful traveller at this hotel.

2. Lemon Tree Hotels

Lemon Tree Hotels are mid-scale commercial and holiday hotels that at the day end will raise the spirits like the fruit they are named after, Lemon Tree Hotels are fresh, cool and with full of zest, friendly welcome and a scent of the lemony freshness will welcome you at 'Lemon Tree'. With its sharp wit and spirited setting, this stylish business hotel with new and vibrant interiors will refresh you. The 'next to home' expediency of Lemon Tree lets you relax with its neat array of facilities.

Both of these brands include:

- A diverse selection of dining choices:
Citrus Café, Slounge, Republic of Noodles and Kebab Theater

- A fitness center, a revitalizing swimming pool and a rejuvenative spa-Fresco to keep you feeling as fresh-as-a-lemon.
- Business on the move is more dynamic with a well-equipped business centre and meeting rooms.

3. Red Fox by Lemon Tree Hotels

Its fresh bold interiors and hygienic rooms, Red Fox welcomes you. With its unbeatable price and safety standards, these economic hotels will delight anyone. A friendly grin and a lively atmosphere with professional service and state of the art amenities, whether you're working on your laptop or playing a carom game in the lounge, Red Fox hotels are young at heart. Add to that the scrumptious food of Clever Fox Café and the "close to home" environment of hotels are the best option for price-conscious travellers.

Management Team

LTH is governed by a collection of seasoned hospitality professionals acted for a prestigious luxury hotel brands and across sectors like consultancy, FMCG, banking and insurance, telecommunications, automotive and offshore business processing.

Learning and Development

The organization has introduced a comprehensive learning and development plan to deliver on its trade name assurance and has evolved with world-class and industry-wide benchmarked tailored content and training processes.

Wealth Creation Opportunity

Notably, through an employee stock option program, LTH provides its employees with opportunities to create wealth.

Sustainability

The endeavour of Lemon Tree is to have a healthy 'triple bottom line,' i.e. Through its sustainability measures, Planet, People and Profit.

Planet: Present efforts comprise energy competence and protection; water competence and conservation; use of CNG rather than LPG; use of green construction material; planting on hotel premises of trees and shrubs; building hotels in accordance with Universal Design concepts - for greater access for differently abled people and building our hotels to 'Leadership in Energy and Design (LEED) Gold Standards'. It focuses on wind power in the average to extensive term; agro-power i.e. agricultural waste burning; used water for AC cooling tower; heat propel for energy conservation; solar photovoltaic (PV) lighting system; widespread use of LED light fixtures (post cost reduction); geo-thermal energy.

People: They are persistent on their ethnicity and on engaging the manpower. Lemon Tree Hotels has been selected amongst the 'Best Companies to Work for' in India for seven consecutive years (2011 -2017) by the Great Places to Work Institute. In 2017, it was ranked #4 in the Top 100 Great Places to Work. LTH is an equal opportunity employer and is constantly encouraging those with disabilities to apply for jobs. The vision of the organization is that disabled persons must have the same opportunities to achieve their full potential. Through

developing an organizational atmosphere that allows them to offer their best, LTH may play a role in social inclusiveness and nation building, however limited it may be. Lemon Tree has definite goals of mainstreaming 'Opportunity Deprived Indians' i.e. ODIs into its workforce. ODIs include:

A. Employees With Disability (EWDs):

Physical Disability

- Speech and Hearing Impaired (SHI)
- Orthopedically Handicapped (OH)
- Acid Survivors (AS)
- Going forward, also Visually Impaired (VI), Low Vision (LV)

Intellectual Disability

- Down Syndrome
- Autism

Key Findings and Discussion

Lemon Trees inclusive hiring policies are an central part of the company's HR culture since 2007 according to Mr. Patu Keswani, company's founder. Mrs. Aradhana Lal, Lemon Trees Vice president of sustainability initiatives states that “This initiative is not done as charity or corporate social responsibility. It is part of our business model and it has become our culture.”

The sample organizations had between 45 to 280 rooms. Many of the interviewed managers had a disability.

The majority of the disabled employees are either deaf or dumb. Managers provided comprehensive explanations of activities and procedures for workers with Down syndrome, as well as familiar systems and routine tasks. Workers who were unable to read were assisted by illustrating their tasks with colours and symbols. New tasks or adjustments and improvements to current work patterns were slowly introduced by constant practice. And many devices in inclusive hotels such as vacuum cleaners bore names for workers with Down Syndrome who often hate impersonal items. Managers accepted that contributing their hospitality experience and know-how unique to the social sector has often contributed to low-cost styles to people with disabilities for day-to-day job challenges.

As the staffing team for managers was restricted to their hotels' associated NGOs, most of the applicants with infirmities had no hospitality experience. The deficit of skills and knowledge required managers to provide financial and non-financial investments for training their employees with disabilities. To some degree, this reinforces the assumption among non-disabled managers that disabled workers may have significant, expensive training needs. However, it's critical to add that this is mainly because of their lack of hotel work experiences and not of their disability. The Lemon Tree Hotels are hiring those with infirmities as six months of job interns and then validating them as regular employees with more or less equal pay scale as non-disabled employees. In fact, hotel employers can use financial support from governmental to support their inclusive training programs. For many this training helps them acquire new skills, and build trust which enables them to take further responsibilities slowly. Greater performance creates more self-assurance and give them basis for developing more multi-tasking and cross-functional abilities. Given their deep sense of loyalty and long-term

commitment, dedicating resources and time to training people with disabilities will make long-term investment in training costs.

Workforce with disabilities would be better integrated if artificial barriers in the form of perceptions and stereotypical thinking to be identified and dealt with early on. Managers must eliminate all physical and social obstacles resulting from indifference, ignorance, and fright. Managers and workers need to have the same corporate values and a shared vision. Such shared common goals amongst all employees could add to the growth of a powerful and cohesive organizational culture needed to place disabled employees needed to put the employees with disabilities at the centre of slew of administrative and organisational processes and procedures.

Types of Disability	No. of Disability Employed	Departments
In seeing (Blind)	7	F&B Service, Front Office, Housekeeping, Production
In hearing (Deaf)	424	Housekeeping, Purchase & Stores, F&B S ervice, Production, Front Office, Finance, HR, Security, Revenue Management & Distribution
In speech (Dumb)		
In Movement	75	Production, Housekeeping, Purchase & Stores, F&B Service, Maintenance, Security, Front Office, Sales
Mentally Retarded	23	F&B service, Housekeeping
Mental Illness		
Any other (Autism)		
Multiple Disability	6	F&B Service, Revenue Management & Distribution, Finance

Conclusions

Despite all legal efforts and administrative programme and policies promoting fair job opportunities for people with disabilities, these individuals continue to face significant challenges in their everyday lives and at work. Artificial barriers as negative perception of disabled persons prohibit these otherwise capable individuals can be engaged entirely in jobs in many different sectors, including the hotel industry. Here we can conclude that several job barriers for disabled workers in the hotel industry do not seem to be justified and do not match up to facts. Engaging and integrating significant figures of critically differently abled persons in a very aggressive marketplace is also possible. Organization's vision and its trade and HR plans, to its efficient programmes for disability employment is of extreme importance. This needs to be accompanied with sensitivity building led by top brass, with open and direct communication to both internal and external stakeholders. Managerial improvements in the inclusion of differently abled persons should be explained with clear objectives and reasons in the commercial case. It must be recognized that people with infirmities to be recruited for their abilities and not for their disabilities.

Recommendation and Limitations

This research should be seen as a preliminary point for further debate between academicians and hoteliers on

the amalgamation of differently abled persons in the non-inclusive hotel sector. Further research of non-integrative hotel organizations will give greater in-depth analysis of job difficulties and obstacles faced by differently abled people. The qualitative character of this research can be initiated with more quantitative oriented research designs. Because of the participant's confidentiality, data collection methods such as surveys could provide different responses or viewpoints from patrons.

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