

Women in Tourism: The case of Croatia

Ivanka Avelini Holjevac

SUMMARY

This research note represents some overall structural indicators of the gender inequality evidenced in the female employment in general and more specifically in the field of tourism. In the context of the world gender division of labour, the example is provided with reference to Croatian national statistics and further demonstrated with a case study of one of the largest and best performing hotel companies - Liburnia Riviera Hotels (with the head office in Opatija, one of the most well-known tourist destinations in Croatia). The objective is to assess the socio-economic position of women in terms of the nature of their employment in tourism, which represents the major economic sector of Croatia.

Key words:

tourism; employment; women; management; entrepreneurship; Croatia

INTRODUCTION: CROATIA AND WOMEN IN THE WORLD OF LABOUR

Women represent a minority in Croatian entrepreneurship and top management positions. In the year 2002 they accounted for 48% of total employees, while holding 6% of top managers positions. It is important to note here that they also account for 33% of all Ph.D. and 45% of Masters degrees (Statistical Yearbook of Croatia 2003) Overall, women make up for 50% of all university degrees in the country (Avelini Holjevac and Galičić 2005). This fact further proves the phenomenon of 'glass ceiling', continuing to reproduce the socio-economic inequality based on gender, despite processes

of women empowerment through education and the general political movements of feminism. For example, the long-awaited paper just recently produced by the Women and Work Commission in the UK points to the gender pay gap which at the current rate will take more than 80 years to close the full-time and around 140 years to end the part-time pay gap (Branigan 2006).

The socio-economic inequality of the status of women at the workplace is best illustrated by the data presented in table 1.

*Ivanka Avelini Holjevac, Ph.D., Full Professor, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, University of Rijeka, Opatija, Croatia.
E-mail: ivankaah@fthm.hr*

Table 1
**RELATIVE SHARE OF THE FEMALE POPULATION IN VARIOUS CATEGORIES
 IN CROATIA IN THE YEAR 2002**

Description Category	% of women
Total population	52%
Total number of employees	48%
Employees in the state sector	52%
Employees in the private sector	39%
Employees under the age of 50	47%
Unemployed persons	58%
Rate of female unemployment	25%
Croatian Government	30%
Female members of the Croatian Parliament	25%
Female County Prefects	5%
Female Mayors	11%
In positions of authority at county and town levels	13%
Municipal Councils	7%
Women working in government administration, but not full-time	89%
Women working in education, but not full-time	60%
Women with 2-yr post-secondary school degrees seeking job for the first time	63%
Illicit female workers	65%
On Supervisory Boards of companies	19%
Founders of companies	25%
Entrepreneurs	20%
Senior positions (all levels of management)	27%
Top managerial positions	6%

Source: *Statistical Yearbook of Croatia (2003); Croatian Employment Office (2004).*

The number of women who want to work is steadily growing, but finding a job is more difficult for women than for men in Croatia (table 2). In this respect, the situation in Croatia is extremely discouraging for women. The reality of discrimination is reflected in statistical data of unemployment presented in table 2. When competing with men, it is harder for women to find work, even though they are often better candidates for the job, as employers tend to give preference to male workers (table 2).

The majority of women seeking employment belong to the ranks of saleswomen, office clerks, tellers, and other less demanding vocations, although there are also unemployed women amongst professionals and scholars. In the macho society of Croatia where the traditional masculinity and femininity need to be constantly performed (Ateljevic and Hall 2005) women continue their struggle to achieve positions of greater importance (in politics) and higher pay (in the economy).

Table 2
**UNEMPLOYED PERSONS IN CROATIA
 ACCORDING TO GENDER**

Year	Total	Women	% of women
1990	195,466	106,952	54.7
1991	283,308	146,146	51.6
1992	261,050	141,305	54.1
1993	243,096	134,891	55.5
1994	247,555	129,546	52.3
1995	249,070	125,807	50.5
1996	269,263	134,978	50.1
1997	287,120	145,776	50.8
1998	302,731	158,920	52.5
1999	341,730	180,129	52.7
2000	378,544	200,652	53.0
2001	395,141	214,716	54.3
2002	366,162	206,105	56.3
2003	318,684	186,281	58.4

Source: Croatian Employment Office (2004).

For the following section it is particularly important to note women make up 68% of unemployed persons with qualifications for jobs in hospitality and tourism (Croatian Employment Office 2004).

WOMEN AND TOURISM EMPLOYMENT IN CROATIA

The national level of gender inequality in the overall employment is reflected in the tourism sector. Whilst women account for 66% of hotel and restaurant employees, they occupy the position of hotel manager in only 32 hotels (7%) of the overall 460 Croatia's hotels (Empirical research 2004). At the same time, women represent the majority (about 65%) of graduates of higher educational institutions, which train managers in tourism and hospitality, and also the majority of unemployed persons (70%) holding a graduate diploma in tourism and hospitality management. It is also important to note that with regard to salaries, jobs in tourism are paid less, relative to the average salary in the Croatian economy – a fact pointing to the less favourable position of women in Croatian tourism.

The broader national indicators have been further confirmed in an empirical study conducted in one of Croatia's largest hotel companies of Liburnia Riviera Hotels in Opatija (one of the oldest and the most renowned tourist destinations located in the northern part of the Adriatic coast). The employment of women in the company, according to the incomplete data available, is presented in the below tables.

Table 3
**STRUCTURE OF EMPLOYEES PER GENDER
 AS ON DECEMBER 31ST, 2004**

Year	Total	Women	Men	% of women
2004	843	553	290	65.60
1999	1,167	788	379	67.52
1994	1,867	1,272	595	68.13
1991	2,442	1,691	751	69.25
1984	2,593	1,766	827	68.11
1979	2,330	1,450	880	68.08
1975	2,768	1,664	1,104	60.05
1969	902	521	381	57.76
1964	805	405	400	50.31

Source: Company data, LRH Opatija.

The data indicate a downward trend in the number of employees in the period following the Yugoslav war years, that is, after 1991. Today in 2004 the number of employees is almost identical to that in 1964, forty years ago. With a participation ranging from 50 – 69%, women prevail in the structure of employees. In comparison with forty years ago, the percentage of women has increased from 50% (1964) to 66% (2004).

Although representing the majority of employees, the nature of their jobs depict very different picture. Women account for the highest number of unskilled workers (92%) and semi-skilled workers (90%), as well as for the lowest number of highly skilled workers (37%) and workers holding two-year post-secondary school qualifications (32%). It can be concluded that although women hold 60% of the country's university degrees and 75% of Master degrees in tourism and hospitality management (table 4), their qualifications are not represented in the higher ranking of tourism management jobs.

Table 4
**EMPLOYEES ACCORDING TO QUALIFICATIONS
 AS ON DECEMBER 31, 2004**

Qualification	Men	Women	Total	% of women
Unskilled worker	10	119	129	92
Semi-skilled worker	8	71	79	90
Skilled worker	2	4	6	67
Highly-skilled worker	47	28	75	37
Elementary school	4	7	11	64
Secondary school	172	283	455	62
2-yr post-secondary school	30	14	44	32
University	16	24	40	60
M.Sc.	1	3	4	75
TOTAL	290	553	843	66

Source: Internal Company documents, LRH Opatija.

Women generally occupy the positions of waitresses and room attendants or the so-called 'women's work'. In the hotel's management structure, women mostly occupy positions at lower managerial levels, such as supervisor, head housekeeper, and less often positions such as head of the pastry department, kitchen, or head of a restaurant. Whereas women are more frequently employed as the managers of professional and administrative departments, *all* positions of hotel managers are exclusively held by men.

Finally, it is interesting to observe the intersection of age and gender data. The 41 – 50 age group accounts for 48% of all employees and the 51 – 60 age group for 28%, with women prevailing in each of these groups. This age distribution can partially explain the gendered structure of employment whereby women in the family status of having children are the most 'suitable' group for part-time and more casual arrangements of lower-skilled jobs in tourism and hospitality, which are also traditionally considered to be "extended form of women's domesticated work".

Table 5
**EMPLOYEES ACCORDING TO AGE
 AND GENDER AS PER DECEMBER 31, 2004**

Age group	Men	Women	Total	% of women
0-20	0	0	0	-
21-30	14	18	32	56
31-40	49	115	164	70
41-50	124	280	404	69
51-60	100	140	240	58
61-99	3	0	3	0
Total	290	553	843	66

Source: Internal Company documents, LRH Opatija.

CONCLUSION

There has been more than five decades since the women's liberation movement, which began in the USA and the Western Europe in the 1960s, fundamentally changing most women lives across the globe. Yet, despite the general perceptions that issues of gender equality are more-less resolved at the socio-economic levels, the statistics of women employment and the case study of Croatia presented here rather confirm the contrary. The specific reference to tourism, which represents one of the key global economic and social agents of development demonstrates that we still have long way to go.

REFERENCES

- Avelini Holjevac I. and Galičić V. (2005) *Žene u poduzetništvu. In: International Conference: Entrepreneurship and Macroeconomic Management, Conference proceedings. Pula: Fakultet ekonomije i turizma. 2-36.*
- Ateljević I. and Hall D. (2006) *Tourism Embodiment of the Macho Gaze in the South-Eastern Europe: Performing masculinity and femininity in Albania and Croatia. In: Morgan N. Pritchard A. Ateljevic I. and Harris C. (eds) Gender, Sexuality and Embodiment in Tourism. Wallingford: CAB International.*
- Branigan T. (2006) *Wage inequality report attacked for failing to push for audits. The Guardian, February, 27.*
- Croatian Employment Office (2004) Available from: www.hzz.hr.
- Internal Company documents, LRH Opatija (2004).
- Statistical Yearbook of Croatia (2003) Zagreb: Bureau of Statistics.

Submitted: 05/15/2005
Accepted: 01/20/2006