

Shattering ceilings: pioneering paths to recruit and retain female employees in luxury hotels amidst language, cultural, and social hurdles

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This study delved into the multifaceted challenges encountered in recruiting and retaining women in the high-end hotel sector in Galle, Sri Lanka. Despite the significant presence of women in the hospitality industry, they remained notably underrepresented in many key positions within this locale. The objective of this research was to pinpoint the obstacles contributing to this disparity and propose feasible solutions. Employing a mixed-method approach, the study gathered insights through a web-based self-completion questionnaire to acquire quantitative data and through semi-structured interviews to gain qualitative data from 50 female employees and 20 managerial staff at five-star hotels in Galle. The sampling methods used were snowball sampling for the quantitative data and purposive sampling for the qualitative data. SPSS statistical software was utilized to analyze the quantitative data, performing comparison and correlation tests within univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses for both parametric and non-parametric procedures. An interpretive strategy was also employed, allowing for a more flexible approach to the prepared themes, based on the responses of each participant. The analysis revealed a range of impediments that affected women's participation preventing the development of this industry to its full potential. Key issues included barriers related to English proficiency, deeply ingrained cultural norms, persistent biases, and insufficient flexibility in work arrangements. Additionally, the women faced systemic challenges such as restrictive employment strategies, negative societal perceptions, and a lack of support from spouses and other family members. The research underscored the need for a strategic overhaul to address those issues effectively. To overcome the identified barriers, it was recommended to implement a comprehensive diversity and inclusion training programme aimed at combating bias fostering a more inclusive workplace environment, and to improve work-life balance ensuring equal opportunities for employment and training. These efforts were expected not only to benefit individual women but also to contribute to the overall growth and success of the industry in Galle.

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