

The evolving role of women in Indian hospitality

In my role as the General Manager of Aloft Bengaluru ORR, Sita Lekshmi is honored to share insights into a topic close to my heart—the evolving role of women in Indian hospitality. The hospitality landscape in India, mirroring global trends, has been undergoing a noteworthy transformation, with women increasingly taking prominent positions in various facets of the industry, challenging stereotypes, and reshaping its narrative. This shift can be attributed to several factors, including education, changing cultural perceptions, and evolving workplace dynamics.

Education plays a pivotal role in empowering women to pursue careers in hospitality. Many educational institutions and hospitality management programs in India actively encourage female participation, equipping them with the necessary tools to succeed in diverse roles, spanning hotel management to culinary arts.

At Marriott Hotels, we firmly believe in the power of diversity and inclusion. Recognizing that diversity enriches our workforce, enhances the guest experience, fosters innovation, and drives business success, we take pride in being part of an industry that celebrates individuals from all walks of life, providing equal opportunities for growth and advancement.

Through initiatives such as leadership development programs, mentorship opportunities, and networking forums, we offer women the support, guidance, and resources essential for thriving in their careers. By investing in their professional growth and well-being, we not only unlock their full potential but also set a precedent for other industry players to follow suit.

As a female leader within Marriott International in South Asia, I consider myself incredibly fortunate to have been mentored by our Area Vice President, Ms. Ranju Alex. She stands as a beacon of inspiration and leadership, not only within our organization but across the broader hospitality industry. Through her leadership, she has shattered glass ceilings and paved the way for countless women to rise and thrive in leadership positions.

In addition to education and changing cultural norms, evolving workplace dynamics within the hospitality industry have contributed to the rise of women in leadership positions. Companies increasingly recognize the value of diversity and inclusion, not just as a moral imperative but also as a strategic advantage. Women bring a unique set of skills, perspectives, and experiences to the table, making them invaluable assets to the hospitality industry. Their innate ability to multitask, communicate effectively, and empathize with guests' needs aligns perfectly with the demands of our dynamic and customer-centric environment. By harnessing these qualities and nurturing their leadership potential, we empower women to excel in roles across all departments, from operations and sales to finance and marketing.

One area where the presence of women in Indian hospitality is particularly notable is in hotel management. From general managers to department heads, women are making their mark and leading by example, demonstrating their ability to drive success and innovation in this competitive industry.

Despite these advancements, it's essential to acknowledge that challenges and barriers still exist for women in Indian hospitality. Gender discrimination, unequal pay, and work-life balance issues continue to pose obstacles to women's career progression. However, with sustained efforts toward gender equality and empowerment, coupled with supportive policies and initiatives, the future looks promising for women in Indian hospitality.

Furthermore, the rise of women in leadership positions has had a ripple effect, inspiring younger generations of women to pursue careers in hospitality and aspire to leadership roles. By serving as role models and advocates for gender equality, women leaders in the hospitality industry are paving the way for future generations to succeed, irrespective of gender or background.

As we look toward the future, it's imperative that we continue to champion diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our operations. By fostering a culture of respect, equality, and opportunity, we not only create a more vibrant and inclusive workplace but also contribute to the larger goal of building a more equitable society.