

Volume 2-2023

Vision2Voice

MAGAZINE

Women in Tourism



Published by

ISSN 2961-533X



www.uoctourism.com 9 772961 533002



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Women in Tourism

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Based on the ongoing disruptions from digital technology to our traditional ways of doing things, this issue will discuss how we can deal with such disruptions.



Message From

Prof.D.A.C.Suranga Silva

***Executive Chairman, Alumni Association of Tourism Economics and Hospitality Management
University of Colombo***

It is my pleasure to address you through Vision2Voice, a publication dedicated to illuminating the journeys, challenges, and victories of women in tourism. This issue is a testament to the strength, resilience, and innovation that women bring to the tourism sector in Sri Lanka and beyond. As we advance toward a more inclusive and sustainable tourism landscape, their voices and contributions have never been more vital.

In the face of economic challenges and a rapidly evolving industry, the stories in this volume remind us of the power of diversity in building resilient tourism models. Women across Sri Lanka are not only redefining traditional roles but are also leading with a focus on sustainability and community empowerment—fostering authentic connections that enhance our cultural heritage and elevate the visitor experience.

On behalf of the Alumni ATEHM, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to every contributor, especially the women who continue to inspire us all. Let us commit to strengthening our efforts, supporting women's advancement, and creating pathways for the next generation. Together, we can build a future where tourism not only thrives but uplifts every community it touches.

Volume 2-2023

Vision2Voice Women in Tourism

We hope this magazine serves as a source of inspiration and unity, reminding us of the power of community and shared vision. May it encourage all of us to continue supporting, learning from, and celebrating the invaluable contributions of women in tourism.



Message From

Mr. Nihal Muhandiram

President

Alumni Association of Tourism Economics and Hospitality Management (Alumni ATEHM)

It is with great pride and joy that I present to you the second edition of Vision 2 Voice. This year, our theme, Women in Tourism, celebrates the outstanding contributions, resilience, and leadership of women in the tourism and hospitality industry. This theme celebrates the remarkable journey of women who have moved far beyond traditional gender roles to reach incredible heights in tourism and hospitality industry.

Women have long been the heartbeat of tourism and hospitality, shaping the experiences, fostering connections, and leading transformative changes that drive our field forward. Through this edition, we aim to highlight their journeys, achievements, and the challenges they have overcome, inspiring the next generation of leaders in our industry.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the editorial team, whose hard work and commitment have brought this vision to life. Their dedication and creativity have ensured that this edition not only informs but also uplifts, honoring the remarkable women featured within these pages. I would also like to thank Professor Suranga, whose unwavering support and guidance have been instrumental in bringing Vision 2 Voice to fruition.



Message From

Damsi Dharmaratne

General Secretary

Alumni Association of Tourism Economics and Hospitality Management (Alumni ATEHM)

It is with immense pride and heartfelt greetings that I address the esteemed Alumni Association of Tourism, Economics, and Hospitality Management, along with its distinguished members, on the occasion of the release of the second edition of Vision 2 Voice. This issue, centered around the powerful theme of "Women in Tourism," serves as a transformative platform, bringing together the brilliant minds of students from Tourism Study Programs and industry leaders to exchange invaluable insights, innovative ideas, and visionary perspectives.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Professor (Dr.) Suranga Silva, whose visionary leadership has made this initiative possible, providing an exceptional opportunity for our students to publish their thought-provoking articles. Additionally, I wish to commend the unwavering efforts of the Publication and Presentation Subcommittee for their exemplary work in curating this remarkable second edition. This release not only reflects the caliber of our alumni but also reinforces our collective commitment to advancing thought leadership in the tourism industry.

Volume 2-2023

Vision2Voice Women in Tourism

We hope this issue serves as a catalyst for deeper discussions and actions toward gender equality and sustainable development in tourism. Together, let us aspire to inspire, ensuring that the voices of women in tourism are heard and valued at every level.



Message From

Puwanendram Gayathri

Co-editor

Vision 2 Voice Magazine

Welcome to the second volume of Vision2Voice, a platform that amplifies the dynamic role of women in tourism. This issue is especially close to our hearts as it highlights the incredible stories of empowerment, leadership, and resilience of women across the Sri Lankan tourism industry. Despite facing cultural, social, and economic challenges, women have continuously made invaluable contributions to the growth of the sector, both as innovators and changemakers.

As we navigate through post-pandemic recovery and tackle ongoing economic hardships, we are reminded of the importance of inclusivity and diversity in rebuilding a resilient tourism industry. Women hold the potential to drive this transformation, bringing fresh perspectives and sustainable practices to the forefront. In these pages, you will find stories of trailblazers who have challenged gender norms, shared their expertise, and inspired future generations to take bold steps in the tourism space.

Happy reading!

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Advancing Sustainability & Inclusivity through Women's Participation in Sri Lanka's Tourism Industry

By Chandra Wickramasinghe,
Chairman,
Thema Collection

Sri Lanka, an island known for its stunning beaches, lush natural beauty, and rich cultural heritage, has long been a magnet for travelers seeking unique experiences.

Over the years, its tourism industry has flourished, becoming a cornerstone of the national economy. More than just a revenue generator, tourism in Sri Lanka has the potential to promote sustainable prosperity, inclusiveness, and peace, contributing to the well-being of its people, particularly in rural communities. As the country navigates a post-pandemic world, there is an increasing focus on how tourism can play a central role in building a peaceful, equitable, and sustainable future. The spotlight is turning towards the untapped potential of women in this sector, as their participation holds the key to realizing a truly inclusive tourism industry.

The Role of Women in Sri Lanka's Tourism Industry

Empowering women is essential to achieving sustainable prosperity and inclusiveness in Sri Lanka's tourism industry.



Globally, women make up a large proportion of the tourism workforce. However, they are often concentrated in lower-paying jobs with limited opportunities for advancement. The situation in Sri Lanka mirrors this trend. Although women are a vital part of the tourism ecosystem, their participation remains disproportionately low, particularly in leadership roles.

Sri Lanka's female labor force participation rate in the tourism sector is below 10%, a stark contrast to other industries. This underrepresentation has a significant impact on the sector's growth and inclusivity. The underrepresentation of women in Sri Lanka's tourism workforce not only limits their economic empowerment but also affects the overall guest experience. Many international visitors, particularly female travelers, have noticed the lack of female staff in resorts, which can influence their perception of the service. Addressing this gender imbalance is crucial for improving the guest experience and for the growth and competitiveness of the tourism sector.

The tourism industry must actively encourage the participation of women across all levels. By doing so, Sri Lanka can create a more inclusive environment that not only supports economic development but also enhances guest experiences. Promoting gender equality in tourism will lead to a more innovative and diverse workforce, which in turn will foster greater creativity and resilience in the industry.

Advancing Sustainability & Inclusivity through Women's Participation in Sri Lanka's Tourism Industry

Barriers to Women's Participation in Sri Lanka's Tourism Industry

Women in Sri Lanka's tourism industry face a range of challenges, many of which are rooted in cultural and social norms. Traditional gender roles often restrict women's career choices, and societal expectations can discourage them from pursuing jobs in tourism, particularly those that require independence or mobility. Access to education and training is another significant barrier. Fewer women are enrolled in hotel schools and tourism-related programs, limiting their opportunities for professional advancement. In the workplace, women may encounter discrimination, unequal pay, and limited chances for promotion, while safety concerns, especially in roles that require late hours or travel, further deter women from entering the industry.

Addressing these barriers requires concerted efforts from both the government and the private sector. Creating safe, supportive, and equitable workplaces, coupled with initiatives to encourage more women to pursue careers in tourism, is essential for boosting female participation in the industry.

Amba Yaalu by Thema Collection: A Women-Led Hotel

In an effort to promote gender equality and inclusivity in tourism, Thema Collection is spearheading a groundbreaking project — Amba Yaalu Kandalama, the first women-led hotel in Sri Lanka. This pioneering initiative aims to create a space where women can take on leadership roles in hospitality, breaking the barriers that have traditionally limited their participation in the sector. Amba Yaalu represents a bold step towards reshaping the tourism landscape in Sri Lanka. It will not only provide employment opportunities for women but also serve as a model for other hotels and resorts in the country. By empowering women to lead in tourism, this project has the potential to inspire a new generation of female hospitality professionals and entrepreneurs. Amba Yaalu's focus on inclusivity aligns with the broader goals of sustainable tourism. The project emphasizes the importance of creating spaces where diverse groups of people can contribute to the industry, ensuring that everyone benefits from tourism's growth.

Sustainability Initiatives at Amba Yaalu

In addition to promoting gender equality, Amba Yaalu is deeply committed to environmental sustainability. The hotel has incorporated several green initiatives into its operations to minimize its ecological footprint and promote responsible tourism.

One of the most significant projects at Amba Yaalu is the installation of a 140.40 kW rooftop solar energy system. With 157 solar panels spread across 12,000 square feet, the hotel generates the majority of its energy from renewable sources. This solar farm reduces the hotel's reliance on traditional energy and minimizes its carbon footprint, reflecting Thema Collection's dedication to environmental stewardship.

Another notable initiative is the TJC Mango Farm, located on the hotel grounds. The farm is home to 457 mango trees, including the renowned TJC Mango variety, known for its large, juicy fruits. The sustainable farming practices used at the TJC Mango Farm not only support the hotel's commitment to eco-friendly operations but also provide a valuable source of income for local communities. By promoting sustainable agriculture, Amba Yaalu contributes to food security and community development while offering guests a unique agritourism experience.

"Hospitality is something we first learn at home, often from our mothers, who show us the true meaning of welcoming and caring for guests. Amba Yaalu Kandalama, with its women-led approach, embodies this spirit, bringing a more personalized and heartfelt experience to our guests, just as we've been taught from the very beginning."

Chandra Wickramasinghe, Chairman, Thema Collection





“As a passionate hotelier from the very start, my goal has always been to promote Sri Lankan tourism in a way that honors our local culture and embraces sustainability. Being the manager of Sri Lanka’s first women-led hotel is a milestone I’m incredibly proud of. Our dedicated team is excited and ready to welcome guests, offering them a unique and meaningful experience.”

Jeewanthi Adhikari Manager, Amba Yaalu Kandalama

Toward a More Inclusive and Sustainable Future

As Sri Lanka’s tourism industry continues to evolve, the integration of women into the workforce and the adoption of sustainable practices are key to ensuring long-term success. By empowering women, promoting peace, and embracing sustainability, the tourism sector can contribute to the creation of a more equitable society.

The tourism industry’s role in building a peaceful future cannot be understated. By fostering intercultural dialogue and promoting mutual understanding, tourism helps bridge divides and build connections between people from different backgrounds. In post-conflict Sri Lanka, tourism has the potential to be a powerful force for peace, bringing together communities and creating shared prosperity.

For the tourism sector to fully realize its potential, there must be a concerted effort to address the barriers that prevent women from participating fully in the industry. Through initiatives like Amba Yaalu, Sri Lanka can lead the way in creating a tourism industry that is inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous for all.



Conclusion

Tourism has the power to transform lives, communities, and nations. In Sri Lanka, the industry is more than just an economic driver—it is a platform for peace, inclusiveness, and sustainable development. By addressing the challenges faced by women, promoting responsible tourism, and creating opportunities for all, Sri Lanka can ensure that its tourism sector remains a beacon of hope and prosperity for generations to come.





Farming and Agro Tourism of Sri Lanka : Incorporated with women empowerment

By T.M.Janani Thenakoon

Sri Lanka has a golden agricultural history of more than 2500 years. The great fertile land and tropical climate provide potential for the cultivation and processing of a variety of crops. Sri Lankans' main crop cultivation is rice. Rice is cultivated during two seasons, "Yala" and "Maha". In addition to that, Tea and rubber are cultivated in the central highlands. Fruit, vegetables, spices and oil seed crops are also cultivated in the country. According to the Department of Census and Statistics the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector is contributed by 7.5% of total GDP in 2022. It is a considerable value for the growth of the economy of the Country.

The accommodation, food and beverage service activities recorded a substantial growth of 27% in GDP in 2022 compared to year 2021 as a subcontinent of the service sector. Both agricultural and travel and tourism sectors had shown considerable growth. Connecting with the agricultural and tourism sectors will be a great opportunity for developing both sectors.

There is a global trend toward to agriculturally based tourism. When considering about the Sri Lankan context, there is low potential to farm and agro-tourism. As an agriculturally based country, Sri Lanka has a bundle of opportunities to promote farming and agro-tourism. The county is full with so much of sources but at an under-utilizing level. We have to promote these types of hidden values to gain optimum usage of that resources. There should not need special arrangements for farming and agro-tourism, even day to day activities of farmers also can offer tourists as new experiences.

The Sri Lankan traditional agricultural practices can offer great insight to foreigners. They can get experience of paddy cultivating, harvesting, and so on. The tourists can gain memorable experiences by eating traditional foods and hearing traditional languages as well. On the other hand, we can go for value additions of agro-tourism as an experience-based tourism product. The sustainability approach can also implement in the concept. Incorporating with the local community is essential for agro tourism's success and will be a sustainable practice. The rural women's participation in tourism activities will empower the industry's productivity.

We can provide accommodations as an experience like staying with rural local families. The local women can participate with culinary activities by providing delicious traditional foods. Sri Lanka is an ideal destination that is rich in traditional authentic foods. It provides a unique symbol for tourism. Actually, it is a native tool of tourism that can promote widely. Cultural diversification also heavily and positively affected to the Sri Lankan cuisine's diversification. The Sinhalese commonly engage with foods such as kiribath (milk rice) and the variety of festive sweets such as kavum, kokis, aluwa and delicious rice and curry rich with natural spice taste. As well as handcrafting, home gardening, and harvesting are also fascinating areas that have the ability to promote. The weaving is also a very attractive activity that can promote women's participation. When we consider Sri Lankan agricultural history always connected nature and human life, they met their day-to-day requirements by utilizing branches for roofing, rush & reed for the production of mats to sleep on, etc. Sri Lankan traditional mats are rich in weaving patterns. By selling it to tourists will be the best source of income earning. As discussed above, by promoting the farm and agro-tourism will help to spread the sustainability approaches and goals.

"Agro-Tourism is one of the great positive insights for the fruit full tomorrow of the Sri Lankan women in tourism industry. "

WOMEN IN TOURISM

By M.H.N.C.Niroshani | DTTEHM,2023

Nothing to compare for the women's unique power which comes from her soul. How much her power is higher, her emerge makes the reason for another birth. They are considered to be the people who have been respected much after any of religion; however, if women's vision can have the correct voice to reveal their capability in tourism, as they play a valuable, major role in their family background like engaging in getting decisions, managing all activities etc. ,they will be outstanding much similar with the men in the industry.

Now a day, in the tourism industry women's role is higher. They bear various occupations such as ,hotel managers, event planers, tour guides, Flight Attendants, Cruise Directors, Travel Writers, Restaurant Managers,Marketing Managers, Travel Agents,chefs etc. Hotel Manager-Women can succeed in this sector if they have the necessary abilities and experience, as hotel management is a crucial function in the hospitality business. The daily activities of a hotel, such as guest services, housekeeping, and maintenance, are under the control of hotel managers. They are also in charge of overseeing staffing, finances, and marketing plans.

Event Planer-Events like weddings, conferences, and trade exhibitions must be successfully planned and carried out by event planners. Women who flourish in this position will have excellent interpersonal and organizational abilities as well as a sharp eye for detail. To produce unique events for clients, they must have a creative flair and the ability to think creatively outside the box. Tour Guide-Tour guides are in charge of conducting visitors on escorted tours of various destinations, including national parks, museums, and historical sites. Women who are passionate about travel and culture, as well as have strong communication and people skills, can succeed in this position.

Flight Attendant-On commercial flights, flight attendants are in charge of making sure that passengers are safe and comfortable. Women who flourish in this profession will have good communication and customer service abilities as well as the capacity to remain composed under pressure. Additionally, flight attendants must be knowledgeable about safety protocols and capable of handling emergencies. who flourish in this profession will have outstanding culinary skills, as well as inventiveness and a passion for food. After pandemic hit women get harder to work in tourism industry. In most of countries, covid 19 affects to lose the most women's occupations as well as their salaries were reduced in the industry. Anyhow, as women have higher emotional intelligence and better at anticipating guests' requirements, and their feminine touch gives beauty and elegance to the hospitality sector. Furthermore, female leadership has been shown to promote team bonding. Although the ways women work in tourism varies by region and culture, examples of empowerment through tourism have some central characteristics.

- Transferring skills
- Developing new skills
- Forming partnerships
- Better financial results
- Fresh perspective
- Inclusive culture

"Now right time has come for a big revolution to the tourism industry with women .The more discussions, strategies should be implemented to yield from their powers, contributions."



Women in Tourism

By Dr. R. Himalee S K de Silva

Assisted by: Dr. Lamali Pathirana,
Institute of Indigenous Medicine,
University of Colombo

Sri Lanka is among the most attractive countries in the world with the specular beautiful coastal areas to the contrast climate cold hill country with amazing tea plantations. Sri Lankan tourism has faced the most challenging circumstances and treats with recent triple hit: political instability, economic crisis and COVID pandemic. The fluctuations in tourism is mostly affected to the vulnerable persons who are directly earning their living from tourism throughout the year. On the other hand, these fluctuations vary the contribution to GDP more than ever in the history of the tourism sector. When considering women, one of the most vulnerable group, can be identified service and product providers and female travelers. According to the Global Report on Women in Tourism 2010 (UNWTO 2019) the five thematic areas corresponding to the thematic goals are the employment entrepreneurship; education and training; leadership, policy and decision-making; and community and civil society. Further, it is stated that the worldwide female tourism workforce is 54% of compared to 39 % in the broader economy with the wage-gap of 14.7 % less than men. Besides female travel statistics reported that 80% of all travel decisions are made by women and 75% of those are on adventure, cultural or nature trips. Additionally, travel companies revealed 230% increasement of female only travelers over the past few years.

Nevertheless, Sri Lankan context dissimilar to the global phenomena with regards to the women in Tourism, Sri Lankan representation of female workforce is less than 10% in contrast to the sizeable female representation in the tourism industry worldwide. In this case, the approaches of the tourism have been questioned more than ever at the policy developmental levels to the ground operational levels. Therefore, finding solutions and strategies to compensate with the fluctuations and to survive and being sustainable as an industry is more crucial. No matter how vigorous the challenges are, the women in tourism would have more impact of it with the attitudes and certain barriers in Sri Lankan culture. I would like to adhere to some of the strategies

As a professional who is practically involving in the tourism sector for years incorporating the novel values to sustain the urban tourism, the strategies I have practiced and expertised have facilitated me in overcoming the unpredicted challenges of the external environment and internal environment. The same strategies and components can be useful for any woman involved in tourism industry in Sri Lanka in any sub sector. In my point of view, the women in tourism can be empowered and facilitated in many ways to find their own paths to be successful as a woman in tourism.



Generally, in Sri Lankan women in tourism has various challenges regards to gender equity, discrimination depend on social norms and stigmas, lack of opportunities in skill and leadership training to empower, underrepresentation in national legal and macroeconomic policies and high technological applications to support innovative ideas. In order to resolve these concerns, UN sustainable goals in agenda 2030 has guided towards high potent implementation and recommendations. Targets in goal 8,12 and 14 had been highlighted on exclusive economic growth with sustainable consumption and production of natural resources in tourism. Therefore, based on the social, economical and environmental status, any woman can start their own small and medium scale tourism entrepreneurship. For an example, when I stepped into tourism I had experiences professionally as a university lecturer and based on it, I had considerable interactions with different social strata. The internal environment of my family and the knowledge, skills and attitudes in an environment science and Sri Lankan Traditional Medicine had aided in different perspective to initiate and improve with my unique authenticity.

Establishing the unique authenticity to encourage the internal and external environment of the business would ensure the supply of the products and services as well as improving the demand for those unique products and services provided. For example, giving free Sri Lankan traditional life style and diet consultations based on unique traditional yams, fruits and spices to improve their body, mind and spirit, has attracted tourists continuously to experience Sri Lankan destination authenticity. Underutilized fruits, yams and spices can be well incorporated depend on the local availability of the area where you are starting or developing tourism as a business. The cost of the products and services and the profit earring from such novel innovative rational would make tourism, economically sound as well as in additional values and principles.





. Additionally, having responsible practice in tourism is vital. As women always hold an important role in family as a mother. Consequently, been responsible and well managed in tourism with long term driven aims can be learned with instinct of hospitality of the Sri Lankan culture inherited especially to women. Well-known hospitality of the Sri Lankan culture and inherited ancient wisdom can be guided to enforce to niche market forces.

Utilization of the social value and ethics of the community and ecosystem can optimize the importance of the local historical and cultural sites and aiding to preserve them with respect. The environmental stress of such valuable ecosystem or cultural sites would be reduced with providing quality tourism experience to gain high quality travel experience. Whereas, when the quality of tourism and community beneficiaries are ignored over the quantity of the tourism, can degraded the travel experience and causes long term negative effect. Thus, at the initial phase, the work out plan could be focused to attract a smaller number of tourists and can improve gradually while increasing facilities technically, ethically and morally. Likewise, any female with beneficial social, economical and environmental status can start tourism as a part time entrepreneurship. That can support your family with extra earing with lesser number of tourists with available quality facilities.

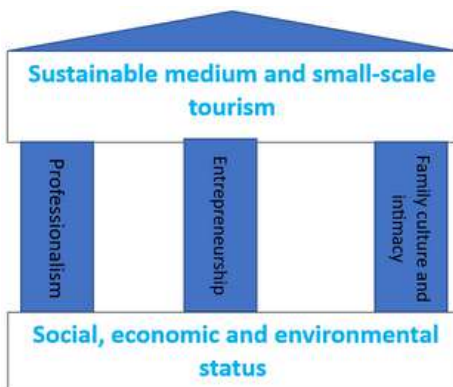
Hence, depend on the available social, economic and environmental status, tourism can be initiated as a small or medium scale business and planned out with short term goals and long-term perspective aims to matching up with Sri Lankan unique authenticity. Aims of the small and medium woman-based tourism should focus on maximum utilization of the local and traditional skills and resources for encouragement and empowerment women in active participate in tourism as an industry. Therefore, the economic empowerment of women will impact on realizing the awareness on women's right through socialization. The economic growth of the under developed rural areas can be empowered with women participation in sustainable tourism to achieve border development goals in terms of economy, health and education.

Based on the social, economic and environment status, through the pillars of professionalism, entrepreneurship and family support and intimacy can build up the sustainable medium and small-scale tourism. The mode and mechanism of starting the sustainable medium and small-scale tourism for women would be less challenging and withstand to unpredictable challenges facing by women in tourism in Sri Lanka.



In Summary

when the social, economic and environmental status can withstand the tourism, it will be operationalized through professionalism, entrepreneurship and family support and intimacy to achieve sustainable medium and small-scale tourism of women in Sri Lanka. Seeing the whole picture, use sustainability standards, collaborate in destination management socially and culturally, choose quality over quantity, demand fair income within industry, concerns over the environment protection in managing tourism, diversify the source of market and being responsible adhering to values and ethics are the strategies to be used in planning to be resilient to current crisis in Sri Lankan tourism. Opportunities and strengths can be improved in tourism in Sri Lanka and reduce the threats and weakness by encouraging women in developing key initiatives which will sustain the industry as well. There are several future perspectives in unidentified aspects in Sri Lankan women in tourism comparative to the global trends; female solo travelers, urban tourism, foodies, Women only hotel and Shoulder and off season travel.



Firstly, Professionalism always carries the Competence, Knowledge, Conscientiousness, Integrity, Respect, Emotional Intelligence, Appropriateness, and Confidence. Accordingly, if someone has professional experience prior to initiating the mild and medium-scale tourism these competencies would naturally advanced the expertise of the entrepreneurship and ability to perform the tasks in business. In my case, professionalism has encouraged in finding innovative strategies to apply the competency and knowledge in environmental studies and Sri Lankan Traditional Medicine to diversify the market by encouraging sustainable healthy living through Sri Lankan Traditional Medicine and nature. Therefore, the tourism would be more resilient with the upcoming challenges. Likewise, local tourist can be attracted too by raising the perceived value of the Sri Lankan Traditional Medicine and nature. Hence, the travel restrictions like limitations will be ruled out or minimally effecting the sustainability of the tourism.

Especially, in Sri Lankan women are more into sharing experiences and networking with family for cultural and social events. Then, finding emotional attachment with cultural and social aspect in tourism can be easily encouraged. If women are knowledgeable and professional, they can easily find more opportunities in sharing experience in tourism. The value of the experience is highly appreciated in tourism in every corner of it. Similarly, professionalism increase the integrity, respect and confident with the tourists increasing the demand in long term. On the other hand, Professionalism provide various entry points for women entrepreneurship in tourisms and make them resilient in challenges.

Secondly, Entrepreneurship creates Opportunities, Capabilities and Resources to function the small and medium level tourism. Whether Sri Lanka tourisms industry has higher percentage of women comparing to other industries, they are dominated and discriminated by the men. Improving own small and medium scale start up tourism among women can encourage in generating activities for other skilled women too. In comparatively, women entrepreneurs have limited access to information, training and networking. Moreover, there are plenty of aforesaid barriers and challengers avoiding women to start on tourism business particularly in Sri Lankan culture. My leadership skills and management experiences gained through entrepreneurship programmes and education makes me face successfully to most of them. The women who are successful in tourism should encourage other potential entrepreneurs to make the first step in starting a business and stepping up in it.

The next important mechanism in sustaining small and medium scale tourism business of women is to get family support and its intimacy. Unlike other industries family culture and environment could make a pleasurable memorable experience for tourists. My family is very helpful in keeping the tourism businesses sustainable amid the challenges. Mainly, they help in management, maintaining and sharing culture and social values with tourism. Other than distrupting the socio-cultural setting, it helps in improving the mutual benefits of the family to tourism and tourism to family bidirectionally. Choosing the quality over quantity is the main reason of mutual benefit from society to tourism and tourism to society. Thus, family and tourism can be both benefited.

Women Employment in Hotel Sector in Sri Lanka

By Yohani

Tourism is a multi-faceted industry which offers millions of opportunities for both men and women to pursue their career goals and has been the bread and butter for many households. Among the sub sectors of tourism, hotel industry is one of the highest labour driven industries as human involvement is utmost necessary to ensure a delightful experience to the guests.

However, one of the severe constraints with related to the hotel industry is that there is significantly low percentage of women pursuing careers in hotel sector especially in Asian countries like Sri Lanka. This is one of the prominent issues to discuss as while many other industries sees a growth in women engagement, hotel industry is still at a slower pace. In-depth study on the reasons why women are reluctant to join the hotel industry and actions which can be taken to motivate them is an important point of discussion. Therefore, as the resource person with years of hands own experience, Dr. Sulochana Sigera was invited to share her thoughts and suggestions on the topic “Women employment in hotel sector, particularly in Sri Lanka”.

“If women are shown the right path to take and right awareness, they will reach heights in hotel sector, empowering themselves and the whole society.”

Dr. Sulochana Sigera is the Founder and Chairperson of Women in Management (Sri Lanka, Maldives, Canada and Australia). She goes extra miles to train and groom women secluded in village areas, especially the ones who are unaware of their potentialities and is dedicated to empower women and children beyond her capacity. The first question raised to her was why women is important in any industry.

The world population is 49.6% women and 50.4% men. However, in many households, women are always the decision makers although men have the financial power, for an example, if we are traveling, mother or wife is the one who check on the comfort and in choosing what exactly suites her family. The same applies to the society, and it is visible that the creativity of women help any industry in growing and their thinking pattern opens up new opportunities for businesses to succeed. With the current trends, more women are becoming financially independent and is equally contributing as bread winners for their families. The equal participation of both men and women creates the perfect combination as their thinking patters are diverse and that results in bringing up innovative ideas into action.

However, as pointed out earlier, women participation in hotel sector is visibly low and Dr. Sulochana voices on the reasons for it. One of the main barriers that hinders women from getting into the industry is the misconception about hotels and its operations. Many Asians including Sri Lankans believe hotels are not a safe place for women to work in and they can be harassed as majority of employees are males and sometimes women have to work long hours. Moreover, some religious leaders have prejudices and misconceptions on hotel sector jobs and they may negatively influence their followers’ mindset. Moreover, with the household obligations women need to perform as a wife, mother, sister or daughter, they contribute their future for the sake of their family. Although there are more women working in spas and salons nowadays, the hotel sector especially restaurants are at a dearth of women employees. Girls who leave school exclude hospitality industry from their career goals as they are unaware about the global demand on hospitality and the vast opportunities that are open for them. As a nutshell, the cultural and social barriers, negative influence, misconceptions, lack of awareness among the school children and teachers on the new trends and opportunities in the hospitality industry eventually result in women out of hotel and hospitality sector.

The next question raised was whether the Sri Lankan hotels are actually taking efforts to encourage women or whether there is a special preference for males in the process of recruitment. According to Dr. Sulochana, she agrees with the point that majority of top management especially in 4-5 star class hotels are truly taking effort to motivate women, however, subordinates like HR executives or supervisors who executes the hiring process need to be acknowledged on selecting the best suited candidate without concerning about the gender. Some of the supervisors believe hiring women is costly as women require more facilities like transportation and women may be reluctant to work for night shifts due to their family obligations.

Identifying reasons leads the path to creating solutions. Dr. Sulochana speaks on some of the effective ways that need to put on action in encouraging women to join the hotel sector. She believes that awareness is the key in changing the mindset of people and removing the misconceptions about hotel sector. As an example, the parents can be given a tour to where their daughters are working and to show them the safe working environment. Awareness sessions for those who have completed O/Ls need to be organized in showing them the career paths with inspirational examples of young girls who have achieved great success from humble beginnings. The religious leaders who can influence the fellow society need to be aware on the positivity of industry to remove the misconceptions they are bearing for no reason. Social media, television and radio programs can be effective in discussing about the work culture, benefits of hotel sector and to increase the enthusiasm about the industry as well. With the current economic crisis, many women are going abroad to meet their family needs as waitresses, housekeepers etc. and once they come back they can be recruited for the hotel industry as they are rich with experience. Moreover, for the girls struggling with poverty in rural areas, they can be given an enhanced training program on how to pave their way towards success and how to manage their lives in the city as a new comer to an unfamiliar environment.

According to Dr. Sulochana, Sri Lanka is still at bottom levels in moving towards new trends in industry. Although the percentage of women getting into universities are increasing, most of them follow the traditional jobs without moving towards entrepreneurship or global industries like tourism and hospitality. Therefore, it is high time that both government and private sector get together in taking actions to encourage more women to join the industry.





Women in Sri Lanka Tourism Industry

By Sumithra Nandana
 (MTEHM o8 Batch)

The tourism industry is recognized as generally the third largest foreign exchange earner in the country as well as valuable income generated to Sri Lanka. Still, we have positive thoughts even though COVID-19 and the current economic crisis badly affect on Sri Lankan tourism industry. Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority statistics proved that during this era also tourism industry contributed 0.8% of the GDP. The tourism industry and its products are highly deviating from other industries. Because it is a composite product and also this industry is highly service-oriented.

The Sri Lankan tourism industry created varieties of job opportunities in different organizations. Travel agencies, Tour guiding industry, Star hotels, classified hotels, unclassified hotels, boutique hotels, homestays, youth hostels, tourist shops, and service providing sectors are identified as main example areas.

Based on the Department of Census and Statistics, there is a considerable contribution from females to the service sector. 48.7% of females are working in the male percentage to the service sector in Sri Lanka.

Also, United Nations established sustainable development goals by focusing on female contribution to the global context. Because the world identified there is a huge conflict in the global economy without female contribution to development activities.

UN SDG 5: Gender equality

UN established its fifth sustainable development goal for gender equity. Sri Lanka also follows the same guidelines to achieve sustainable development goals. Sri Lankan female empowerment is motivated in different ways. Both public and private sector consideration and interaction focused to empower females.

Especially, the tourism industry is not as usual after the COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis. Also, the number of female representatives and employees increased after the 2009 year (after the three-decade war). Community perception was changed on female employment when compared to the last decade. Furthermore, female education and entrepreneurship were developed in the tourism sector. Homestay tourism units, female management positions of different hospitality organizations, career development, and female entrepreneurs can be considered as a few examples to prove female contribution to the tourism sector.

This high-potential Sri Lankan tourism industry needs more female contributions to develop itself. Government intervention in the tourism industry development and educational sector development is another fact to encourage female percentage attraction to the tourism industry. Both public and private educational organizations are conducting different degree-level, diploma-level, and certificate-level tourism courses to fulfill Sri Lankan tourism industry employment gap. Even at the international level job opportunities can be gained well experienced female employees also. Gender oriented job concept is rejected from tourism because of the tourism best practices. Food and beverage department, Kitchen department job positions are invited to females.

Major Industry group	Sri Lanka	Gender	
		Male	Female
Sri Lanka	100.0	100.0	100.0
Agriculture	25.0	24.2	26.5
Industry	27.9	29.6	24.8
Services	47.1	46.2	48.7

Source: (Department of Census and Statistics, 2022)
 Percentage distribution of Employed population by major industry group & gender, first quarter – 2022

Attitude is another motivating fact for women in Sri Lanka tourism. Because present industry expertise highly considers attitudes higher than qualifications. Gender is not considered when recruiting employees for different positions. Most chances will go to candidates who have the right attitudes. We can identify female representation in the Sri Lankan tour guide sector. It is a significant milestone in the Sri Lankan tourism industry. Further different Government and non-government organizations are developing policy papers to enhance female employment (Ex-United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific).

Mainly, Sri Lankan tourism industry needs women more women entrepreneurs in the sector. Because it will highlight the entire industry. Especially, European countries are created a high capacity for female tourism employees. But some south Asian countries are encouraging females into the tourism sector. There can be identified different barriers to Sri Lankan females engaging in tourism industry employment. Those are busy working schedules, day and night time working schedules, male-dominant culture, traditional perceptions, security issues, difficulties of work-life balance, migration, family commitment, etc. However, education is the most powerful weapon to answer the above-identified issues. Because education creates an independent personality.

Both public and private sector intervention need to develop further to enhance female contribution to the tourism industry. Developing educational opportunities, and insurance plans, ensuring job security, establishing gender equity in the tourism industry, developing direct access to tourism, pro-poor tourism concept development and its practical implementation, policy development, etc. can be identified as a recommendation for the development of female involvement in the tourism industry.

Not only urban females but there should also be empowerment of females who are staying in rural areas. Because they need the motivation to take an approach. Women in Sri Lanka's tourism industry can gain different positive impacts. Economic independence, education, professional development, social welfare development, living standards enhancement, access to national and international opportunities, etc can be determined as the main positive impacts. (Ex - Ella tourism destination, Sothern coastal belt, etc.) All tourism benefits need to distribute to its stakeholders who are involved at different levels.



Sustainable Tourism Unit A Way Forward



The Sustainable Tourism Unit (STU) at the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo offers study programs in tourism education and training. These programs aim to equip students with knowledge and skills in sustainable tourism practices, preparing them to address tourism challenges in sustainable tourism practices. Through industry interactive and application oriented learning approach.

The Sustainable Tourism Unit (STU) at the Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, has achieved significant milestones in tourism education, industry collaboration, and research. It has introduced different study programs that integrate sustainable tourism practices addressing the contemporary global and local challenges,

The STU has organized impactful events and workshops, fostering dialogue between academia, industry experts and policy makers. It has contributed extensively to research, publishing studies on sustainable tourism development, heritage conservation, and community-based tourism. Collaborations with industry stakeholders have enhanced practical training opportunities, enabling students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios. These efforts underscore the STU's commitment to advancing sustainable tourism development in Sri Lanka and beyond.

Volume 2-2023
Vision2Voice Women in Tourism



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Vision2Voice Women in Tourism

A Vision of Change

By Aloka

Hospitality is one of the largest and fastest growing industries in the world. Being in the forefront, driving the growth of the service sector of Sri Lanka, it runs with great potential for employment generation as well as sustainable development. Yet, owing to the social stigma of women participation in the hospitality industry, Sri Lanka has still not been able to fully capitalize the monumental impact of female engagement in the field.



Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts, a pioneer Sri Lankan brand spread across both Sri Lanka and Maldives with 15 properties and over 2400 rooms, has been challenging the status quo through its continuous initiatives over the 40 years of its existence in striving for diversity, equity and inclusivity. Committed to increasing female participation in the workforce and driving gender parity under the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) agenda, Cinnamon Hotels and Resorts have been making conscious efforts to break the barriers and welcome capable female workers to the industry, with equal opportunities.

Among its other initiatives, “Project Aloka” signifies an important milestone in encouraging women to take up non-traditional roles and do so through progressive policies and targeted initiatives that create greater awareness within the industry. “Project Aloka” is an apprenticeship programme specifically aimed at attracting and training females into non-traditional roles. With women taking up active roles across various industries, hospitality industry was not left just to remain male dominated. It is imperative women are educated, empowered and welcomed to shatter stereotypes and to build them strong enough to resonate the industrial stability.

“Project Aloka” addresses the same, creating employment and training opportunities for females in Food and Beverage, Kitchen, Housekeeping, Engineering and many other divisions, supported by an international level training, recognized certification and other attractive benefits.





Woman in Tourism: Aspire to Inspire

BY
 LIYANAGE PRIYANTHI PERERA
 DTTEHM - BATCH 15

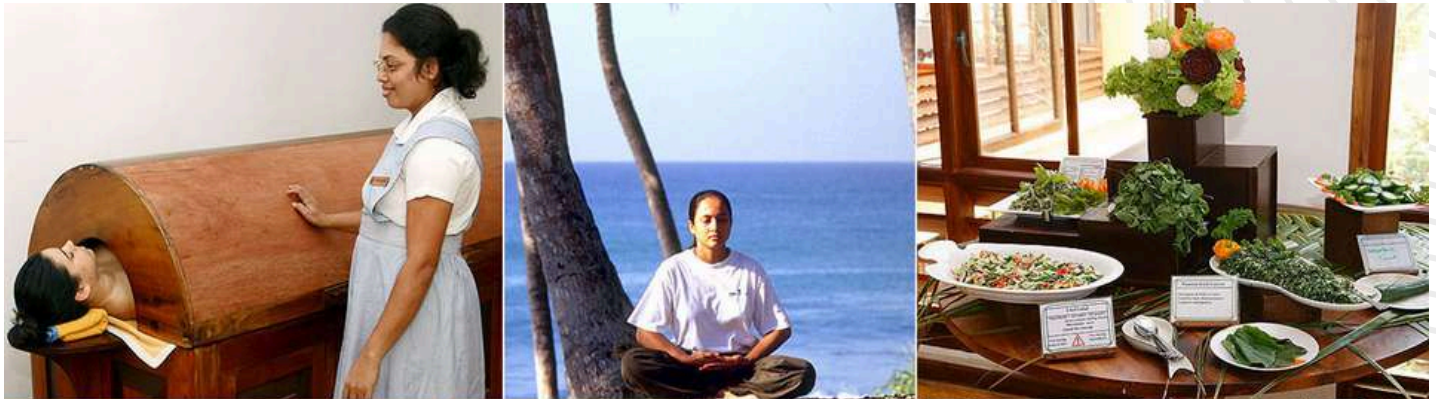


This is the story of my life as a woman in the tourism industry for the past 26 years.

I decided to unfold my story not to boast about myself, but hoping to inspire anyone dreaming to enter this vibrant and economically thriving industry. Let me take you on a journey through my career in the tourism industry. It all began in 1997 when I started my career in the tourism industry as a receptionist Lihiniya Surf Hotel in Bentota(Hotel cooperation) three years later after school. I wanted to be a helping hand to my aunt who is my mother's elder sister. Tourism at that time was not booming amidst the war, but in the Southern Province of the country it was the most popular tourist hotspot. Working among the hotel workforce, I found myself immersed in the world of hospitality. Soon after, I had an incredible opportunity to travel to Europe to study foreign languages and work as a trainee student. It was an amazing opportunity that changed my life. I went to Germany for language trainer to Goethe Institute During my time in Germany, I learned the language quickly and developed a strong interest in working with foreigners. As well as I had a chance to work as an au pair (helping to take care of the children in the host family). When I returned to Sri Lanka after a year, I decided to continue my studies and focus on improving my language abilities to be successful in my hospitality career. I joined private classes for German and English, determined to enhance my skills. Thanks to my language abilities, I became in high demand among German-speaking clients, which led to quick recognition from both the hotel management and companies. After working as a receptionist for three years, I joined an Ayurvedic hotel on 2000, where I took on the role of a Senior Guest Relations Officer and Translator. I deliberately chose private hotels closer to my home to prioritise my family and financial stability. In mid twenties, I got married and moved on with another milestone. Although, I saw a lot of my colleagues who left the industry after marriage; I continued to stay on. I knew my abilities, capacities, strengths and weaknesses. Though I could have stayed home as a housewife easily, I didn't chose that path because I was headstrong and wanted to be a career woman.

However, I made sure to negotiate with management to work only during the day, avoiding night shifts like in other star-class hotels. This was a choice I made to ensure work-life balance and to challenge the cultural norms and for self confidence. My career path has been filled with unbelievable experiences, especially in the Ayurvedic sector, where I've worked with European tourists, many of whom were women seeking treatments. I was fortunate enough to have another chance to travel to Europe, this time to promote Ayurveda and Hela Wedakama treatments. It was a fantastic opportunity to meet friends and expand my professional network further. In addition to the role in the current role as a General Manager at an Ayurvedic Resort in Balapitiya in down south, I've been able to help them with their psychological problems, acting as both a counsellor and a translator. Balancing my family life with three young boys and having an incredibly supportive life partner has been crucial for me. There are so many responsibilities and obligations that I as a woman in the tourism industry I've dealt with on a daily basis. As a working mother in the hospitality industry, sometimes it amazes me as to how much I could push myself in fulfilling the duties of the workplace, whilst attending to my family members. Being a woman and an active participant in the tourism industry hasn't been an easy journey, especially in our society. We encounter various types of workforce, ranging from educated to less educated and non-educated individuals. Different challenges and disturbances are always present at workplace, but how you face and navigate through the journey as per your conditions or will easily give up is in the individual's interest. I never gave up on my dream job because I was passionate about it. I many have lagged behind in certain aspects, but as a career driven woman in the tourism industry and as a woman who has immense responsibility towards caregiving role at home, I've done a pretty decent job. Looking back, I am genuinely happy with my journey in this amazing industry and the progress I've made in this demanding society.

The best part is my contribution to the development of industry as a responsible and talented individual. My advice to young and aspiring ladies is to invest in your education and skills, challenge stereotypes and cultural norms, assert yourself on opportunities and be a trailblazer. At a time when our beautiful island nation is recovering from a economic downturn, I call on the girls and women in this country to join and explore this diverse industry to and make a world of difference.



Sri Lankan Women in Tourism

BY Amila Jeewantha

Revolutionary Path to Comprehensive Tourism

Sri Lanka, a land of vibrant culture, scenic landscapes, and warm hospitality, has seen a remarkable rise in the influence and empowerment of women in the tourism industry. These trailblazing women are not only shaping the future of the country's tourism sector but are also breaking barriers and redefining traditional gender roles. In this article, we celebrate the inspiring achievements of Sri Lankan women in tourism, highlighting their significant contributions, challenges, and the strides they have made towards a more inclusive industry.

Leadership and Entrepreneurship

Sri Lankan women are making great strides in leadership positions within the tourism industry. One outstanding example is Shiromal Cooray, Chairperson of Jetwing Hotels, a renowned hospitality chain in Sri Lanka. Under her guidance, Jetwing Hotels has gained international recognition for its commitment to sustainable practices and community engagement. Cooray's leadership exemplifies the strength and vision that women bring to the forefront of the industry. Miss Shiromal's entrepreneurial spirit has led her to create unique travel experiences, highlighting Sri Lanka's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty. Her success inspires other women to pursue entrepreneurship in the tourism sector.

Empowering Local Communities

Sri Lankan women play a significant role in empowering local communities through tourism by engaging in various initiatives and activities. They have established and run their own tourism-related businesses, such as guesthouses, homestays, handicraft shops, or restaurants. By doing so, they not only generate income for themselves but also create employment opportunities for others in the community. In the realm of tourism, women possess a unique ability to promote and preserve local culture and traditions by showcasing traditional arts, crafts, music, dance, and cuisine. They can organize cultural events, workshops, or cooking classes to educate tourists and create awareness about the rich cultural heritage of Sri Lanka. Drawing upon the foundations of tourism, women hold the ability to actively engage in community-based tourism initiatives. By offering genuine experiences such as village tours, home-cooked meals, or traditional performances, they facilitate direct interactions between tourists and the local community, thereby stimulating economic development. In order to thrive in the tourism sector, women actively pursue skill enhancement and knowledge acquisition through engaging in training programs and workshops. These valuable opportunities provide them with the means to develop expertise in various areas such as language proficiency, hospitality training, marketing strategies, and sustainable tourism practices. By equipping themselves with these relevant skills, women in Sri Lanka in tourism empower themselves to assume leadership roles within the industry. Feminine individuals together and form cooperatives to collectively engage in tourism-related activities. This allows them to share resources, share responsibilities, and benefit from joint marketing and networking efforts. Cooperatives can focus on handicraft production, community tours, or other tourism services. Women's participation in decision-making is crucial for promoting a more inclusive and diverse tourism sector. By actively engaging in discussions, sharing their perspectives, and voicing their opinions, women can influence policies, strategies, and initiatives that shape the industry. Their input has contributed to more equitable practices and create opportunities for women's advancement. It's important to note that empowering local communities through tourism requires collaboration, support, and opportunities provided by government bodies, NGOs, and the private sector. By working together, women can make a positive impact on their communities and contribute to the sustainable development of the tourism industry in Sri Lanka.

Challenges and Conquests

Despite their remarkable contributions, Sri Lankan women in tourism face challenges that hinder their progress. Gender stereotypes, social perspective, limited access to resources, and work-life balance are some of the obstacles they confront. However, these challenges have not dampened their spirits.

Through mentorship programs, professional networks, and collaborations, women are supporting each other to overcome these obstacles. Organizations like "Women in Management Sri Lanka" provide a platform for women in the industry to share experiences, gain skills, and enhance their leadership abilities. These initiatives help pave the way for the next generation of women in tourism.

Sri Lankan women in tourism are reshaping the industry, challenging norms, and contributing to the country's socio-economic development. Their leadership, entrepreneurship, and commitment to community empowerment are paving the way for a more inclusive and sustainable tourism landscape.





IN THE EVER-EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF TOURISM, WOMEN'S ACHIEVEMENTS ARE KEY FOR THE INDUSTRY TO THRIVE. REMEMBER, YOUR VOICE AND CONTRIBUTIONS MATTER. BY CONTINUOUSLY LEARNING, SUPPORTING EACH OTHER, AND ADVOCATING FOR GENDER EQUALITY, YOU CAN HELP SHAPE A MORE INCLUSIVE AND EMPOWERING TOURISM INDUSTRY IN SRI LANKA. "IF YOU WANT SOMETHING SAID, ASK A MAN; BUT IF YOU WANT SOMETHING DONE, ASK A WOMAN"

- MARGARET THATCHER



Building Tourism as a Gender Equality Leader

By Charumini de Silva

DTTEHM Batch 15

Tourism is a vibrant and important industry that is contributing significantly to the economic development globally. As per the UNWTO, 54% of the global tourism workforce is female and the gender gap is lower in tourism, whilst the proportion of women in leadership roles is higher than in other sectors. However, in contrast to the high levels of female participation in the tourism industry globally, women are highly under-represented in Sri Lanka. Despite women making up 52% of the total population of Sri Lanka, only 33% are employed and just 7% work in the tourism industry. Of the 7% represented in the tourism workforce, many of them are from the informal sectors and there are hardly any official records of their contribution to the sector or to the national gross domestic product(GDP).

The under-representation of women in the labour force is a massive economic loss for a country like Sri Lanka as an economy which is still in the developing stage, an economy recovering from a massive economic crisis and amidst a fast-changing demographic structure where 20% of the country's population would be over 60 years and more by 2030. Against this backdrop, let's deep dive in to see if the sector has given sufficient attention to empower women or to acknowledge a path for inclusive growth to drive lasting change for gender equality in the tourism industry.

Why women's participation in tourism is low in Sri Lanka compared to global scenario?

The historically limited recognition and seriousness given to the contribution of women in the tourism industry can be attributed to a combination of societal factors and gender biases. These include gender stereotypes, cultural norms, lack of representation, unconscious bias and limited access to resources and opportunities.

- **Gender stereotypes:** Societal stereotypes and biases have perpetuated the notion that certain industries, including tourism, are more suitable for men. Traditional gender roles and expectations have led to the undervaluation of women's contributions and their exclusion from decision-making positions.
- **Cultural norms:** Many cultures have ingrained patriarchal systems that priorities men's roles and perspectives over women's. These norms have influenced perceptions of women's capabilities, limiting their opportunities for advancement and leadership within the tourism industry.
- **Lack of representation:** The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and key decision-making roles within the tourism industry has contributed to a lack of recognition for their contributions. When women's voices and perspectives are absent from influential positions, it becomes more challenging to acknowledge and address their needs and contributions.
- **Unconscious bias:** Unconscious biases can shape perceptions and judgments, often leading to the undervaluation of women's skills and expertise. This bias can influence hiring, promotion, and recognition practices within the tourism industry.
- **Limited access to resources and opportunities:** Women have overtime faced barriers to accessing education, training, and resources necessary for career advancement. Limited opportunities for networking, mentorship, and skill development have hindered their progress and the recognition of their contributions.

Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to challenge gender biases, promote gender equality, and create inclusive environments within the tourism industry. Recognizing and valuing the contributions of women, providing equal opportunities for career growth, and implementing policies that support gender equality are essential steps toward rectifying the historical undervaluation of women's contributions in tourism.

Areas in which women can be found in tourism industry of Sri Lanka

Women are in various roles within the tourism industry, but their representation may vary across different sectors and positions. These are some of the common areas where women can be found in the tourism industry in Sri Lanka and there are reasons behind those choices.

- **Frontline tourism staff:** Women often serve as receptionists, customer service representatives, tour guides, and hospitality staff in hotels, resorts, and travel agencies.
- **Accommodation and food services:** Women are commonly employed in positions such as hotel managers, restaurant managers, chefs, housekeeping staff, and waitstaff.
- **Tourism administration and marketing:** Women can be found working in tourism administration, marketing, and public relations roles, promoting destinations, managing events, and developing tourism campaigns.
- **Travel and tour operations:** Women are involved in travel agencies, tour operators, and transportation services, managing bookings, arranging tours, and coordinating logistics.
- **Entrepreneurship:** Women entrepreneurs play a significant role in the tourism industry, owning and operating businesses such as bed and breakfasts, guesthouses, restaurants, travel agencies, and souvenir shops.
- **Sustainable tourism and community development:** Women actively contribute to community-based tourism initiatives, cultural preservation, and sustainable tourism practices.

It is important to note that while women are present in these roles, their representation may still be lower compared to men, particularly in leadership positions and certain sectors of the industry. Therefore, efforts to address gender disparities and promote equal opportunities for women in the tourism industry are necessary to achieve greater representation and empowerment.

Remedies to address challenges, promote women's participation in tourism industry

The participation of women in the tourism industry of Sri Lanka is influenced by various factors. Some causes for the hindrance of women's participation include societal norms and cultural expectations, limited access to education and training opportunities, gender-based discrimination and biases, and lack of supportive policies and infrastructure. While there are no official statistics available post-COVID pandemic, there are some general insights that can be considered. The underrepresentation of women in the tourism industry not only hinders gender equality but also leads to economic losses. Women's full participation in the sector can contribute significantly to the overall growth and development of Sri Lanka's tourism industry. By empowering women, there is potential for increased entrepreneurship, job creation, and improved economic opportunities for communities.



- **Education and training:** Providing educational opportunities and training programs to develop skills relevant to the tourism sector, ensuring women have access to knowledge and resources necessary for career advancement.
- **Equal opportunities and policies:** Implementing policies and initiatives that promote gender equality, eliminate discrimination, and create a supportive environment for women's participation and advancement within the industry.
- **Setting gender targets:** Slowly but steadily we see that some private sector firms in Sri Lanka are setting gender targets for their recruitments. This is an area that tourism-related businesses can also embark on for measuring success. Companies that set gender targets can ensure a balanced working environment and encourage others to advance their gender-inclusive agenda.
- **Mentorship and networking:** Establish mentorship programs and networks to connect women in the industry with experienced professionals who can provide guidance, support, and opportunities for growth.
- **Awareness and promotion:** Raising awareness about the importance of women's participation in the tourism sector through campaigns, media, and industry events to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusivity. Storytelling is a great way to create awareness from the school level onwards to draw female employees.
- **Infrastructure and safety:** Improving infrastructure, safety measures, and access to resources to ensure a conducive environment for women's participation, both as employees and tourists.

These are just a few possible remedies and policymakers, industry champions, stakeholders, and communities must work together to create an inclusive and supportive environment that enables women to participate and thrive in Sri Lanka's tourism industry.

Key learnings and recommendations for companies, women engaged in tourism

At a time when Sri Lanka is hoping for a faster economic revival, women in tourism can play a crucial role. Thus, a call to action is critical to building tourism as a gender-equal training for leaders in Sri Lanka.

- **Education and skill development:** Invest in your education and acquire relevant skills for the tourism industry. Seek out training programs, courses, and certifications that can enhance your knowledge and expertise in your specific area of interest.
- **Build a pipeline of women leaders:** Consider targeted leadership training for women in junior and middle management to ensure women are ready to take on leadership roles. Identify barriers to women's progression.
- **Networking and mentorship:** Build a strong professional network within the tourism industry. Connect with peers, mentors, and industry professionals who can provide guidance, support, and growth opportunities. Seek out mentorship programs that can help you navigate your career path.
- **Empowerment and self-confidence:** Believe in your abilities and value your contributions. Develop self-confidence and assertiveness in the workplace, enabling you to assert your ideas, take on leadership roles, and make meaningful contributions to the industry.
- **Continuous learning and adaptability:** Embrace a mindset of continuous learning and adaptability. The tourism industry is dynamic and ever-evolving, so staying updated with the latest trends, technologies, and best practices is crucial. Be open to new challenges and embrace opportunities for personal and professional growth.
- **Collaborate and support each other:** Foster a spirit of collaboration and support among women working in the tourism industry. Build relationships and networks that enable you to learn from each other, share experiences, and advocate for gender equality within the sector.
- **Seek leadership opportunities:** Aspire to leadership roles within the tourism industry. Challenge yourself to take on positions of influence and make a positive impact. Advocate for equal opportunities and representation, both for yourself and for other women in the industry.
- **Build respectful workplaces:** Creating policies and procedures that support respectful workplaces and discourage bullying or harassment helps build a culture of trust and enhances employee wellbeing. Ensuring employees have confidential channels for reporting incidents if they do occur and transparent processes for reviewing and deciding on appropriate responses is an essential prerequisite of a respectful workplace.
- **Family-friendly policies:** Explore childcare as an investment rather than a cost. Measure business results like productivity and retention to understand the cost to business when working women are not supported.
- **Mental health support:** Understanding and being empathetic towards your employees' is essential. Supporting employees mental health helps to ensure they can bring their best selves to work. This is particularly critical during times of crisis or transition.
- **Create flexible workplaces:** Designing flexible policies in ways that address the specific needs of women and men is a win-win for all. Offering alternative work arrangements such as part-time or flexible working hours, career by choice and career breaks to help women manage work and family responsibilities is important.
- **Promote sustainable and inclusive tourism:** Embrace the principles of sustainable and inclusive tourism. Identify the importance of environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and community engagement. Seek opportunities to contribute to responsible tourism practices and initiatives that benefit local communities.



Sar-G Design Studio and Sri Lanka Tourism

By Sarangi Rathnayake

Sar-G Design Studio truly special is how Sarangi's passion for art intersects with her love for her homeland, Sri Lanka. As an artist deeply inspired by the natural beauty and rich culture of the country, Sarangi's work often serves as an ambassador for the island's vibrancy. By creating live art experiences that engage tourists, she plays a part in promoting Sri Lanka's image as a destination of creativity and relaxation.

Sar-G Design Studio, led by the talented artist and designer Sarangi Rathnayake, is a brand deeply rooted in the idea of spreading happiness through creativity. As a creative entrepreneur, Sarangi's work extends beyond typical artistic endeavors, tapping into a larger purpose of wellness, mindfulness, and promoting positive mental health. Through her unique blend of art and therapy, she embodies her slogan, "Drawing Smiles and Selling Happiness." Sarangi's work as a professional artist, particularly in the tourism-rich regions of Sri Lanka like Ella, brings together art and culture in a way that benefits both her clients and the broader image of the country.

Sar-G Design Studio: A Vision of Creative Happiness

At the core of Sar-G Design Studio is the belief that art has the power to change lives, enhance moods, and create lasting memories. Sarangi, the creative force behind the brand, uses her artistic skills to inspire joy and relaxation through her creations. Her work spans live event drawing performances, doodle illustrations, custom portraits, and even art therapy sessions. The brand reflects Sarangi's personal vision to help people release stress, stay calm, and find peace through creativity, aligning with her lifelong love for mindfulness and tranquility.

Sarangi's unique artistic style is not only confined to online platforms but has also grown to include international clients. Her ability to connect with people across the world through her art Sar-G Design Studio: A Vision of Creative Happiness makes her a global artist with a distinctive Sri Lankan touch.

Live Wedding Portraits: A Creative Attraction for Tourists

One of the most exciting aspects of Sarangi's work is her live wedding portraits. In this unique offering, Sarangi captures the most special moments of a couple's wedding day through live drawings. These personalized wedding portraits are not only a gift for the couple but also an artistic memento that encapsulates the magic of the occasion. Sarangi's live art adds a touch of creativity and warmth to weddings, making the experience even more memorable for both the couple and their guests.

Sri Lanka, being a popular destination for destination weddings, provides the perfect backdrop for Sarangi's live wedding portraits. With the beautiful beaches, historical sites, and scenic landscapes of the country as inspiration, Sarangi's art captures the essence of love and celebration in a way that reflects the beauty of the island itself.

This has proven to be a big hit, particularly among foreign tourists who choose to get married in Sri Lanka. For many, Sarangi's live wedding portraits offer a personalized souvenir that brings together the joy of their special day and the charm of Sri Lankan culture. This is not just a unique service but also a way to promote the country's tourism offerings, showcasing the creativity and talent that Sri Lanka has to offer.





Conclusion: Art as a Bridge Between Creativity and Tourism

Sar-G Design Studio, under the leadership of Sarangi Rathnayake, is a brand that not only embodies creativity and artistic talent but also plays a vital role in enhancing Sri Lanka's tourism industry. Through live wedding portraits, face painting, and art therapy, Sarangi offers foreign tourists a unique and personalized way to experience Sri Lanka's culture and beauty.

As an artist who believes in the power of creativity to bring happiness and healing, Sarangi's work goes beyond the canvas, creating lasting connections between people and places. In doing so, she helps build a positive and creative image of Sri Lanka as a destination that offers not only natural beauty but also artistic inspiration and emotional well-being.

Promoting Sri Lanka's Image Through Creativity

Sarangi's work with foreign tourists not only benefits her personal brand but also contributes to Sri Lanka's broader tourism industry. In a country that is known for its natural beauty, historical significance, and warm hospitality, Sarangi's live art and creative sessions add an extra dimension to the tourist experience. By offering visitors a chance to engage with local art in an interactive and meaningful way, she helps create memorable experiences that tourists take back with them, promoting the country's positive image.

In recent years, Sri Lanka has been working to position itself as a wellness and relaxation destination, and Sarangi's art therapy sessions align perfectly with this vision. Her approach to mindfulness and mental well-being through art speaks to the growing global trend of wellness tourism. Visitors to Sri Lanka are increasingly looking for experiences that promote not just physical relaxation but also emotional and mental peace, and Sarangi's creative offerings fit into this emerging niche.



Volume 2-2023


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Women in Tourism: New path of action

By Charumini de Silva
DTTEHM Batch 15

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Tourism remains ambitious and resilient. Participation of women in the workforce is vital for faster tourism and economic revival. Gender disparities, and social stigma attached to

the tourism industry hamper overall growth potential. Extensive awareness, inclusive policies, education, and work-supportive systems are essential to boost women in tourism and the workforce. Glass ceilings and sticky floors can be overcome if only women challenge stereotypes.

Tourism is a crucial service export for Sri Lanka, and it is currently the third largest foreign exchange earner after apparel and worker remittances. It also acts as an engine for development through foreign exchange earnings, the creation of direct and indirect employment, and a boost of local businesses and livelihoods.

The industry recorded outstanding growth since the end of the armed conflict in May 2009, with tourist arrivals growing by around 2.8 times during the past decade, as per the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (SLTDA). The industry considers 2018 the benchmark year where annual arrivals topped 2.33 million with an income of over \$ 4.4 billion. However, this exponential growth took a triple blow following the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks in April 2019, the outbreak of the new Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, and the worst economic crisis post-Independence. Hit by multiple crises caused severe drawbacks for the tourism sector and the overall economy.

We must keep in mind that if the first step is not taken individually by women in our country, no amount of literature will succeed in achieving it. Glass ceilings and sticky floors are notions we can only conquer if women take aggressive steps, support one another to advance, and continue to challenge stereotypes. It is easier said than done, but it is one way in which we can transform the industry and the economy to new heights.

Post-crises tourism dashboard

Despite the economic crisis and political turmoil, the industry saw a significant recovery towards the end of 2022, ending the year with 719,978 tourists, compared to the COVID-impacted 2021 total arrivals of 194,545, but far below the 2.3 million recorded in crisis-free 2018 and 1.7 million in 2019 which saw the tragic Easter Sunday terror attacks.

The tourist industry began the year with 102,545 visitors, the highest for a month since March 2022, proving its resilience. These developments were amidst Sri Lanka continuing to gain the spotlight for its unique tourism offerings and scenic beauty.

The latest was that Sri Lanka ranked ninth in a list of the 50 most Instagrammable places in the world, based on social media data, whilst the destination was also ranked among the top 24 countries to travel in 2023 by Travel Triangle, a leading online holiday marketplace. In addition,

Kandy was ranked two among the top 10 sustainable holiday destinations by Travel Better. The country's passport also joined the league of the top 100 passports' globally published by Henley and Partners Index 2023. Sri Lanka moved up three places and ranked 100th on the list, with 42 countries granting visa-free travel or visa-on-arrival to holders of Lankan passports. Moreover, the resumption of services by 20 top global airlines has also come to pre-pandemic frequency levels enhancing the connectivity and attractiveness of the destination. SLTDA data shows the country has welcomed 129,051 visitors year-to-date (YTD) while Russia leading as the top source market for Sri Lanka with a cumulative number of arrivals at 31,874 followed by India with 17,221, the UK with 10,752, Germany with 10,205 and France with 6,403. Pinning on to the upbeat start, the tourism industry is hopeful of drawing 1.55 million visitors and collecting \$ 2.88 billion by end of 2023. According to the Tourist Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL) over 12% of the population is dependent on tourism with over 500,000 direct and indirect employment. The total investment in the tourism sector in Sri Lanka is over \$ 20 billion and ranks as the top net foreign exchange contributor in 2018.

The tourism industry has provided multiple entry points for employment opportunities for women to create self-employment openings in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to boost foreign exchange earnings and the economy. Several aspects must be weighed in assessing women's participation in the tourism industry as a sector that generates both direct and indirect employment.



Tourism has proven its potential for economic growth and resilience but less emphasis on the industry has resulted in uneven distribution of tourism benefits between men and women, especially in developing countries like Sri Lanka.

Labor market participation of women in tourism

In contrast to the high levels of female participation in the tourism industry globally, women are highly underrepresented in Sri Lanka. Although women make up 52% of the population of Sri Lanka, only 33% are employed and just 7% work in tourism. Of the 7% represented in the tourism workforce, many women entrepreneurs are from the informal sector.

They are predominantly the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from the coastal and up-country tourism hotspots such as Galle, Matara, Arugambay, Hikkaduwa, Mirissa, Hiriketiya, Ella, Kandy, and Nuwara Eliya, where they operate inns, homestays, small eateries, surfing camps, retail stores, restaurants, cafes, clothing, weaving, and handicraft shops, creating future opportunities and growth for all Sri Lankans. Regardless of the high education and literacy levels, especially in the South Asian region, the under-representation of women in the labour market is a massive economic loss for a developing country like Sri Lanka. It is a key concern, especially given Sri Lanka's fast-changing demographic structure, which estimates over 20% of the country's population would be 60 and more by 2030, according to the World Bank.



Studies frequently draw attention to factors that discouraged women from pursuing employment opportunities in the tourism industry, including demeaning job titles, poor language skills, low wages, seasonal service charges, poor career prospects, unavailability of job security, and a lack of knowledge of labour laws.

In most cases, women in tourism are assigned unskilled and uneven remuneration for equivalent labour, with irregular working hours creating considerable strain on work-life balance, where most employed in the formal sector quit after marriage or childbirth. Issues of gender-based violence, sexual harassment at work and structural and cultural stigmas attached to the industry are also painful factors that hamper female representation in the sector owing to unawareness of the wide variety of careers and opportunities available across the tourism and hospitality industry. The industry stakeholders were also alarmed by factors such as brain drain and switching occupations — matters which escalated in the latter part of 2021 amidst the worsening economic crisis.

Strategies to step up efforts for an inclusive growth

Against this battered scenario where Government recognise tourism as a low-hanging fruit to overcome the foreign exchange crisis, Sri Lanka Tourism needs to step up its efforts to build a favourable outlook of the overall tourism industry to woo more women into its workforce and ensure greater gender equality and inclusive growth.

Extensive awareness of the overall contribution from the sector, therefore, is essential. It will also help to overcome the myths about the social stigma attached to women in tourism. To address the stigma associated with tourism-related employment opportunities, the Government together with the industry bodies and stakeholders can initiate national awareness campaigns from school levels with active community engagement for recruitment campaigns focused on broad-based industry and employment practices, culture, nature of different jobs roles as well as risks and opportunities. The consequences of unawareness of the importance of the tourism industry were evident when factions opposed the post-COVID Ukraine pilot project to resume tourism via the tourist bubble.

A stronger focus on consistent human resource development within the tourism industry is mandatory and can make an impactful transformation in attracting fresh female talent to the industry. An emphasis should also be on the inclusion of differently-abled females with supported infrastructure facilities and labour laws. These efforts require the collaboration of all stakeholders; the Government, state agencies, industry champions, trade unions, local communities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), mainstream media, community-based initiatives and so on.

Publicising the importance of education and career opportunities is also important as technical and vocational education on finance, entrepreneurship, information technology, human resource management, research and development models. Given the recognition of an export status to the tourism industry, policymakers can also consider adding it to the curriculum to create an interest among children from the school level. Breaking barriers to access finance and financial literacy is a compulsory facet to ensure a strong community of women entrepreneurs in tourism.

Women-led tourism businesses particularly the SMEs are more vulnerable to demand downturns, the disrupted flow of income, shrinking financing, high inflation, shortage of raw materials and talent migration. The negative consequences of this are seen in rural parts of the country, where they have turned to microfinance institutions that acted like loan sharks, charging exorbitantly high-interest rates and forcing SMEs into bankruptcy. In this context, it is imperative to have financial policies that would address loopholes and equip financial tools to boost businesses, as the empowerment of women results in financial independence, alleviating poverty, and self-sufficiency.

In the context of a steadily ageing population and a transformation of industrial structures, women in tourism can fill in future shortages of business leadership and be a source of innovation. However, it also requires continuous training, mentoring and rewards schemes to retain female talent moving up the ladder with support services such as accommodation, transportation, flexible hours, and daycare centres to address concerns surrounding the working environments.

Women in tourism must also explore the rapidly changing nature of demand and boost technological advancements to expand businesses and their scope. Certain women-led tourism enterprises that moved to digital platforms managed to survive the harsh impacts of the crises. Those who conducted homestay units entered the digital space to promote their accommodation facilities via online travel agencies (OTAs) such as Airbnb and Expedia, whilst some promoted home cooking by sharing local cuisine and cultural values via Instagram and TikTok. Sub-sectors depending on tourism engaged in clothing, handicrafts, weaving, fisheries and agriculture industries also adopted digital methods via websites like eBay and Facebook to promote and export their products – which garnered a substantial customer base and income. As the Government readies to unveil a National Tourism Strategy, it is critical to involve women in every part of its planning and implementation. It is also crucial to hold role models to draw more females into the industry and to challenge stereotypes.

Only you can take the reins

Today, women in tourism can play a crucial role at a juncture where the entire nation is hoping for a faster revival of the economy by jumpstarting their value chains and businesses.



Women Entrepreneurship in Tourism

By
Isurika de Silva

Women's entrepreneurship has surged onto the global stage, gaining attention in new and dynamic ways. Within this wave, women entrepreneurship is carving out an increasingly prominent and appealing role in the tourism industry. Women entrepreneurs are bringing fresh perspectives and dynamic energy to the field, making their mark in a way that is both inspiring and impactful. In a tourist paradise like Sri Lanka, this growing trend is especially significant, as it not only enhances the tourism industry but also contributes to the country's global appeal. Women leaders in tourism offer a unique blend of creativity and innovation, driving sustainable growth and adding immense value to Sri Lanka's reputation as a top destination.

As the leader of a growing tourism company in Sri Lanka, I see the industry as one that many women are hesitant to explore, yet it offers tremendous opportunities for both employment and long-term success. To bridge this gap, it is our responsibility as women to educate and empower others across the country. More emphasis should be placed on incorporating tourism into school curriculums, as it is vital for the next generation those who will eventually join one of Sri Lanka's key industries to gain the knowledge, vision, and training needed to succeed in this field.

For a woman to step into the tourism industry as a leader and entrepreneur, it's not just the qualifications that matter most, but the passion, motivation, and perseverance within her that truly make the difference. It is essential to understand the purpose behind starting a business, how to navigate the challenges in the early stages, how to build a solid foundation for the profession, and the safety measures required to sustain it all successfully.

Engaging in conversations with professionals who are making an impact in their industry is invaluable. These interactions provide valuable inspiration and help clarify your own role, shaping your mindset for success. For instance, if you're starting a restaurant catering to tourists, insights from an expert or professional can provide valuable knowledge on key factors such as choosing the right location, identifying your target market, determining initial capital, diversifying your offerings, and understanding employee behavior.





Determining how to position your business is a crucial aspect of your strategy. It's essential to follow foundational marketing steps to effectively establish your brand and reach your target audience. The choice of financial resources, media platforms, personnel, and marketing strategies should be carefully aligned with the unique characteristics of your business. The strategies you use to attract customers through marketing in the early stages will not only draw them back to your business but also generate new customers through positive word-of-mouth. This relies heavily on the tactics you employ, the quality of service you provide, and the excellence of your products.

“In my view, a successful business relies on employees who possess both training and experience. Investing in training for newcomers and providing them with practical experience brings good value to the industry. Effective management of stability fosters a team of loyal employees committed to their work. It is crucial to focus on employee retention, especially considering the significant changes in today's workforce. The new generation prioritizes not just salary, but also freedom, a positive working environment, job security, and a sense of value factors that come together in a complex package. The key to retention lies in how successfully you create an environment that meets these evolving needs.”



The customer should be the central focus of any business. This principle is a fundamental law that every entrepreneur and employee must embrace. As a leader, your primary responsibility is to foster a positive environment by treating both your employees and customers as key influencers in your business's success. As the leader of an organization, you hold a substantial responsibility for your staff, who are instrumental in selling your product and crafting the quality and image of your business. Their mental well being is crucial, as it significantly impacts the long term sustainability and success of your organization.

As a female entrepreneur, navigating industry competition can present significant challenges. On one hand, there is a growing motivation to support women, providing them with opportunities that may not be as readily available to their male counterparts. However, women still encounter numerous obstacles, both personally and in promoting their products as they strive to rise to the top in a competitive landscape. To effectively tackle these challenges, it's essential to cultivate a robust network of contacts. This network is invaluable for accessing expertise when needed and offers a solid foundation for legal advice and front-line support in taking decisive action.





Moreover, regardless of the type of business you operate as a women entrepreneur, it is crucial to adhere to the established rules and regulations while ensuring compliance with the laws of the country. Maintaining a clear and accurate background is essential, as it prepares you to face challenges that may arise not only during the daily operations but also after achieving success. Your ultimate goal should be to protect the reputation of the business you've diligently built, ensuring that it remains intact and does not crumble in an instant due to oversight.

Ultimately, it is essential to recognize yourself as a talented woman entrepreneur. Your positive mindset, unwavering commitment, and self-confidence can propel you to heights far beyond your current position. The journey of entrepreneurship isn't defined by how or when you start, or even where you begin; what truly matters is your dedication and resolve. Your commitment will be the defining factor in shaping your trajectory over the next 5, 10, or even 15 years. As you navigate the landscape of entrepreneurship, remember that every step you take contributes to your growth and success.

Sri Lanka may be a small island, but it is rich with opportunities for innovation and leadership. As a women entrepreneur, you possess the power to make a significant impact not just locally, but globally. Your unique perspective and contributions can help represent Sri Lanka on the world stage, showcasing the potential of women in business. Embrace your journey with confidence, knowing that your efforts can inspire others and pave the way for future generations of female entrepreneurs. By believing in yourself and striving for excellence, you can achieve remarkable things and drive positive change within your community and beyond.



Giant Shadows within the Woods

By Hashan Chathuranga
PgDTEHM – 13th Batch

“Once I’ve visited on of the luxury hotel in Yala National Park with a group of tourists. We reached the hotel very late night. There was lady coordinator from the hotel continuously checked where we are, to ensure all the arrangements done to welcome our guests. When we arrived at the hotel around 23:00, two ladies were there to welcome. They treated the clients with a fresh smile even they were tired with their whole day shift. It was so great to our guests who had a long drive. The two ladies with their bell boy assistants, did the preliminary duties at the check-in as the hotel is few meters away from the point where the bus stopped. It was so fascinating to see that, all the duties were led by these two ladies without any delay. Even the buggies were driven by these two ladies inside the jungle without any fear.” This is my first-hand experience about the role of women in Tourism Industry. Truly they are giant shadows in the woods.

The dawn is full of bird singings, ray of sun shine, dew on turf, fragrance of flowers, lush greenery with wonderful views. Among all these occurrences, giant shadows are emerging. Who are they? About whom we are talking about? We are talking about the beautiful souls, the women staff who engage in the National Park hospitality. The beautiful souls with silky skin, do their jobs along with the male staff without any difference. With my first-hand experiences, I have noticed that the women staff do their best with zero complaints. They do their job without any grievance.

It has been proved that; an enormous number of females are now employed in the tourism sector in different roles. Among them, a significant number of females are rendering their unbeatable job roles in resorts based in National Parks. There was an era where the female employees are reluctant to work in these properties due to several reasons; such as unsafe environment for women, household duties and responsibilities, loneliness, and negative thinking of only men can work in these resorts as they are in the wild life territories. All of these reasons may true, when comparing the early stages of the tourism industry.

The women were totally ignored in the tourism industry, mostly in hotels, or else the women were discriminated, insulted, and humiliated in hotels during the early stages.

But these old-fashioned thinking has been changed a lot recently due to the change of thinking pattern in the modern society, which is women has the same rights as the men. Along with this concept the women were privileged to work in the hotels without any hesitation. With this self-confidence, the women tend to learn the tourism and hospitality industry via different platforms and institutions like hotel schools, universities, private institutions and etc. The significance here is that, among all the students, most of the times the high scorers are women. Due to this initiative, most of the tourism institutions welcome the women in to the industry and they were employed in different roles in hotels in every department. Surprisingly the women are rendering their jobs in the hotels in highly satisfactory manner.





Giant shadows within the woods....?

It was hard to find women employees in hospitality industry within the national parks early stages. The hotel owners, top managers may think that, the women are not suitable for these hotels as they are far away from human habitats and much more hard work have to be done in the hotels. But these thoughts drastically changed afterwards and many of the women employees are now working in the hotels as same as the men. The women have added a nice colour to the National Park hospitality. The smiling faces like blooming flowers even with the hard day schedules are truly welcoming. The charming sweet voices like bird singings can heal the souls.

These women employees are engaging in different roles in these hotels in National Parks. Some do their jobs as naturalists and park rangers. This is a very challenging job role in such hotels as they have to always engage with the wild life. It seems this only can be done by the males. But in the hotels women naturalists are there who engage actively. The women front office staff, receptionists, guest relation officers, butlers are also common now in these hotels. Having the women staff in the front office really light up the hotel atmosphere. Also, there are women housekeeping staff who do a great and hard task in keeping the entire territory clean and hygiene.

There service is remarkable. Yes, it is hard that to work in housekeeping department of a hotel surrounded by a jungle, but they do that. This is a remarkable contribution to tourism industry by women. Not only that, Female chefs and bring creativity to park dining experiences, often emphasizing local ingredients. The trend of hiring the women has grown up as women are expert in customer service, team leading, and welcoming. Many women hold managerial positions in hotels and within national parks, overseeing operations, guest services, and staff management. Their leadership helps to enhance the guest experience.

However, the women are facing some of the challenges when they work within the National Parks that has to be addressed. There may be a safety concern for a woman; who works in night shifts as the hotels are in remote locations. If the women who work in remote areas have to strike a balance to manage family responsibilities. Women may face to biases by other employees, management which causes to job dissatisfaction. They may face issues in inadequate facilities within the properties, such as restrooms and accommodations not be designed with women's need. Sometimes the high stress and work pressure combined with isolation will make mental instability in mental health.

In conclusion, women working in hotels within national parks play a crucial role in enhancing the visitor experience. However, the challenges they face such as safety concerns and work-life balance issues highlight the need for systemic change within the industry.

When the industry grows up, there should be an equitable workplace prioritizing the needs and experience of the women. With this initiative, the national park resort experiences for all the visitors can be enriched as the women play a crucial role in satisfying clients desires.



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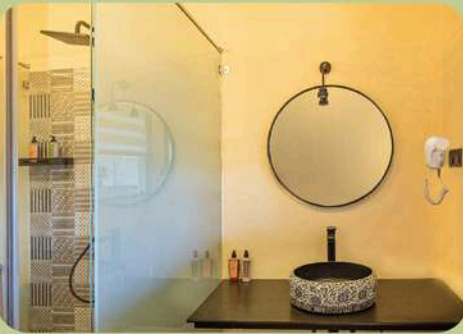
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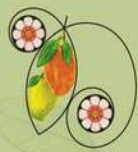


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