



IoH Broadsheet

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Breaking Barriers: Women crafting powerful hotel brands in a competitive industry

Claudia Rinna MIH joined the Institute in 2024 and is the CEO and Founder of Genre Hotels International, a business that represents independent lifestyle boutique hotels.

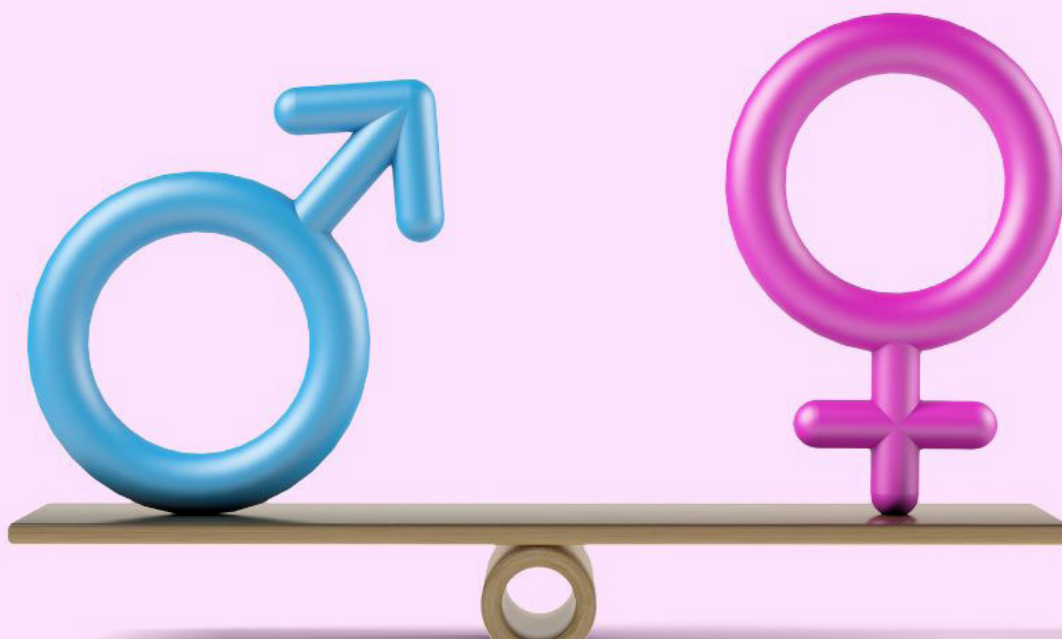
In this month's IoH Broadsheet, Claudia examines the challenges and solutions of: **"Breaking Barriers: Women crafting powerful hotel brands in a competitive industry."**

Having spent time running the European office in Los Angeles, California, Claudia now splits her time between the two offices.

Introduction

Building a brand in the competitive hotel representation sector presents unique challenges, especially for women entering such a typically male-dominated field.

The struggles for women working to establish a strong brand identity, particularly in representing independent boutique hotels, includes challenges such as gender bias, the difficulty of establishing credibility, standing out in a crowded market, and balancing authenticity with professionalism. Hurdles which need to be overcome using specific strategies.



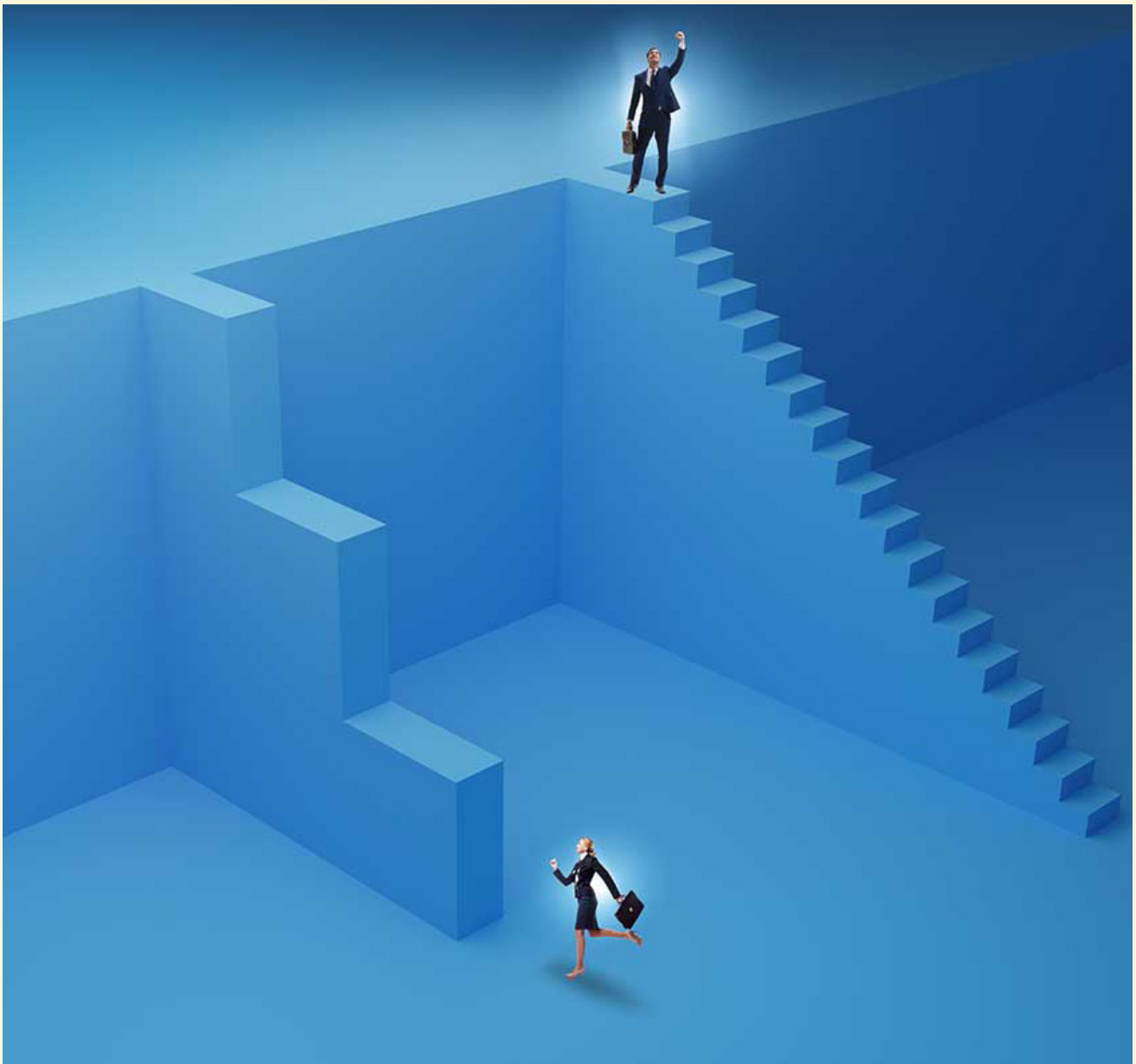
Challenges

Gender bias: In a traditionally male-dominated industry, women often face skepticism about their capabilities. This bias can undermine their authority, especially when working with high-profile clients in an industry where trust and relationships are key.

Establishing credibility: For women without an established track record or extensive industry network, gaining credibility can be a major barrier. Building trust with boutique hotels requires demonstrating both expertise and an understanding of their unique needs.

Gaining visibility: The hotel representation sector is highly competitive, with many companies vying for attention. Women face the added challenge of standing out in a market where larger, more established brands dominate, making it difficult to be recognised as thought leaders.

Balancing authenticity and professionalism: There is often pressure to fit into a conventional mold of leadership, especially for young women building a personal brand. It can be difficult to stay true to one's unique identity while also being seen as a capable and authoritative professional.



Solutions

Leverage expertise and knowledge: One of the most effective ways to combat gender bias and build credibility is by becoming an expert in hotel representation. Continuously learning about industry trends, understanding the unique needs of boutique hotels, and showcasing this knowledge can earn respect. Women can demonstrate their expertise by publishing insightful content like blogs, articles, and hosting webinars.

Actionable solution: Launch a blog or podcast to discuss boutique hotel trends and marketing strategies and share content on social media platforms like LinkedIn to build thought leadership.

Build a network of support: Networking is crucial for establishing credibility. Building a strong support network of mentors, industry peers, and potential clients can help combat biases. Attending industry events and joining associations can also raise visibility and foster relationships with influential figures in the field.

Actionable solution: Seek mentorship from successful women in the hospitality sector, attend relevant events, and connect with professionals on LinkedIn to expand your network.

Project confidence and professionalism: Confidence and professionalism are key to being taken seriously. Developing a clear, consistent message about your abilities and services can instill trust. Clients are more likely to engage with someone who projects assurance in their skills and their business.

Actionable solution: Practice pitches and presentations, and work with mentors to refine communication skills, ensuring a confident and professional demeanor in all client interactions.

Establish your 'Unique Value Proposition': To stand out in a crowded market, it's essential to highlight what differentiates your brand from others. For boutique hotels, emphasising personalised service, creativity, and a deep understanding of niche markets can resonate strongly. Clearly communicating how your services add value to potential clients is vital.

Actionable solution: Define what sets your company apart - whether it's a specialised marketing approach, or deep expertise in tourism trends - and make this clear in all client communications.

Use social proof and success stories: Social proof through testimonials, case studies, and success stories can help establish credibility. Even if a woman does not have a long list of high-profile clients, showcasing smaller wins and early successes can demonstrate competence and potential.

Actionable solution: Collect testimonials from smaller boutique hotels and highlight successful case studies in marketing materials, building a portfolio that showcases your ability to deliver results.

Be consistent in your branding and messaging: A consistent online presence is essential for building a strong brand. Whether through a website, social media, or marketing materials, your brand identity should reflect professionalism and expertise. Consistent messaging helps build trust and recognition over time.

Actionable solution: Create a polished website and content strategy for social media that aligns with your brand values. Ensure all communication materials project a cohesive and professional image.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges, women can succeed in the hotel representation industry by focusing on expertise, confidence, relationship-building, and a clear value proposition.

By leveraging these strategies, they can overcome gender bias, establish credibility, and carve out their niche in a competitive market.

With the right approach, women can thrive in the evolving hospitality sector and create lasting, impactful brands.



About the author

Claudia Rinna MIH founded Genre Hotels International, specifically the European Office of Genre Hotels based in Los Angeles, in 2023. She has been with the company since 2018, during which time she has spent several years residing in California.

With extensive experience in sales, marketing, business development, and social media management, she blends her passion for hospitality with a love of travel and tourism—as an active member of the Italian network of travel agents.

Claudia holds a degree in Business Management, a secondary degree in Tourism Management, and a Master of Business Administration in Hospitality Management.



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