

TO STUDY THE FACILITIES AND AMENITIES OFFERED FOR A SINGLE LADY TRAVELLER IN THE FIVE STAR AND MIDSCALE HOTELS IN MUMBAI AND PUNE

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Abstract:

The success of hotels largely depends on how much more they can offer to their guests. The rising number of women travellers over the world has made the Luxury Hotels create the special services for them. The Women Friendly Frills have become an international trend and since the last decade the hotels in India are also gearing up to tap this clientele. Some hotels have full-fledged floors, whereas others have single lady rooms. The preferences or inclination for facilities and amenities differ according to the gender. Not many hotels cater to this gender preferred services. The research article tries to focus on women friendly facilities and the preferences of the women clientele to stay in these hotels. The findings of the study suggest that comfort, safety and security are the main factors that women guests want in a hotel. The facilities for single lady traveller in India are catered by top-end hotels only; the midscale hotels offer very few women friendly facilities.

KEYWORDS:

single lady traveller (SLT), lady butler, women friendly frills, facilities, amenities

DEFINITIONS-

Single Lady Traveller- A women travelling alone for business or leisure

Lady Butler- responsible for the operations in the various departments of hotels, fulfil the special demands and requests of the guests

Facilities -all items that are provided in the hotel which are conducive to the guest's increased material comfort and convenience, it is a broader provision compared to amenities

Amenities- all luxury items that a hotel gives away at no extra cost to the guests

INTRODUCTION:

In the 21st century women is taking over various roles in the business world as chief executive officers, entrepreneurs, sales representatives. The female customers are slowly replacing the valued male guest and this can be seen in the hotels globally. With more and more women pursuing careers, this segment is seeing a growth of 15-20 percent (Hotel and Food Service, 2004) every year. Indian Tobacco Company (ITC Hotels) has 10 percent of their clientele as domestic or foreign women travellers. According to Travel Industry Association the female clientele values luxury and security above all the other factors in the hotel. The single lady traveller is a fast growing, niche market and has tremendous potential in India. Today, women are as big spenders as men have been and are willing to pay the money as long as they can see the value. Reaching out to them and satisfying their needs will be an important factor in translating Marketing into Sales for the hotels. Hotels that often perceive their customers as only men could be losing a lot of clientele if their practices or facilities are not tailored to suit the female customers. Women are now travelling without being accompanied by their male partner and are taking more trips on their own to visit relatives, friends with female friends or within a tour group. In the past, women do not seem to constitute a

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discrete market segment for hoteliers. Marketing practices accepted women as part of the family market segment and were believed to gain access to hotels in their role as wives and mothers. Today, the women market is expanding and substantial where their purchasing power is large and profitable enough to be served by the hotel. The services could be tangible like price, physical appearance, and location and intangible like security, reputation, staff behaviour.

Women are perceived to be especially interested in factors which include cleanliness, well maintained furnishings, comfortable bed and pillows, good service by the staff, ambience of the guest rooms, placement of amenities in the rooms, comfortable access. The other related factors include the location of the hotel, the convenience of meeting site, the hotel's reputation. By understanding how women customers rate these services, the hotel attributes can be changed and practised to become more competitive within the market. The hotels apart from including the full scale facilities like 24-hour internet access, e-mail, voice-mail, secretarial assistance etc also offer women friendly facilities like lady butlers, lady attendants in housekeeping, screened telephone calls, entry allowed through swiping cards in elevators, video phone in the room to the extent that assistance in draping a sari is given.

The Five Star Hotels in India offer the following facilities and amenities for their Women Customers-

1. Special attention during the allotment of rooms- When rooms are allotted by the front desk staff to the single lady guest, special confidentiality is maintained. The information about the room number, personal details, and the room change details are kept confidential. They are allotted rooms near the elevator, so they are secluded in a corner and are not inconvenienced by having to walk through a long corridor alone. The staff will avoid giving the women customers, adjacent rooms to single male guests. The room to room dialling service is not given when the hotel has a single lady staying with them. The hotel offers in-room check-in with bouquet on arrival as most ladies prefer flowers. The Guest Relations Associates keep in touch with them during their stay to have it as per their likings and preferences.

2. Safety and Security services- Security is the main concern for these customers, so most of the hotels have free pick-up and drop services from the airport. When entire floors are dedicated to women customers in the hotel, entry is allowed only through swiping the card in the elevator to direct it to the women's floor. The entry is allowed only to the resident women guest giving them the optimal security. The floor is guarded by women security guards all 24 hours in the hotel. The rooms offered to female guests are near the elevators for easy access and the corridors are well lit. There are video phones to check the identity of the person seeking entry into the guest room, and the screening of telephone calls is done at the desk by the front desk staff of the hotel. The guest rooms will have fire alarms, water sprinklers, and fire exit maps for better safety purposes, which is a general practice also. The electronic safe box is placed in the rooms, for the convenience and ease of the lady customers.

The initiative of having only Women's Floor in Hotel holds importance as a study conducted by the industry body, The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) revealed that there has been a 35 percent drop in women travellers to India in the aftermath of the December 2012 gang-rape.

3. In room dining services – The women's floor may have the service of a cocktail and hors d'oeuvres trolley in the room by the room service staff in the evenings. The female customers may feel a little awkward to have a drink all alone at the bar in the hotel, and hence such services might actually help to have repeat customers in the hotel. Some hotels have the facility of kitchenette in their guest rooms when the guests prefer home cooked food.

4. Special Room Amenities and Facilities – The guest room has feminine needs like full-length mirrors, makeup mirrors, iron and ironing board, skirt hangers, appropriate sized bath robes for females, and an assortment of extra organic cosmetics. . The dressing preferences of the business women clients at the age of forty today are different from those in 1990's and hence the amenities also needs to be upgraded all the time by the hotels.

Most of the hotels claim that these are the part of their standard facilities. Some hotels place special amenities like multanimitti face packs, a cane basket containing foot and bath salts, a manicure set, rose-scented soaps, and headband which is elegantly adorned with a flower for a lady guest in the room. The number and the logical placement of electrical plugs in the guest rooms is also an important aspect for the guest.

5. Services by Female attendants- The servicing of the guest room is done by the female attendants for a lady guest in the hotel. The Women may feel uncomfortable with male attendants serving them as they need to be well dressed all the time in their rooms. A single window service is given to the guests which includes all room related services to be given at one time only. The guest is not disturbed at different times to provide services to the room.

6. Check- In, Check- Out and Travel facilities-. A desk may be provided on the Women's Floor with check-

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in and check-out facility on the floor without having to go to the lobby. The hotels provide airport assistance on the arrival of the guest; the guidance may be given in terms of travelling within the city by the guest relations staff to the guest. They help with the hiring of reliable transportation for the female guests. The travel desk also arranges female guides for sightseeing, excursions, shopping in the local market and tries to help them in all aspects of travel.

7. Bathroom facilities and amenities-The bathroom amenities include spa style showers, enlarged bath spaces with more colour, shallow vanity counters with raised edges and good illumination for makeup, phone in the bathroom, good quality bathrobes and bath towels, silky robes and slippers, hair curlers, aroma oils, potpourri in the bathrooms, with special emphasis given on the sanitary items. Some hotels have introduced curved shower rods in their bathrooms, which creates more space and the shower curtain is less likely to touch the guests which gives them more sense of cleanliness.

8. The other complementary facilities and services provided by the hotel include the following-

- a. The hotel arranges for baby-sitters for the lady customers travelling with their children.
- b. The hotel staff help the lady customers to drape the perfect sari and many hotels do the stitching of blouses in a day's time for their customers.
- c. The hotels provide feminine touch-upholstery in soft shades of pink, purple in the interiors of the guest room for the ladies special floors. An exquisite flower arrangement, women's magazines, cookery books, in-room exercise DVDs may be placed in the rooms.
- d. The lady guests may be given complimentary ayurvedic body massages. The Hotel Spa and beauty salons have lady masseurs' for the women clientele.
- e. The foreign guests are offered cultural experiences through complimentary yoga and cookery sessions.
- f. The hotel has a 'Dial a Chef' programme where a lady guest can ask for a special diet meal, according to her preference.
- g. The restaurant has the "Business Women's Networking Table" for those touring alone. It also has a special lounge where female guests can unwind after a long day's work.
- h. The mini bar in the rooms has champagne and smoothies instead of beer in the rooms.
- i. The hotel has a private women-only fitness room with lady trainers at convenient timings.
- j. The hotel may offer a pillow menu, with extra pillows being placed on the bed for the women guest.

The Midscale hotels in India do not offer as varied facilities and services as Five Star categories of hotels. These hotels have very few single women guests. The facilities and services offered by them are as follows-

1. The women guests may be put together on one floor when special floors are not allotted for single lady traveller. The hotels also offer a complimentary upgrade to a corner suite in such cases.
2. Entire floors may not be dedicated to female customers in mid-scale hotels, but they are offered rooms near to the elevators, there is discreet conduct in announcing the female guest's room numbers, free airport picks-ups are given to the guests.
3. Many a times the women business traveller may be accompanied by male colleague from the same organisation and prefers to stay on the same floor. The hotel tries to accommodate the requests of the women guests.

The large organisations prefer to book rooms for their women employees in Five Star Hotels, where special services are offered to the single lady traveller. The Women will feel safer in such properties and would not mind travelling alone for business.

OBJECTIVES:-

1. To study the Special services offered to the Single Lady Traveller in the Star Category of Hotels.
2. To compare the Facilities and Amenities for the Women Customers in the Five Star and the Midscale Hotels.

LITERATURE REVIEW-

1. Jane Lutz, Hotels and the businesswoman: An analysis of businesswomen's perceptions of hotel services, Elsevier, Tourism Management, volume 14, issue 5, October 1993, 349-356

The study is based on the significant differences between male and female clientele towards the factors related to hotel accommodation. The study suggests that even though there is a commonality in factors, the female customers are more sensitive towards certain factors and the hotels needs to pay more attention towards these needs. It also incorporates the suggestions given by the female guests.

2. Evita Yung, Business Traveller Satisfaction with Hotel Service Encounters, Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, [Volume 11, Issue 4](#), 2002

The study is related to the customer satisfaction and hotel services and other factors. It states that the

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Business centre encounters had the greatest effect on customer satisfaction, whereas rooms have the least one. The findings suggest that hotels should pay more attention towards peripheral services, to give the customer overall satisfaction and repeat business.

3. [Raymond K.S. Chu](#), An importance-performance analysis of hotel selection factors in the Hong Kong hotel industry: a comparison of business and leisure travellers, *Tourism Management*, volume 21, issue 4, 363-377

The study examined business and leisure travellers' perceived importance and performance of six hotel selection factors. The six hotel selection factors identified were: Service Quality, Business Facilities, Value, Room and Front Desk, Food and Recreation, and Security. Room and Front Desk and Security were found to be the determining factors for business and leisure travellers, respectively, in the choice of the hotel.

4. Sourav Sarkar, Hotels make room for single women traveller's preferences, *Live mint and Wall Street Journal*, June-2007

The article states the various facilities and amenities provided for the single women traveller by the various chains of hotels in India. The ITC hotels were the pioneers in the services for the single lady traveller and have the special floor for the women. The other hotel chains also have special facilities for their women clientele and others are gearing up for it. Hotels are catering to the female clientele by providing various women friendly services and facilities.

5. Sara Dolnicar, Business travellers' hotel expectations and disappointments: A different perspective to hotel attribute importance investigation, *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, volume 7, issue 1, 2002, pages 29-35

The research investigates the expectations of the business travellers and their dissatisfaction factors related to the hotel attributes. The study also focuses on providing additional insight for customizing hotel offers.

6. Alanna Peet, *the Power of Pink*, *Hosteur*, Volume 15, Issue 1, 2006.

The article states that Women travellers have specific amenities in their minds when they are travelling and the hotels are changing and updating in order to attract more women travellers. The study indicates that women business travellers' value security and luxury above all the other factors while selecting the hotel, even though they appreciate all the feminine services offered to them in the hotels.

7. Azizan Marzuki, *What Women Want: Hotel Characteristics Preferences of Women Travellers*

The study suggests that women travellers prefer staying at hotels that provide quality services and attributes where the guests' comfort and safety were of top priority. Hoteliers would do well in understanding these preferences of women travellers and provide services accordingly.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY-

Collection of Data:-

The data required for the research was collected using the following techniques:-

Personal Interviews:-

The researchers conducted personal interviews with the General Managers, Executive housekeepers and Front Office Managers of the hotels to understand the various facilities and amenities provided by the hotel to the Single Lady Room.

Sampling Techniques:-

The study was conducted for the total of 15 Five Star Hotels and 10 Midscale Hotels in the city of Mumbai and Pune by random sampling.

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS:-

1. Comfort, safety and security are the main factors that women guests expect from the hotels.
2. The Facilities for single lady travellers are catered only by the top-end hotels in India. The midscale hotels do not offer special facilities for their female customers.
3. The women travellers prefer staying at hotels that provided quality services and in-room amenities without compromising the comfort and safety of guests.

The study would help the hoteliers to know how women travellers perceive the quality of services and facilities offered to them. It will help them in forming the marketing strategies to attract new customers and get repeat business. By understanding the preferences of single lady customer the hotel can have a competitive advantage over the other hotels in today's competitive market.

RECOMMENDATIONS-

1. Every hotel can create a plan for single lady guest and customise it depending on the occupancy percentage of the lady travellers.
2. The Midscale hotels should offer more women friendly facilities for their guests, as these hotels are

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preferred by the companies for their staff due to lower costs. Such services will encourage more independence among working women when they need to travel for work to other cities.

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