ABSTRACT

Women of this era are financially more independent than their earlier generations. They have a lot of disposable income, which they utilize for their own self. Thus we see that today, there are a lot of ladies who travel on their own, for business or pleasure, unaccompanied by male members of their family. This is something that was almost unheard of a couple of decades ago. The trend of ‘Single Lady Traveller’ is a very strong one in the hotel industry, one that contributes its own bit to the revenue generated.

For ladies travelling on their own, safety & comfort are issues of prime importance. They give a lot of emphasis on selecting the right kind of accommodation for the duration of their stay. To cater to this growing market segment, star category hotels in India are developing special facilities for ladies who are travelling on their own, and want a safe, comfortable & dependable home away from home.

Pune city sees a lot of business as well as leisure travellers, a sizable number of which are ladies. To cater to this niche market, hotels here have started offering various services, targeted at influencing single lady travellers to make reservations with them. Such facilities range from gender-specific floors, to being waited upon by female staff, to personalized room and bathroom supplies.

Keywords: Single Lady Traveller; Safety; Comfort; Facilities; Market Segment

INTRODUCTION

About two decades earlier, women used to travel with their families, accompanied by the male members in their family and/or their children. Today the glass ceiling is broken and they have emerged out on their own. Today, more and more women are travelling alone, for work or leisure. Indian hotels have observed that about 10 percent of their guests comprise of this segment, thus contributing to a noticeable amount of revenue earned by the hotel. So, hotels have started paying more attention to this segment and introducing facilities and amenities that go a long way in making their stay safe and comfortable. Pune city has emerged as an important business hub in the country, mainly due to the IT (Information Technology) and Automobile industries that have come up. Software companies like Wipro, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Cognizant, Amdocs, Symantec and automobile companies like Tata Motors, Fiat, Volkswagen, and Mercedes Benz etc. are a part of the city’s business profile. Also the Pune international airport offers good connectivity to most parts of the country. Thus we see a lot of women business travelers in the city.
Also, due to its proximity to Mumbai, the capital of Maharashtra and good connectivity- rail as well as by road (Mumbai- Pune Expressway), there are a lot of leisure travellers who prefer to make a quick trip to Pune, to experience its historic legacy as well as modern day culture. A lot of ladies prefer to travel in groups to Pune for a couple of day’s getaway, to soak in the ambience of a classic mix of modern day living, coupled with the charm of an era gone by.

Most ladies who travel on their own are tech-savvy, aware of on-line bookings and prefer to check out the hotel review on the internet, before making their bookings. These ladies give the most importance to the location of the hotel and the safety and security features. They would like to have lighter meals and also not alert the other guests to the fact that they will be staying alone in the hotel, while checking in.

Travel agencies in India too have recognized the potential in the leisure market segment and have started creating special customized tour packages for the ladies travelling on their own. Femmes’ en Voyage, a Bangalore-based travel club, Women on Wanderlust and Kesari Tours Private Ltd, with its special My Fair Lady tour packages is leading the way in inducing more and more ladies to travel on their own and explore destinations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Baraban, (1986), DeLuca, (1986), Hawes, (1988) opined that women travellers have different expectations for travel, different attitudes toward travel and have an important role to play in taking decisions as compared to men.

Waters (1988) analyzed from a research study which was carried out in the United States, that although men still have the upper hand as business travellers, women have been increasingly going on an equal number if not more vacations as compared to men in the leisure market.

McCleary and others, (1994) asserted that in terms of lodging preferences, women emphasize mostly on criteria with respect to security details, special services and lesser prices during hotel selection while men give importance to business services and facilities as being more important than those criteria chosen by women.

Sammons and others, (1999) reviewed the reasons that made female business travellers’ decide on their accommodation while travelling alone and summarized that more than 90% of the respondents gave importance to a few features that were critical, such as- cleanliness of the hotel, comfortable mattress and pillows, individual room smoke detector, dead bolt door locks, chain locks/latches and parking area lighting.

Wilson (2004) stated that women are recognized as an influential market segment within the tourism industry as they are increasingly active in the participation and consumption of travel.

The review of literature proposes that the concept of the Single Lady Traveller is a burgeoning sector in the hotel and tourism and has evolved into a subtle, though profitable market segment for hoteliers the world over.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives are-

1. To study the facilities offered to Single Lady Travellers by hotels in Pune city.

2. To survey the requirements of Single Lady Travellers staying in Pune city hotels.

OBSERVATIONS

During the course of this survey it was found that hotels in Pune have started offering special services for the Single Lady Traveller, with a view to capturing this niche market. A few of them are mentioned below-
Single Lady Floors / Ladies Only Floors/ Pink Floor

A few hotels like the Grand Hyatt, Pune & the Westin, Pune have introduced the concept of Single Lady Floors. These are floors on which rooms are assigned to only female guests. There are fresh flowers kept in the rooms, special toiletries and amenities kept, such as bathrobe, make up items, ladies magazines etc.

In fact the Westin Pune offers ladies a separate area where they can relax, read magazines and have access to a small kitchenette where they can even cook for themselves. Also the staff that comes into contact with these guests is female i.e. There are female butlers and food & beverage room service staff. Female housekeeping staff takes care of the cleanliness and upkeep of the floor. Moreover in some hotel chains, is not possible to even gain access to these floors from the elevator, if the guest does not have the room key card.

The Keys Hotel in Pimpri has a separate wing of one floor dedicated for Single Lady Travellers.

Budget hotels like the Noorya Hometel also have special rooms for the female guests who are travelling on their own.

Special Efforts Taken By Hotels

Safety & Security

Despite India’s slogan of ‘Atithi Devo Bhava’ i.e. Guest is God, in view of the recent attacks on ladies in the country, its image as a safe tourist destination has taken a beating. The 2012 Delhi rape case, news reports of a British tourist having had to jump out of her second floor hotel room’s balcony in order to escape from an assault, and a few other similar unfortunate events have raised the question of the safety of women travellers in the country. To counter this fear in the minds of lady travellers, hotels in Pune are taking the following precautions-

- In hotels, where there are no specific floors dedicated to the Single Lady Travellers, there are other precautions taken, like assigning these guests rooms near the elevator, so that the lady does not have to travel through a long corridor to reach her room.
- Rooms are allotted usually on non-smoking and lower floors
- Also, in case of business travellers, single ladies are given a preference of being given rooms close to where the rest of their team is staying. All the ladies of that group are given rooms next to each other, avoiding corner rooms.
- If a lady is checking in late at night, a female member of the hotel staff escorts her to her room, after she checks in.
- All the incoming calls are checked and screened, without revealing the identity of the female guest or her room number.
- There are video door phones fitted, so that the lady can see for herself who is outside her door, before she opens it.

Hygiene

Ladies place special attention to hygiene and cleanliness, so the housekeeping departments of hotels are making sure that this factor is not compromised.

- Clean and fresh-smelling washrooms in public areas are a must, so is liberal use of cleaning agents, sanitizers and detergents.
- Placing a sanitary band around the commode after cleaning has been carried out in the guest room bathroom, that will be broken only by the guest staying in the room assures them that hygiene practices are followed.
Hotels also place disposal bags near sanitary bins, in order to promote hygiene standards.

**Discussion**

A survey of 42 ladies who were travelling on their own for business/leisure and staying at various hotels in Pune city was done using a questionnaire to find out their requirements from hotels that they were staying in. Following were the results, represented in a graphical format.

1. 23 (54.76%) of these were travelling for business purpose, while 19 (45.23%) were travelling for leisure.

![Graph showing the distribution of business and leisure travellers.](image)

2. Age Group of the Single Lady Travellers in relation to age-

It was observed that out of the 42 ladies surveyed the results were as below-

- Age group 26-35 years: 09 Business, 06 leisure, total- 15 (35.71%)
- Age group 36-45 years: 07 Business, 04 leisure, total-11 (26.19%)
- Age group 46-55 years: 04 Business, 08 leisure, total-12 (28.57%)
- Age group 56-65 years: 01 Business, 03 Leisure, total-04 (9.52%)

![Graph showing the distribution of business and leisure travels by age group.](image)

Thus the maximum number of Single Lady Travellers was in the age-group of 26 to 35 years of age, out of the total span of 26 years to 65 years. Also, the age groups of 26-35 years & 36 to 45 years had more business travellers, as compared to the other two age groups, which had more of leisure travellers.
3. Single most important criteria for selecting the hotel-
   Facilities: 03 Business, 05 Leisure, total-08 (19.04%)
   Location: 03 Business, 02 Leisure, total-05 (11.90%)
   Company Contract: 03 Business, Nil Leisure, total-03 (7.14%)
   Safety & Security measures: 05 Business, 10 Leisure, total-15 (35.71%)
   Recommended by Travel Agent: Nil Business, 05 Leisure, total-05 (11.90%)
   Budget: 02 Business, 04 Leisure, total-06 (14.28%)

Thus, the single-most criterion for selecting a particular hotel was -Safety & Security measures, as per 35.71% of the respondents, followed by facilities (19.04%) and then the location (11.90%)

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is seen that special facilities have been offered by only the star category hotels in Pune city. The budget hotels do not have any concrete facilities apart from saying that they cater to Single Lady Travellers. It is recommended that the budget hotels too start focusing on these needs, which would help in attracting this segment, thereby act as a tool in revenue generation.

It is also recommended that hotels start hiring lady chauffeurs for the pick and drop of Single Lady Travellers, which will add on for the safety and security of lady guests.

Virtual marketing of Pink Floors/ Only Ladies Floors would help in boost the revenue generation and positive publicity.

CONCLUSION

Pune is a hub of activities and also claimed to be the fastest growing cities, it has been one of the most preferred cities for relocation/ migration and Investments (many MNCs and Corporate offices are located here) which gives rise to Single Lady Travellers and also the demand for private internal transport. There is some change happening but this needs to be supported by effective marketing tools and promotion to achieve a change in the Hospitality Business of today.

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