



STUDY ON HOTEL TRENDS DESIGNED FOR SINGLE LADY TRAVELERS

***Arti Ghai¹ and Shreya Chowdhri²**

¹Senior Lecturer, Institute of Hotel Management, Catering and Nutrition,
Pusa, New Delhi and ²Sales and Marketing Management Trainee, ITC Hotels
arti.ghai@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: *The hotels industry has brought in tremendous changes in its hospitality standards and services since its origin. The success of this industry depends on how much their customer is happy with the services and how much more they can offer to their guests. Gender equality has encouraged single lady traveler for work, leisure, health etc. Many hotels does not cater to this gender preferred services though, 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.*

Objective: *To understand the scope of single lady travelers market in terms of its productivity.*

Methodology: *This study falls within a quantitative research approach. Data collection was done by random probability sampling from subjects those who have been travelling frequently and have been in house-guest of five star hotels in Delhi/NCR. The sample size was 100. They were the repeat guests in the age group of 18-50 years. Questionnaire was used as a part of the research tool. Analysis was done using the percentage parameter. Results: Of the total participants 64.3% of the guests taken into account were male, 34.8% were female and 0.9% were others. The scope of the market is promising in the coming five years of the future about 81.7% of the respondents believed that such initiative by the hotels will make a difference for the single lady travelers. 78.3% of women would avail this facility while travelling alone. In developing countries about 73% of respondents both male & female were aware of this initiative and were positive and industrial about it. Conclusion: Women prefer hotels that incorporate features that are women centric. With the growing concerns on safety of single lady travelers, the hospitality industry in India is seen to be doing their bit to cater to the 'ladies' demand and ensure their security.*

Key Words: *Single Lady Traveler (SLT), Women Friendly Frills, Amenities, Facilities*

INTRODUCTION

In the middle twentieth century men enjoyed more privilege than women with regard to leisure travel (Harris & Wilson, 2007). In some parts of the world women travelling independently is considered inappropriate by society and arguably, this perception has endured until today where gender inequality persists (Craik, 1997). 1970's started the era of women travel market with the rise of global capitalism, improved access to education, employment, and as a result financial independence, since then there has been no stopping and it has expanded steadily (Frohlick, 2013). This social transformations came right after the second world war, thus resulting in changing structural conditions social circumstances for women. A lot of progress has been made ever since feminists fought hard in the past to establish themselves (Bond, 2015).

Solo female travelers are basically women of all age groups, ethnicity and clientele who travel alone. However they may or may not be single as per marital status and generally they travel for the purpose of work, meeting, leisure, etc.

Women are in charge of 85% of household purchasing decisions now make up half the business travel sector as more female travelers are asking for a room for one during their travel. This has given, the hotels a lucrative opportunity if it can take advantage of this growing trend for female-focused hospitality. Hostel world reported a 42% increase in solo traveler bookings from 2017 to 2018, and the numbers continue to rise. Adults travelling alone- single or not- has risen dramatically in the past few years (Landman, 2019).

Following the rise of tourism in Asian market has seen a growing female travel. Through a postcolonial feminist lens to review the extent literature on Asian female travelers, with the aim to contribute to a cultural understanding of the historical and contemporary travel practices of Asian women the study employs a narrative synthesis approach. Based on this review, it is evident that Asian women's travel behavior is influenced by cultural identities and gender stereotypes (Yang et al., 2016).

In a survey from 314 female mountaineers, four constraint dimensions were identified using confirmatory factor analysis. Three of these dimensions: 'inter- personal', 'intra-personal', and 'structural' constraints besides the family constraint have typically been subsumed with the previous three. Women's mountaineering tourism: an empirical investigation of its theoretical constraint dimensions, this study investigated the perceived constraints on participating in mountaineering tourism faced by women, and to empirically verify the dimensionality of those constraints (Doran, 2018).



For solo independent women travelers in North Queensland, their key motivations for travel and behaviors is the typology of solo independent travelers in Australia. A large number 2,00,000 per year (approximately), 15% of the total visitors are at wide end of the travel spectrum as fearful and risk adverse and at another end, as risk-takers who have few concerns about safety within the destination. The overall number of solo independent women travelers is quite large so it is up to the stakeholders of the region to develop a better understanding of who these women are and what type of activities they prefer once they are at the destination (Mcnamara & Prideaux, 2019).

Growth has been observed in women's travel - Girlfriend Getaways (GGA), i.e. holidays are taken by females with other females. An action research approach to explore the accommodation needs of these all female travel groups in the Malaysian market was employed. It had used a five stage approach which included in-depth interviews, a hotel-stay for three groups of women on a GGA, focus groups and secondary data analysis, four themes were identified. These themes addressed feminine safety, comforts, shopping, facilitating friendship, and the use of discount promotions with GGA. The findings of the research suggested that the needs of female leisure travelers are very distinct from that of women who travel on business. Recommendations for stakeholders is to enhance the GGA experience for women, notably providing spaces and activities to facilitate female bonding (Khoo-Lattmore & Heather, 2015).

Solo female business traveler is one of the major markets for the hotel industry. Hotels have realized this and have now initiated with an enormous amount of efforts in improving the hotel's services to meet the needs of these growing markets. However, a fast growing sub-segment of the market business female traveler will soon be receiving special attention on their preferences of product needs. A study, surveyed 150 female working adults in Malaysia, it determined that generally solo business female travelers are young, unmarried and engaged in personal leisure activities. The female labor in Malaysia currently 45.7 percent in the country total labor force. According to the survey, they prefer safety and location as the main concern areas when selecting a hotel. Based on another survey carried out by the travel industry in America in 2005, a total of 43 percent of American business travelers are female. In addition, a study was conducted by New York University identified the female business traveler as a baby boomer with a college degree, who earns over \$75,000 per year (Fields, 2006). Thus the travel marketers and researcher have become aware of the potential of this female business traveler and have begun addressing this segment. It is recommended that female business traveler requirements must be accommodated if hotels establishment want to attract this growing market (Hao & Har, 2014).

In 1995, Wyndham established the 'women on their way' program, they are targeting the emerging female business traveler market. Thus became the first hotel to launch women friendly policies.

This gave female travelers a platform to do research on travel products while they plan for their travel. This program gave them an opportunity to make the most of their time with work and everyday life. Women account to half of the Wyndham's travelers and more than a third of the company's business travel base (Chan, 2007).

As tourists, these women are looking for journeys that are more than a trip to a destination rather they choose to go alone in the pursuit of independence, adventure, escape and feeling of personal fulfillment as well as individuality. Driven by specific and consciousness motivations so they choose to travel as loners not that they are alone or single. This concept of female solo traveler, in recent years, has become a relevant tourist segment (Periera & Silva, 2018).

Women business road warriors and adventurous retired single women are more conscious of safety concerns also appreciate being pampered and experience a sense of exclusivity in only women hotels. Women only hotels were depicted as an eccentric marketing trend a few years ago, but the practice is experiencing resurgence as the number of women business travelers increase and more women want an added level of security and autonomy in their accommodations (Manning, 2019).

Today many hotels have started offering women only rooms and floors to attract an increasing number of solo female travelers. Now-a-days many hotels around the world are riding this trend that has made some people think goes against the spirit of equality. In fact some see it as discriminatory towards men (Wilson & Little, 2005).

Talking about India, over the last two years the numerous travel industry reports show that more than 35% of women have chosen to holiday on their own. Bengalis being intrepid travelers, surprisingly women from the state are hardly featured among solo female travelers. In fact the bulk of these travelers are from North India with Punjab leading the way. Even though the jump in solo women travelers does not amount to a paradigm shift, there are many encouraging trends which will see their numbers increase further. More countries, like Vietnam for example, are realizing that women have much greater purchasing power and are willing to go the extra mile to address their concerns. The hospitality industry realizes that this is a segment that can bring in huge revenues. This trend of solo female travelers is increasing after the travel companies are creating special packages for them that will pay huge dividends for India (Manning, 2019).

Nicole (2018) mentioned that solo travel offers the opportunity to escape everyday life as well as a certain freedom and independence. As compared to past decade now-a-days more people are single and remain so for longer periods of their lifetime. As a result, people don't want to give up their travel dreams for lack of a partner for travel or the life partner. The number of women who aren't



single but choose to travel alone is also on the rise. Various sources put the number of women travelling solo versus men at anywhere from 70- 80%.

Part of the reason for this rise in this market in modern times is the ‘ease of travel’. Traveling, especially internationally, used to be far more daunting than it is today. Smartphone and laptop enable consumers to check recommendations for restaurants find deals on plane tickets, and accommodations and translate non-native languages instantly. In addition, work from remote locations has also grown with the rise of technology, so travelers have the liberty to be no longer tied to their desk or work schedules. All these things has replaced the tedious old methods that used to take a lot of time in booking flights and hotels over the phone, trips to libraries and bookstores to do research and buy language and travel books are now at the fingertips. Hence, if these obstacles are removed, this market niche of solo travel will soar high.

A search for solo female travel returns more than 2.45 million search results on Google. A Google trend has recorded growth steadily over the past ten years while interest in female solo travel has only gained traction since 2013 (Nicole, 2018).

The BMO wealth institute estimated that 51% of personal wealth in the USA was controlled by women. In 2015, as reported by trip advisor about the global trend, 74% of women had travelled solo or were planning to do so. In 2016, walking vacations, country walkers & VBT bicycling has reported to Conde Nast Traveler that solo female travelers made up 58% and 40% of bookings respectively, they have seen about 5% increase in female travelers each year. A recent survey by a Metasearch engine IXIGO on “what women want” shows that Indian women travel as frequently as once in two months (50%) with 44% stating spending quality time with relatives, family & friends as their common reason for travel. The survey also confirmed that women today have become tech-savvy, with 43% booking their hotels online and 76% agreeing they only read reviews to make their final choice. Women prefer a hotel that incorporates features that are women centric. Indian hotels have begun understanding that the single women traveler is a fast growing, niche market and has tremendous potential in India (Kodesia, 2014).

The significance of this research is to check the awareness level of the travelers with this facility provided by the hotels. Now-a-days there is an increase in travel of working women both domestic and internationally. They want to ensure about safety in the hotel before making a booking of their stay. So is the concern of their family members also. Many hotels ensure proper safety and security of the Single Lady Travelers, their needs and requirements etc. There are specially trained female employees serving them and a lady guard manned on their floors as well. The male travelers are also aware of this facility. This research will be beneficial to the hotels as it gives a clear view that

this market segment is not much explored and is in its nascent stage.

The objectives of this study were:

- To understand the scope of single lady traveler market productivity.
- To realize the difference it will make to solo women travelers in developing countries.
- To understand the perspective of both the genders in the position of guests about this initiative by the hotels.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The present study was done with the descriptive design.

Locale: The study was conducted in Delhi/NCR. The respondents were frequent travelers and have been in- house guest of five star hotels in Delhi/ NCR.

Sampling Design: A sample size of 100 subjects was considered. The data was collected from the frequent visitors of the five star hotels. 64 male, 35 female and 1 in others category responded to the questionnaire in the age group of 18 to 50 years.

Tools and Technique: A questionnaire was made for the purpose of data collection. It consisted of multiple choice questions (MCQ) to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire was shared with the repeat customers and the frequent travelers (randomly). Secondary data was collected from various journals, newspapers, magazines available online.

Data Analysis and Statistical Analysis: The primary data was then analyzed based on the frequency and percentage. Graphical representation of the data was done using Excel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following results have been evaluated from questionnaires that were circulated among the guests who have stayed in five star hotels and are aware of the initiative taken by hotels for solo female travelers in Delhi /NCR.

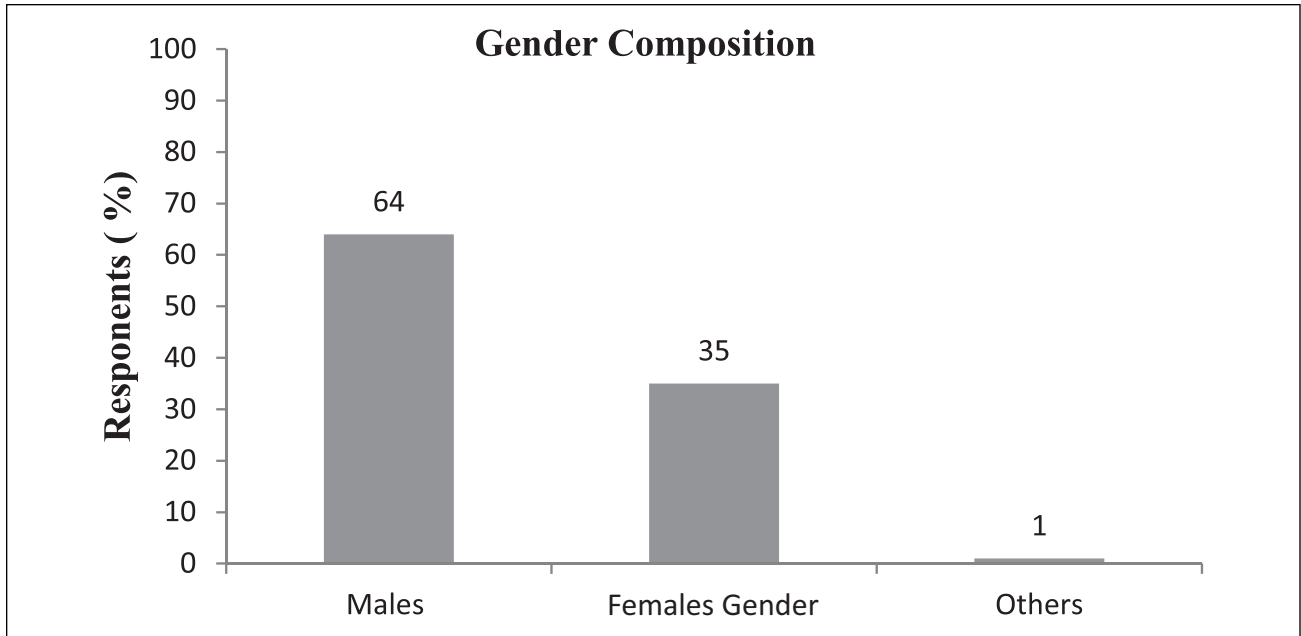


Figure 1: Gender composition of the respondents

64% of the guests taken into account were male, 35% of the guests were female and 1% was others. The huge number of male participation gives an opportunity to them to understand that the solo female travelers are taken care of by hotels during their trip. It also makes the female aware of the facilities and services available for them in the hotels during their solo travels.

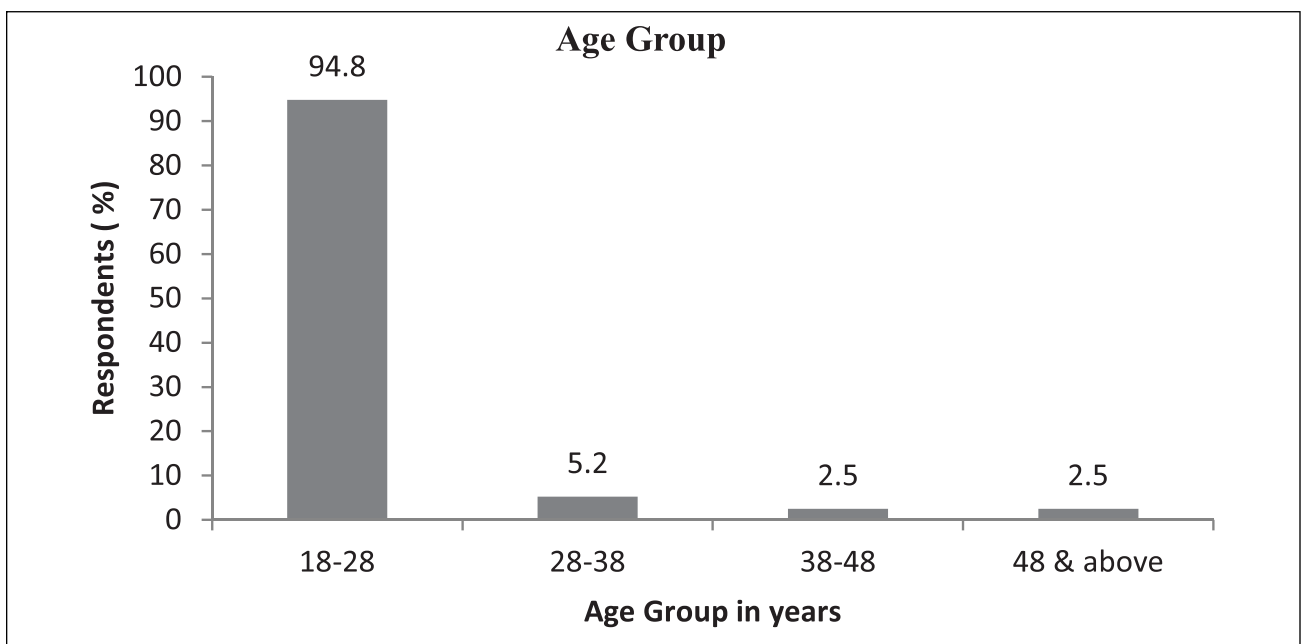


Figure 2: Age group of respondents

94.8% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 18-28 years, about 5.2% in the age group of 28-38 years, 38-48 years and above 48 years, both represented 2.5% respectively. Generally

the young working females are the solo travelers who go out for work, leisure, adventure, girl's getaway etc.

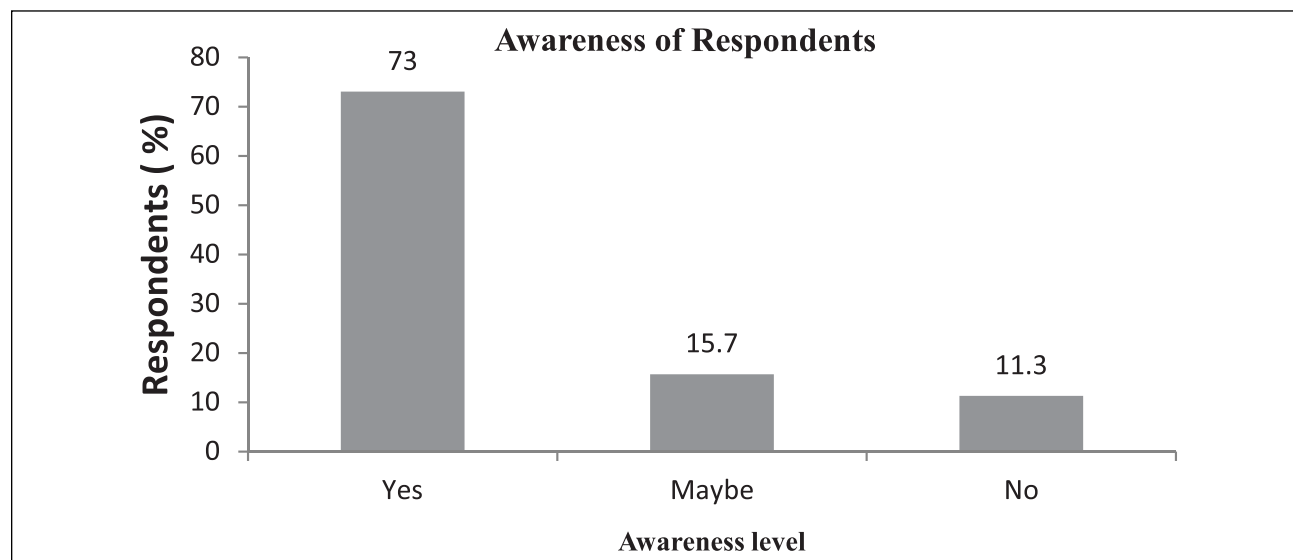


Figure 3: Awareness of respondents regarding the initiative taken by hotels for single female travelers

73% of respondents were aware of the initiatives taken for solo female travelers by hotels. 15.7% were not sure (maybe) about it and the rest 11.3% were totally unaware (no). Hotels provide various facilities to the Single Lady Travelers related to their safety and security. The regular guests in such hotels are well aware of it. However hotels have realized that the Single/Solo Lady Traveler is the new niche for them to explore and need to do marketing of the facilities provided by them. It gives them lot of opportunity to attract these travelers and encourage them to reside in their hotels.

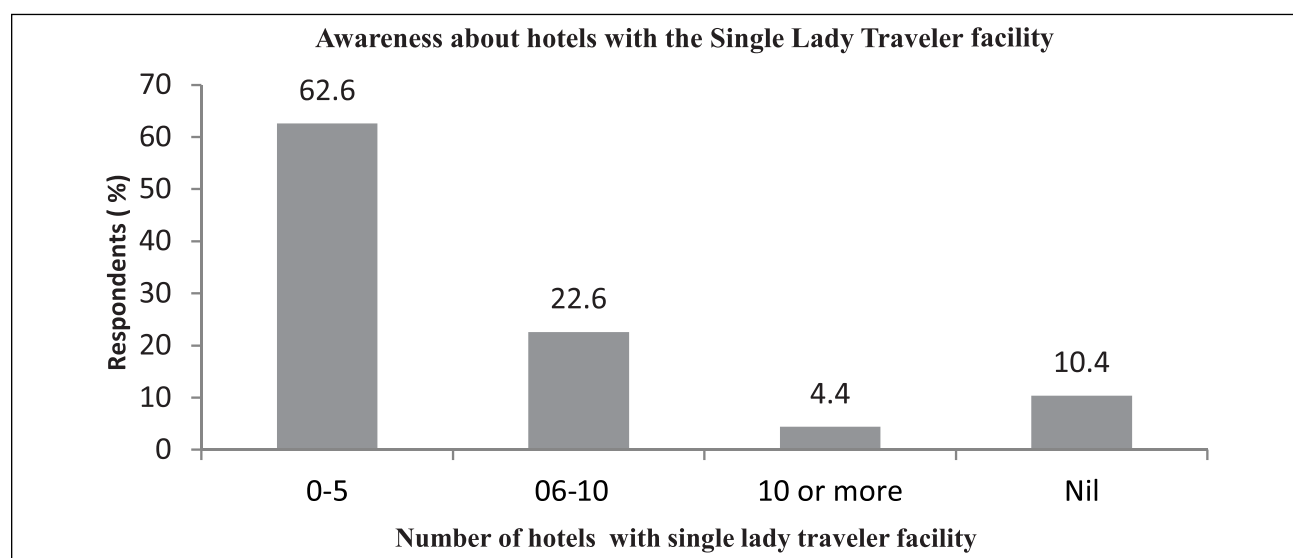


Figure 4: Awareness of respondents about the number of hotel brands offering special facilities to solo female travelers.

62.6% of respondents knew only 0-5 hotel brands which have introduced measures for solo female travelers, 22.6% of respondents knew more about 5-10 hotel brand, 4.4 % knew 10 or more hotels and the rest 10.4% knew none of such hotel brands. It shows that the customers were aware of the amenities, facilities and services provided by the hotels. The Five Star categories of hotels and midscale hotels in India offer varied amenities, facilities and services as they have very few single women guests. The Women Friendly Frills are now-a days have become an international trend.

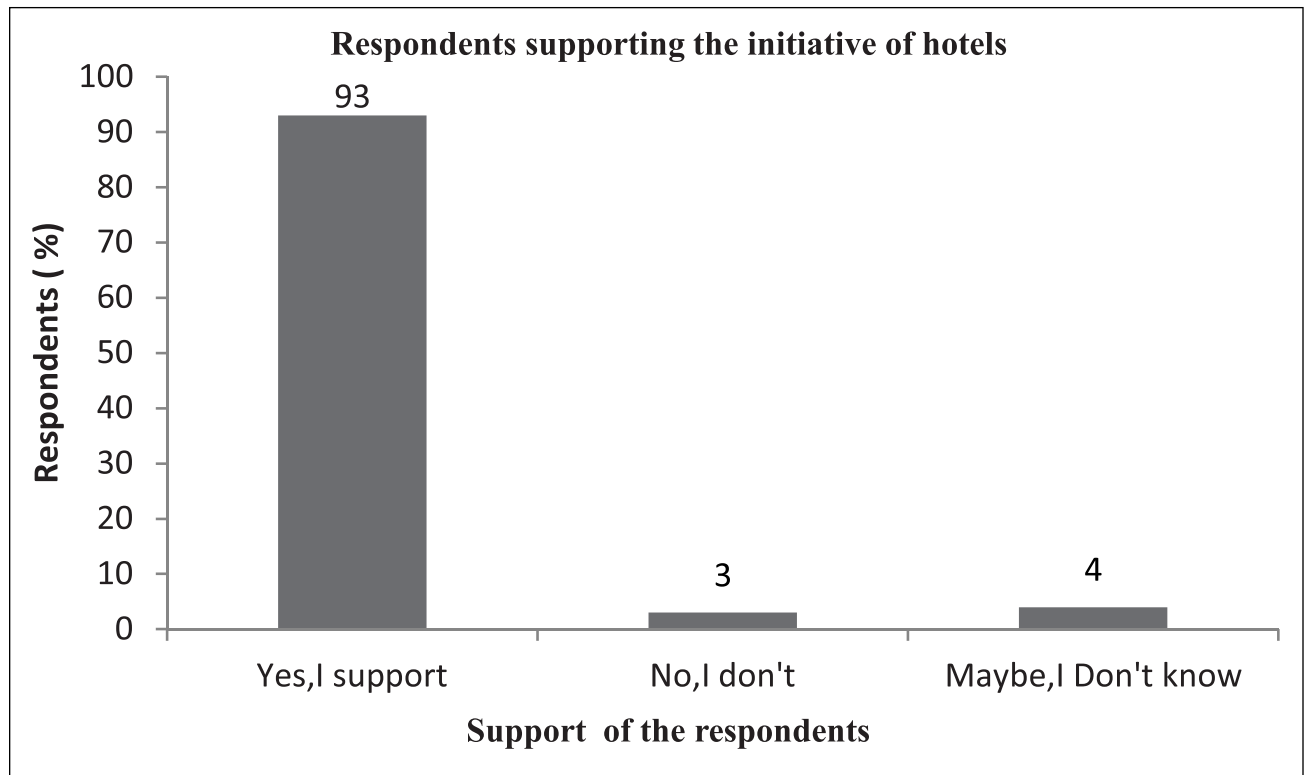


Figure 5: Respondents supporting single lady traveler trend initiated by hotels

93% of respondents support this trend initiated by hotels, 4% of the respondents were not aware and 3% did not support this initiative. Hotels in India have now begun taking the Single Lady Traveler concept seriously and have introduced amenities to make their stay safe and comfortable like offering them rooms next to or near the elevator or stairway and more. Famous hotel brand like ITC have a dedicated floor for the Single Lady Travelers.

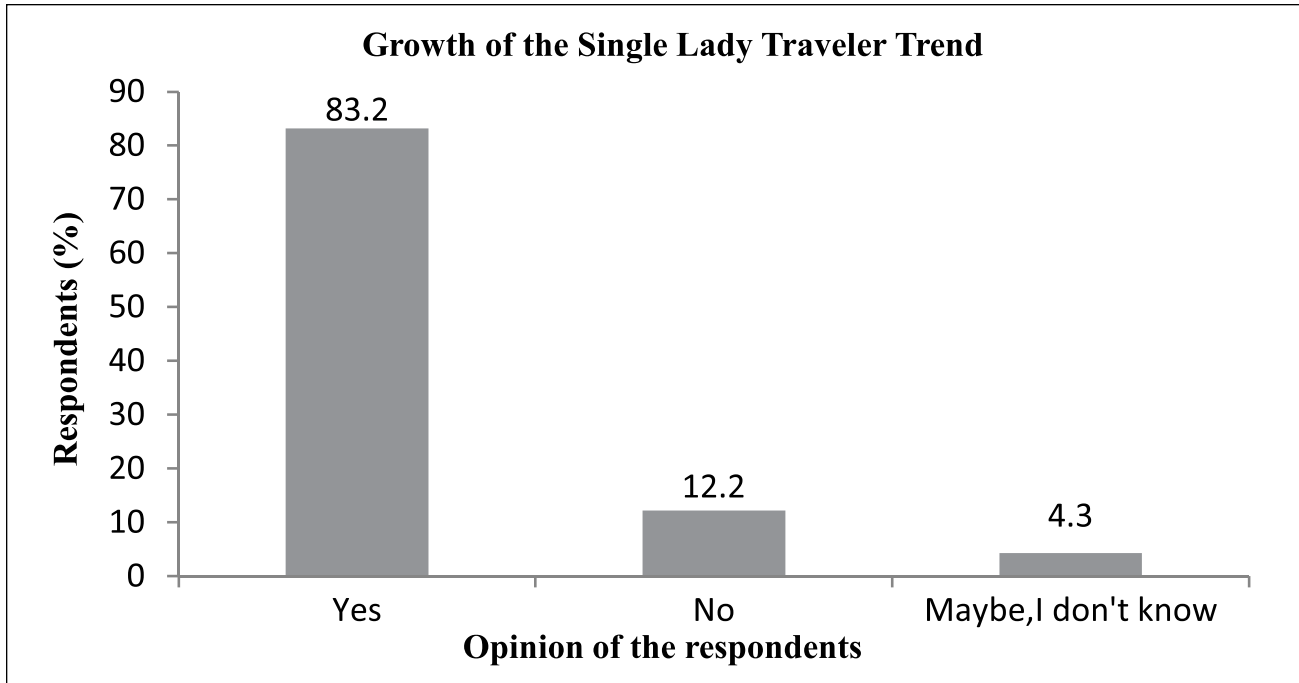


Figure 6: Opinion of the respondents for growth of single lady traveler trend

83.5% of the respondents believed that this trend will continue to grow in the coming five years, 12.2% were not sure about the trend following up in the future and 4.3% did not find this trend continuing. Hotels across the globe honor and respect the single lady traveler and have initiated various services as per the needs of the guest considering that the requirements of an Asian lady will be different from that of a European or a Malaysian traveler.

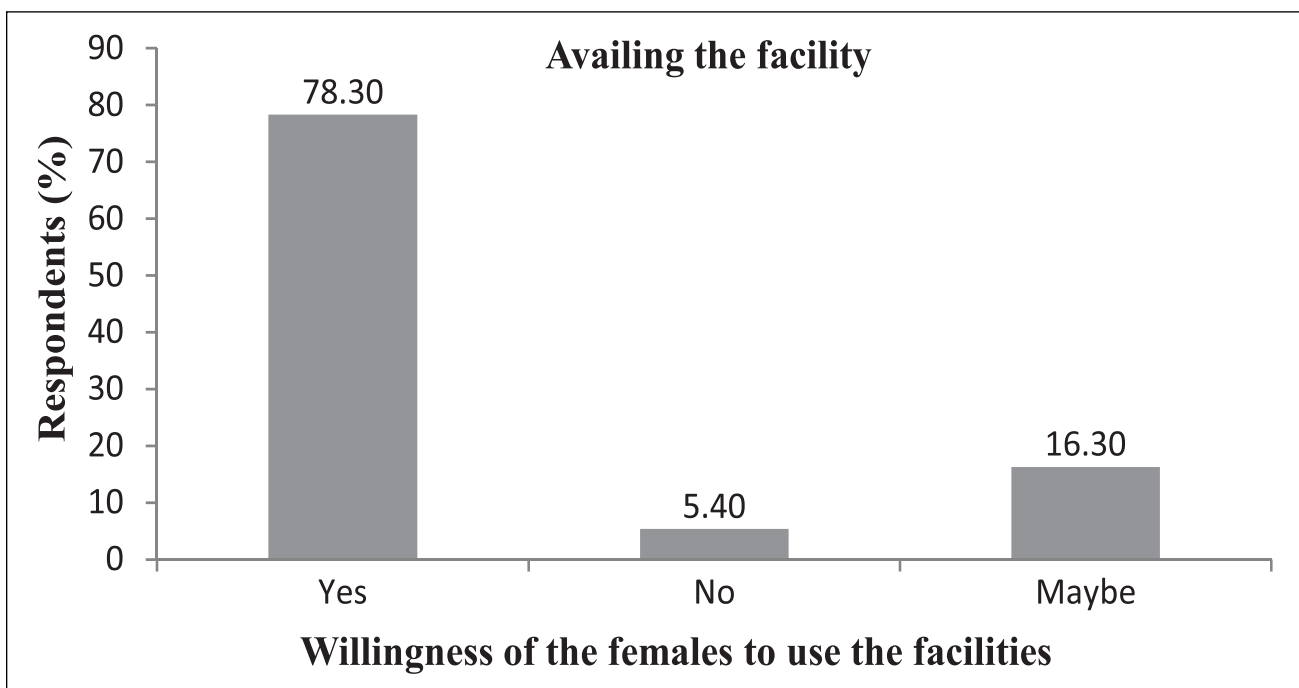


Figure 7: Readiness of females to avail the single lady traveler facility themselves

78.3% of women would like to avail this facility while travelling alone whereas 16.3% of women were not sure about it, 5.4% of women mentioned that they won't avail it. Destination managers should encourage a safer travel space and atmosphere as security is considered one of the key concerns of single female travelers, which when embarking on a solo adventure could facilitate a feeling of safety and comfort. Travel providers must also be able to concentrate their marketing efforts on delivering a more comprehensive service to this market segment through recognizing the travel motivations of women (Xie, 2019).

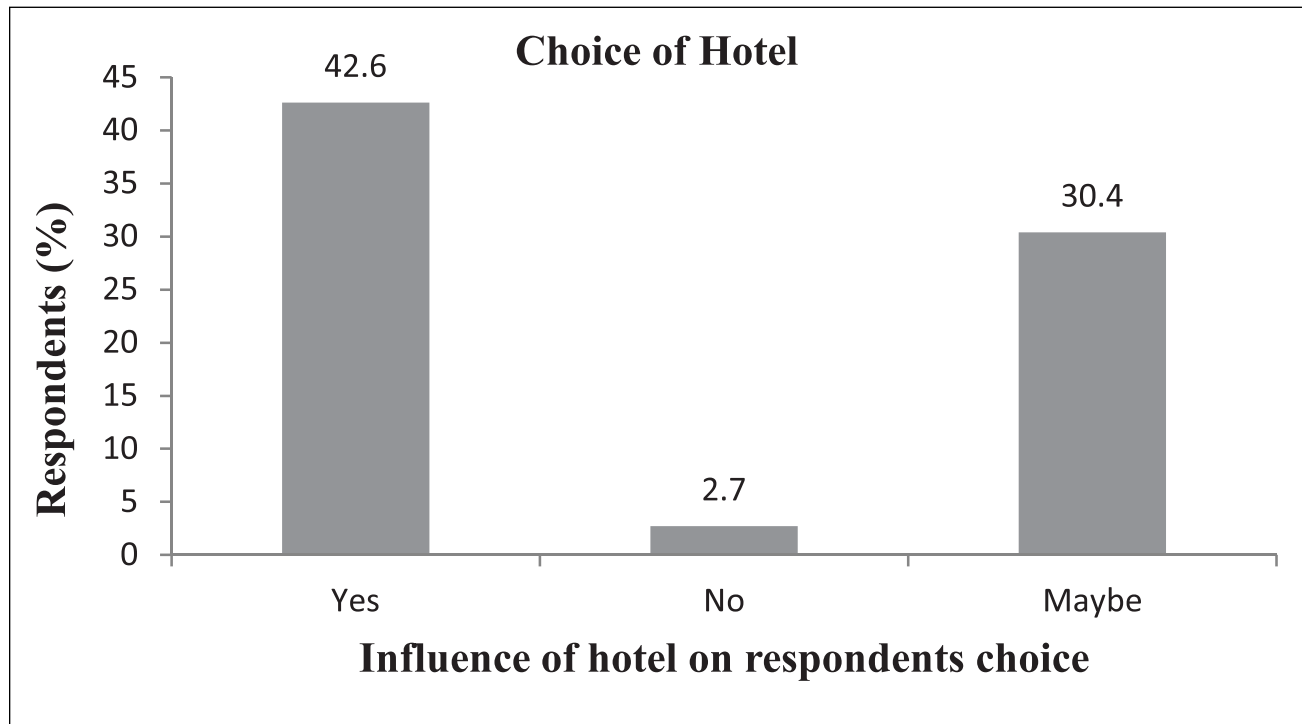


Figure 8: Respondents finding single lady traveler trend to be one of the factors influencing their choice of hotel

42.6% of respondents do take this facility into account while booking their choice of hotel, rest 30.4% of respondents might get influenced and the other 27% mentioned that they will not get influenced by this trend. Female business traveler needs facilities such as separate check in desks, meeting room space, in room fax facilities, cellular phones and discreet meeting places are seen in most hotels. Female business traveler has become one of the major markets for the hotel industry. Hotels are packaging their room products to meet the needs of these markets (Baker et al., 2000).

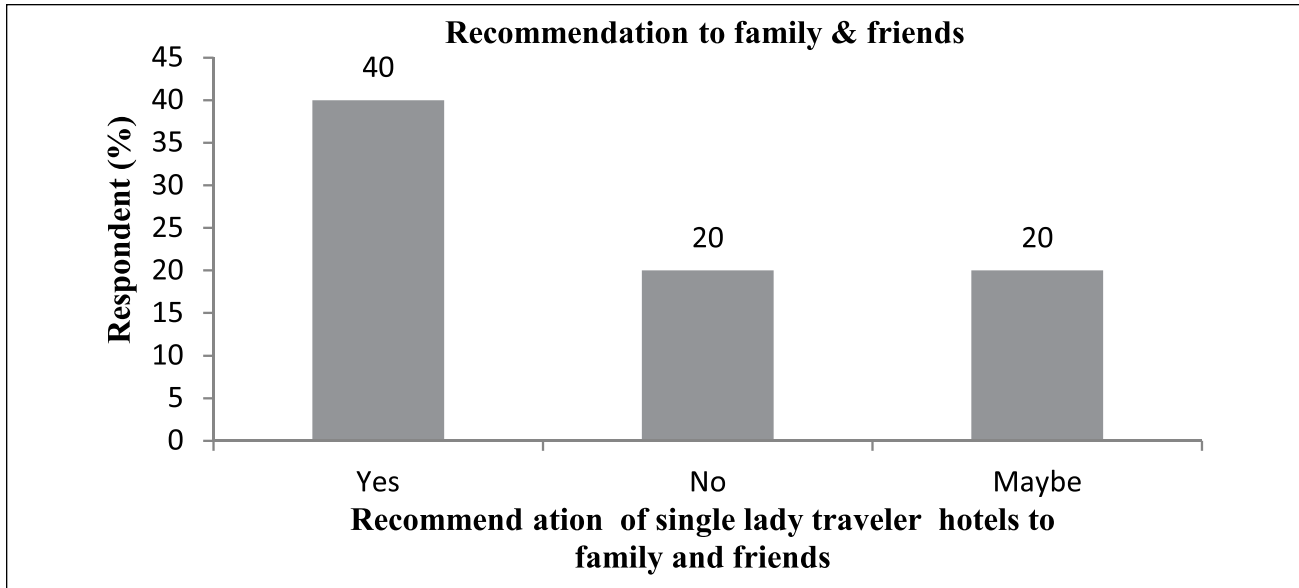


Figure 9: Chances of the respondent to suggest single lady traveler facility of hotel to friends and family

More than 40% of the respondents mentioned that they will definitely suggest their friends and relations, approx. 20% of the respondents were quite likely to suggest the same, and the rest 40% were relatively less likely to suggest their close ones to avail this facility. Many solo women travelers publicly share their personal experiences by blogging over social media platforms, motivating thousands of women around the globe for sole exploration. Women are now giving time and space to themselves and becoming more prominent in the travel world (Mack et al., 2008; Bosangit et al., 2009; Volo, 2010).

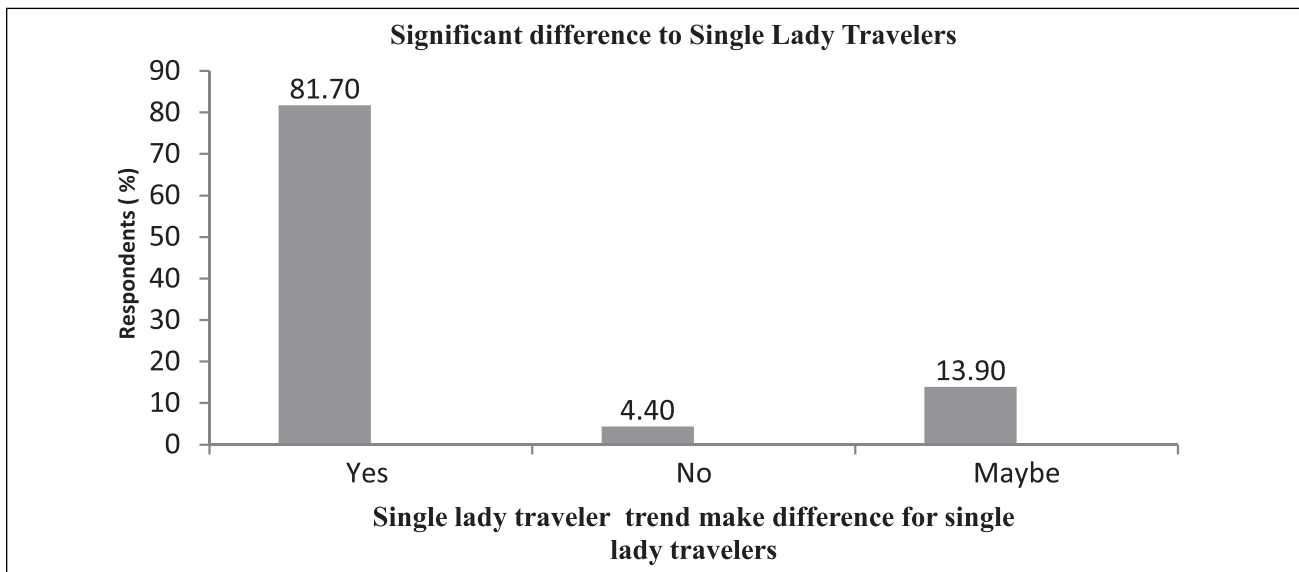


Figure 10: Number of respondent believing that single lady traveler trend will make a significant difference



81.7% of the respondents believed that it will make a difference, the rest 13.9% were unsure about it and 4.4% did not think it will make a difference. Tourism providers who wish to appeal to the female and non- western tourism markets should take these travelers priority needs thoroughly and adequately into account to ensure that everyone has equal and sufficient space. Women belonging from emerging developing economies are also important participants in social processes (Xie, 2019).

CONCLUSION

The aim of the research was to find the scope of market in terms of how productive the single lady traveler trend is turning out to be so that more emphases can be given on this market trend by the stakeholders. It is realized that Solo Women Travelers have increased in developing countries. It is very clearly revealed that both the genders are open to Single Lady Traveler. To conclude, in the present date of socio-economic development of our society, women are as much independent and productive as men and this evolvement will only mature with time. The dynamic initiative taken up by hotels to introduce special facilities and services for solo female travelers with the aim of generating revenue through a promising and growing market segment as well as to send the message of equality and feminism, has been perceived well by the customers of both genders and is growing to be a successful step of change in the industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Landmark studies and recent statistics show that women represent half of the contemporary travel market (Bond, 2015; Harris & Wilson, 2007), and dominate the adventure travel, solo holiday, and backpacking markets (Wilson & Harris, 2006; Wilson & Little, 2005). It is projected that women's participation in tourism will continue to grow, and this growth will be especially remarkable in the Asia-Pacific region, with an estimation of a 400% increment by 2030 (E global travel media, 2014).

At present not many hotels have the facilities for the Single Lady Travelers. It is highly recommended that it should be made a necessary mandate for the hotels to make facilities for Single Lady Travelers. This should be one of the important parameter in the Star Classification of the Hotels. Besides this encouragement should be given to the hotels with such existing facility. Hotels can provide extra points in their Loyalty programs to Single Lady Traveler. Various stakeholders like hotels, travel agents, etc. should increase their advertisement and also to explore, encourage and tap on this potential market.

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