

Challenges and Experiences of Single Lady Traveler: A Study (With special reference to Hotels in Delhi City)

Anjali Xess¹, Gurjeet Kaur², Santosh Malkoti³

^{1,3}Chitkara College of Hotel Management, Chitkara University, Punjab, India

²Chitkara School of Mass Communication, Chitkara University, Punjab, India.

¹anjali.xess@chitkara.edu.in, ²gurjeet.kaur@chitkara.edu.in, ³santosh.malkoti@chitkara.edu.in

Abstract

For some, travelling alone as a woman can be daunting and stressful. Nonetheless, an increasing number of women are stepping out on their own, even travelling internationally to explore new locations. Women's solo travel has grown in popularity to the point where many travel portals around the country are organising exclusive women-centric trips and tours. Women are becoming more self-sufficient and economically powerful, which is one of the key causes for this development. In this conceptual work, several solo travel motives are classified based on a literature review to identify why women choose to travel independently, and to identify their preferences while choosing a hotel to stay. This article explores the experiences and challenges faced by a solo traveller and how they overcome these challenges. A survey has been conducted among Solo Lady Traveller (SLT) of Tricity who have stayed in Delhi's hotels while travelling frequently or occasionally. The tool for data collection is a Questionnaire, which comprises objective questions and open-ended questions as well. Primary data is collected from 100 SLT who shared their experiences, preferences, and challenges while travelling or staying in a hotel. The qualitative data collection method has been chosen for the study. Term clouds, Sentiment analysis, are part of it. This displays the respondents' opinions and thoughts on a specific topic. The NVIVO 12 software is used to perform qualitative research. This study also derived precautions to be taken by those who are planning their first solo travelling. The results indicated that the only way to feel better when travelling was through proper pre-planning, such as background checks, destination information and knowledge of the local language for interaction with other travellers and locals..

Keywords: Single Lady Traveller (SLT), Amenities, Hotel rooms, Delhi, Tricity, Challenges, and Experiences

Introduction

In the 21st century, women have taken up different corporate world positions as chief executive officers, sales managers, entrepreneurs, cabin crew, hoteliers, teachers, etc. Customer segment is witnessing increasing women count and bridging men-women disparity. The SLT is a fast-growing market and has an enormous potential in India. In earlier times, women travelled with their families and were not permitted to leave the house without male members of their families. However, over time, this barrier has cracked and falling apart, and more and more women are emerging as SLT. Women are becoming more autonomous than they were in the past; they are ambitious and prefer to travel alone without a male companion or family or relatives, or a group. There are more times in a woman's life when her duties are limiting. Therefore, solo travel offers them a break, and they find it convenient and relaxing.

Being a national capital, Delhi experiences a lot of business and leisure travellers alike. Like most of India, Delhi is a sea of beautiful chaos - the incredible vitality of its busy streets, combined with a strong fragrance of spices, a glimpse of ancient balconies, the industry in central Delhi, etc. The safety and protection of the lady traveller have always been a topic of grave concern. Recent media awareness and public unrest for heinous crimes against women have brought this issue to the fore. Many safety precautions are being advised, particularly for working women who have to travel frequently. Nowadays, women are not afraid and bold aspirants, aware of their rights to achieve success. The SLT phenomenon is the fastest-growing trend globally, making luxury hotels build special services and geared to tap this clientele. Comfort, protection and security are the key factors that the woman guest wants. Therefore, holding all the basic

requirements of a SLT, most hotels have begun to work on winning this opportunity from SLT. According to the survey conducted by industry experts, between 10 and 18 per cent of hotel guests are single lady travellers (2). With the awareness of SLT as a fast-growing concept in India, Indian hotels have also begun to embrace this concept.

Literature Review

2.1 Basic amenities offered by hotel for Single lady traveller: - Safety for women is an essential concern in the hospitality industry because a SLT opts for the hotel while travelling nationally or internationally. Hotels like Oberoi, ITC, Taj, Leela has started with the concept of single lady traveller. Thus keeping in mind with the single lady concept, hotels have dedicated an entire floor for the SLTs to make the lady feel pampered. Women tend to have a comfortable, safe and secure environment, aesthetic upkeep, are more concerned about cleanliness, level of services and ambience. The other factor includes the hotel's location & its goodwill and convenient approach area for a meeting (RasikaGumaste et al. 2013 and SunitaBorkar et al.). A SLT is always the prime priority for the hospitality industry. Thus, the hotel had taken a step forward to create a comfortable and convenient environment for SLT and tried to offer all the luxury items that a SLT needs and demands. Hotels have started serving the best possible way and offered many room facilities for the SLT. Hotels offer basic amenities on their arrivals like a welcome kit, flowers, cakes, cookies, fruit platter, basic bathroom amenities like single lady kit which contains all basic amenities like a safety pin, sanitary napkin, nail filers, nail paint, essential oil, loofah, etc., kimono in bathroom, bed cushion with a name of lady guest and other security features like in-room dining facility provided by female staff, lady concierge and a lady attendant for cleaning the room and the telephone video screening.

2.2 Safety and security: – Travelling alone for single lady guests are prone to risks due to the increased crime rate. Thus the second paramount concern for a SLT is her safety and security. While travelling women should follow a set of simple guidelines when out for adventuring alone (4). A fine place to begin is from the hotel itself, which has proved more advantageous for a single lady traveller journey. The hospitality industry has also recognised this concern of SLTs and is now taking proactive precautions on a SLT's safety and security. Hotels have developed specific procedures or standard operating procedures (SOP) for SLT, including all the concerns about the safety and security of SLTs starting from the airport pick-up facility by lady chauffeurs, to lady porter in the hotel lounge, and escorting lady guest to the guest room by a lady executive. The residential floor dedicated for SLTs is kept under CCTV surveillance, monitored by patrolling guards on that floor to prevent any untoward attentions/incident by troublemakers (5). In-room facilities given by the hotels include photo phones, having a photo camera attached to it. Facilities like incoming calls are checked and screened without revealing the female guest's identity or her room number (6). Sammons and others (1999) studied that single lady guest room safety and security are prioritised. Before allotting the room to the single lady guest, the room is thoroughly checked by the housekeeping and maintenance staff to ensure the proper functioning of the safety latch, peephole, smoke detector, etc. (7).

2.3 Handle with care – hotels are now taking the lead to offer a wow service to single lady guest. Creating wow factors occurs when an employee understands, anticipates, takes the minutes care, and goes out of the way to do it if required. Various facts prove that the hospitality industry tries to fulfil all the demands and run an extra mile to meet requests of SLTs. As observed, special recognition by the hotel is given to SLT; the hotel staff is put on alert right from the arrival of a SLT in the city and includes through pick-up facilities by a lady chauffeur, cleaning of the room is done by the lady associate to ensure a feeling of comfort to the SLT. Most of the hotels now provide the SLT room with the feminine look – upholstery with the blue, pink, violet based interiors, decorated rooms, especially on floors earmarked for SLTs. With the motive to handle-with-care gesture to the SLT, the room also includes famine magazines, flower arrangement, fruits

and cookies platter, mini-bar with champagne and chocolates. Hotels offer various plans that include spa treatment with different complimentary massages, silk bathrobe beauty parlour where the lady traveller can pamper herself. Most of the hotels offer happy hours that includes one-hour free drinks with snacks in the lounge, especially for the single lady travellers. Most of the hotels offer the pillow menu card where a single lady can order accordingly through the list and make them comfortable.

Objectives:-

1. To study the experience and challenges faced by a single lady traveller.
2. To study the preferences of solo female customer in the hotel.

Scope:

1. This article aims to enable hotel owners and management to make necessary adjustments to concentrate more on the future proactively to meet female customers' expectations and analyse quality and technical interfaces properly.
2. Provide insights to Hotel designers when planning the hotel's in-room facilities.
3. To help those women plan better their first solo travel to Delhi.

Research Methodology: -

The data required for the research was collected through a survey conducted among Solo Lady Travellers of Tricity (Chandigarh, Panchkula, Mohali), staying in hotels in Delhi during their occasional or frequent visits. A questionnaire related to a solo traveller's experiences and challenges and how she overcomes these challenges were asked. The questionnaire contained 15 objective and open-ended questions. Primary data was collected from 100 SLT who willingly shared their experiences, preferences, and challenges while travelling or staying in a hotel. This survey enabled to formulate precautions for women planning their first solo travel.

5.1 Data Analysis

The research was carried out in two stages: first, all the closed ended responses that were gathered through a survey, converted into graphical representations, and then, in the second phase of the review, open ended responses data was transcribed and washed before being imported into NVIVO. On the basis of queries, the second Stop Node was declared. All of the responses to the same questions were anchored on the same node. To begin, Word Clouds were created by announcing Stop terms, which assisted in extracting valuable material for the study. Sentiment and thematic analysis were conducted by using Autocode feature

5.2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION: The qualitative data collection method has been chosen for the study. Term clouds, Sentiment analysis, are part of it. This displays the respondents' opinions and thoughts on a specific topic. The NVIVO 12 software is used to perform qualitative research.

Discussions and Interpretations: -

6.1 The responses to the survey of 100 SLT from Tricity i.e., Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali were analysed to present its salient features as given below.

Age

100 responses

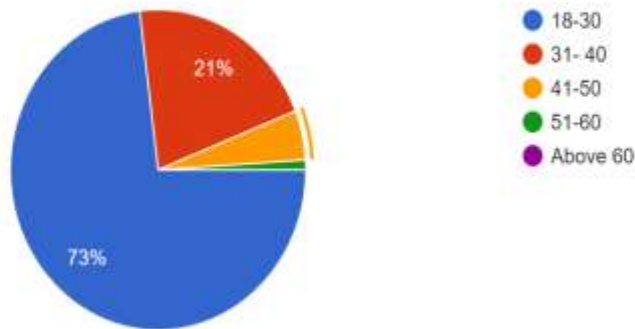


Figure 1 shows that almost all age groups have participated in this survey. SLT from the age group of 18-30 covered maximum of this survey - 73%, followed by those from age group of 31-40 – 21%. The rest were ladies above 40.

Marital Status

100 responses

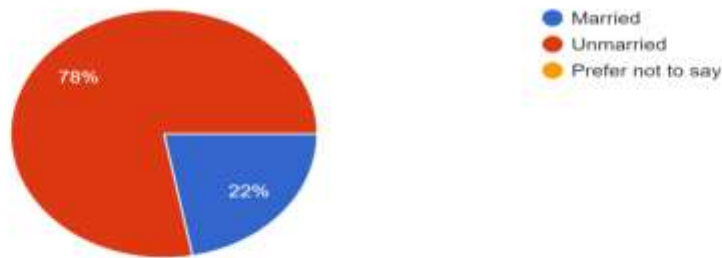
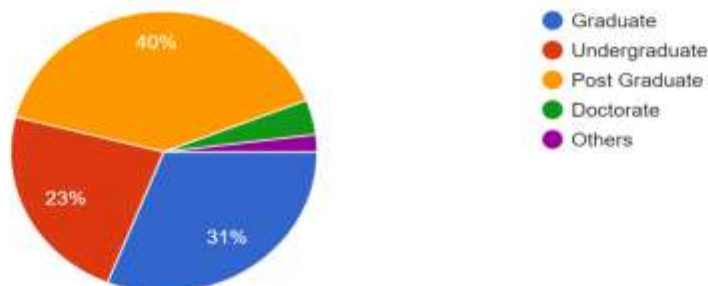


Figure 2- 78% of respondents was unmarried and prefers to travel alone, whereas 22% of respondents were married. This mix helped in authenticating the responses from both the categories (Figure 2).

Education Qualification

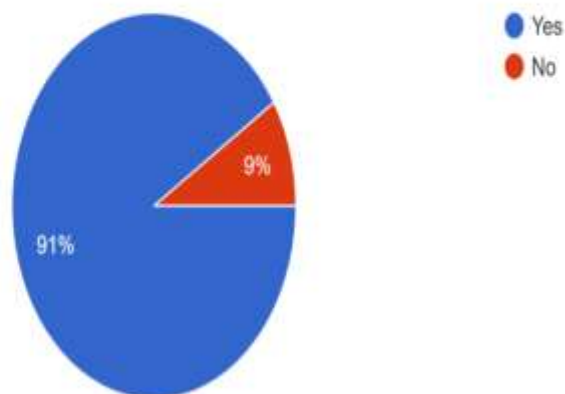
100 responses



3. All the respondents are educated. 40% are Postgraduate, 23% undergraduate while 31% were pursuing graduation (Figure 3).

Do you travel for leisure/recreation/business or other activities?

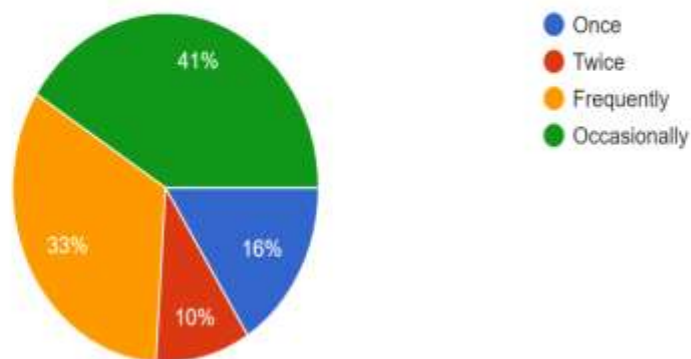
100 responses



The pie chart in figure 4 shows that the primary objective of the 91% of the SLT for travelling was for leisure/recreation or business purposes.

How many times in a year do you travel for leisure/office work/other activities in Delhi?

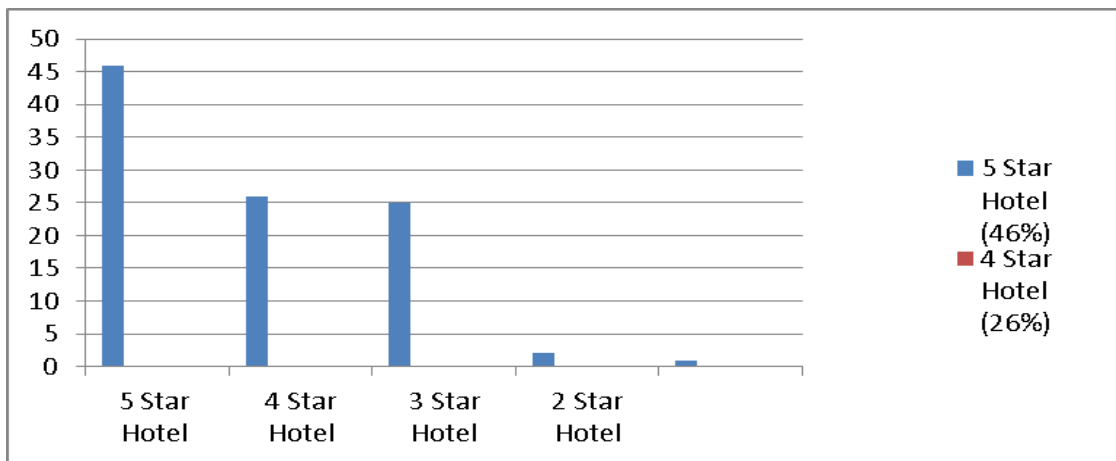
100 responses



This pie chart in figure 5 shows how often a SLT undertakes travelling to Delhi. 41% of the respondents occasionally travel in a year, 33% visit Delhi frequently, whereas 16% and 10% travel twice and once respectively.

6. When you travel alone which star category hotel do you prefer?

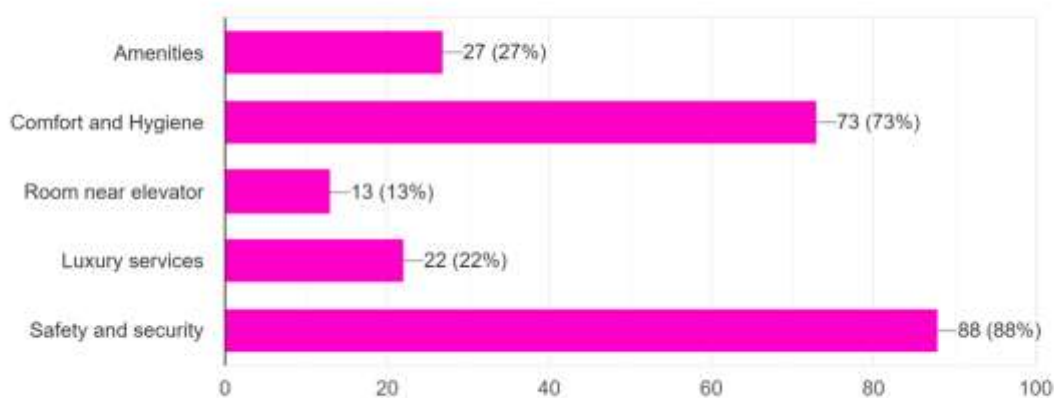
100 responses



This bar graph in Figure 6 clearly depicts that almost 94% of the SLTs choose star hotels implying that they prefer excellent service, safety, and hygiene. Choosing between 3 stars to 5 stars also shows that they expect value for the money they spend.

What do you look for in hotel as a single lady traveler?

100 responses

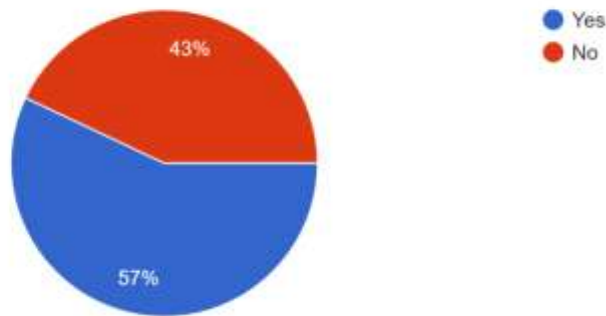


The Bar graph in figure 7 represents the grading of preferences of SLTs for selecting a particular hotel. Their top desire is safety & security during their stay (88%), then comfort and hygiene (73%) and finally the amenities in the hotel (27%).

On enquiring about a change of mind to explore other options after booking a hotel, some SLTs confirmed having opted for other options. Some of the respondents said that they hesitated to change their hotel after confirmation of their booking. However, they would not mind changing the hotel, if the hotel room was not felt safe by them, or if the hotel staff was not providing services as assured or advertised at the time of booking, or if the hotel lacked services/amenities, or if the rooms were found to be unhygienic and uncomfortable. Many SLTs suggested choosing a hotel having lady staff for room service to SLTs. Some of the respondents told that they usually explore the area or do research before hiring a hotel room that makes them feel satisfied.

Have you ever noticed female inequality while travelling alone?

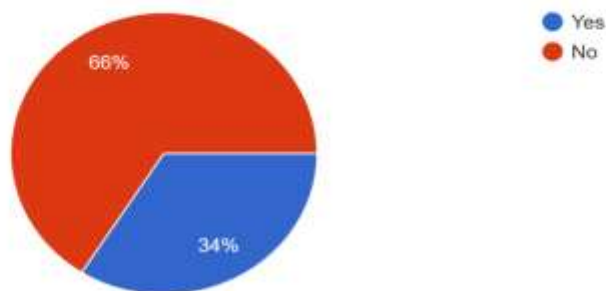
100 responses



57% of respondents claimed of having noticed female inequality while travelling alone, whereas 43% SLTs from Tricity of Chandigarh never faced such a situation while travelling alone (figure 8).

Did you find it difficult to talk to a local ?

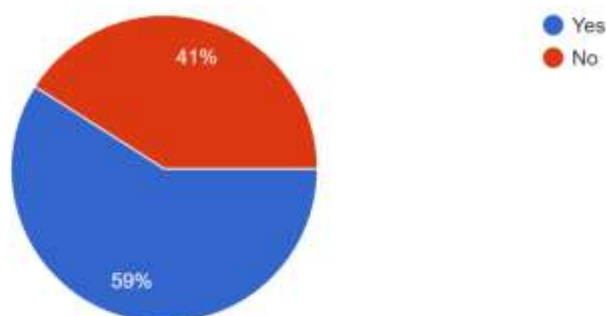
100 responses



66% of SLTs found interacting with local people very comfortable, while 34% of SLTs faced problems communicating with locals due to language or some other factors (Figure 9).

Being Single Lady traveler, have you ever experienced anything during your trip that made you feel unsafe?

100 responses



Being SLT, 59% of the respondents experienced something which made them feel unsafe, followed by 41% of respondents who did not experience such a situation (Figure 10).

Some SLTs mentioned their concern regarding safety and security during their trip. As most women like to travel alone and independently, hotels should prioritise ensuring their SLT guests feel safe and secure. They expressed that somehow, they felt unsafe while travelling. While 40% of ladies felt that as a SLT, they had experienced an unsafe journey, whereas 60% felt safe and secure while travelling.

Did your experience for a good looking hotel turn into bad one? if yes then give a reason ?

100 responses



As per the survey, it was found that the journey of SLTs often turned into a bad one. Some SLTs were disappointed, as the hotel rooms were not up to the mark. The hotels' websites that claimed to provide adequate safety and protection in their hotel were failing to provide it to the SLTs. The hotels lacked the facilities expected by the SLTs. Some SLTs stated that they had encountered difficulties when travelling to remote areas in Delhi, which did not have hotels safe for SLTs. Some SLTs expressed their frustration with the hotel staff's mismanagement, due to lack of proper hygiene and comfort.

On asking about the most critical piece of advice that SLT would give to anyone planning her first long-term solo trip, some of the respondents recommended that future travellers choose those hotels to stay in Delhi that prioritises women's safety and security. Some respondents indicated that before planning any tour, the first and foremost thing to do is to study in detail about the hotel, the travel history of the place and the impressions of other travellers to get an idea of the area. They also recommended carrying hand maps and safety gear ready, including pepper spray, safety pin and a pocket-knife for their safety. SLTs should be brave enough to face the obstacles when deciding to stay at the hotel. After having room in a hotel, they should ask for a lady attendant to accompany them, clean the room and take their service orders. Most of the ladies have advised sending a location link to their guardian while travelling, as it would be convenient for them to keep track of them.

6.2 Word Cloud Analysis

The word cloud analysis has been done based on the open ended questions (Q.No. 8, 12, 13, 14) received from respondents (shown in Fig.12)



Fig.12 Word Cloud Analysis

The word cloud depicts that respondents are really concerned about comfort, hygiene, safety and security provided by hotels to the single lady traveler. It has been clearly pin pointed that respondents have given priority to Comfort, hygiene and safety while selecting a hotel for their stay in Delhi. Also it is observed that amenities, luxury and hotel services have also got respondents attention.

6.3 Sentiment Analysis

Table1. Sentiment analysis (Q.No. 8, 12, 13, 14)

Sentiment analysis of Open ended Questions	A : Very negative	B Moderately negative	C Moderately positive	D : Very positive
1. Experience for a good looking hotel turns into bad one	0	4	2	0
2. Thinking to yourself after hiring a hotel room that you must have gone for the other options	1	4	4	1
3. looking for facilities as a single lady traveler provided in hotel	0	0	21	0
4. The most important bit of advice you would give to someone who is planning her first solo long term travel	5	5	32	8

The sentimental analysis table indicates that the experience for a good looking hotel turns into bad one is moderately negative. It’s been observed that thought of changing hotel room after hiring it has both moderately negative and moderately positive impact on the respondent’s sentiments whereas looking for facilities as a single lady traveler being provided in a hotel has moderately positive influence on the respondents. Lastly, the most important bit of advice given to those who are planning first solo long term travel received maximum moderately positive reaction from the respondents.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

Women are achieving parity with men in the business world, which involves regular travel to carry out professional responsibilities. Women also represent the family on the domestic and social fronts. This study therefore discussed the experience and difficulties faced by solo travellers and how to resolve these challenges. The survey shows that women from almost all age groups have expressed their interest in travelling whether for leisure or business purposes. Out of 100 respondents, 60 per cent of SLTs fly rarely or regularly in a year to Delhi. Many SLTs choose star hotels that prefer excellent service, protection and hygiene. Following a survey, it has been observed that SLTs offer top priority to safety and protection, followed by comfort and hygiene. They do not hesitate to change their hotel if they did not find the hotel room safe or if the hotel staff did not provide facilities as assured or advertised at the time of booking. Many SLTs have recommended selecting a hotel with a lady room service crew. Some of the respondents said they would generally explore the area or does research before hiring a hotel room that would make them happier. This study also helps to allow hotel owners and managers to make the required changes in order to focus more proactively on the future in order to meet the needs of female customers and to evaluate the quality and technological interface properly, as some SLTs have indicated their concerns about safety and security during the trip. Hotels should give priority to ensuring that their SLT guests feel safe and comfortable. Some of the respondents pointed out that hotel rooms were not up to the mark because they lacked the facilities required by the SLTs. Hotel designers should also reflect on the planning of in-room hotel facilities. The survey extracted the measures to be taken by those making their first solo trip. It was suggested that future travellers select those hotels to stay in Delhi that offer priority to women's safety and protection. Before planning any trip, the first and foremost thing to do is research the hotel in depth, the travel history of the place and the experiences of other travellers to get an idea of the location. Most of the ladies advised that they should send a location link to their guardian while travelling as it would be convenient for them to keep track of them. The findings showed that the only way to feel better when travelling is by careful preparation prior to travel, such as background checks, destination information and knowledge of the local language for interaction with other travellers or locals.

Conflict of Interest Argument

Regarding the work, the author and/or its publication, the authors claimed that there were no possible conflicts of interest.

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