WORKING WOMEN TRAVELLING ALONE: SAFETY AND SECURITY CONCERNS, ISSUES AND EXPECTATIONS FROM INDIAN BUDGET HOTELS

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ABSTRACT

Women empowerment and entrepreneurship opportunities have allowed women to drive the world economy. In India, Female entrepreneurs empower 50% of the start-up ecosystem, motivated by opportunities and education. Therefore, it is an opportunity and responsibility of hotels to provide safe and secure stays to these women traveling for business or other official reasons. A qualitative research approach has been applied to understand single lady travelers' safety and security needs and expectations. Sixteen in-depth interviews were conducted with working women to understand the safety and security features that can promote the female economy in tourism.

The data was analyzed using content analysis. The research findings reveal that these females consider safety and security to be the topmost considerations when selecting hotels. Some basic features expected from budget hotels are 'good location of the hotel, confirmation of room booking, pick-up, and drop, safe location of the room, presence of female employees, proper room locking system, monitored CCTV in corridors and other public areas, female security guard, and DND facility. This research study has significant implications for budget hotels, as adding these services will increase the revenue generated from female travelers.

Keywords: traveler, solo, budget hotels, safety and security, female economy.

Introduction

The number of businesswomen travelers in India has been increasing steadily (Rao, 2023). As globalization and economic development continue to shape India's business landscape, more women are taking on leadership roles and engaging in professional endeavors that involve frequent travel within the country. Women empowerment and entrepreneurship opportunities have allowed women to drive the world economy. As per a new analysis by Boston Consulting Group, if women and men throughout the globe engaged equally as entrepreneurs, global GDP might eventually climb by 3% to 6%, expanding the global economy by $2.5 trillion to $5 trillion (Unnikrishnan & Blair, 2022). In India, Female entrepreneurs empower 50% of the start-up ecosystem, motivated by opportunities and education (Saluja & Bfsi, 2024). However, despite the progress made in empowering women entrepreneurs, it is essential to acknowledge the unique challenges and concerns working women face in India in various dimensions of society (Rajam & Soundararaja, 2016). One aspect of such a challenge is staying in a hotel when traveling alone. It is an opportunity and responsibility of hotels to provide safe and secure stays to these women traveling for business or other official reasons. Usually, four and 5-star hotel properties outdo themselves regarding safety and security services. However, budget hotels operate differently. Hence, it is crucial to conduct qualitative research on the safety and security features of Indian budget hotels for single lady travelers. Therefore, this qualitative study explores the safety and security features of budget hotels for single lady travelers in India. By conducting in-depth interviews with working women travelers, the study will examine whether or not budget hotels cater to single lady travelers' specific needs and concerns regarding safety and security. The peculiar objectives of the study are;

1.   To identify females' safety and security concerns during their stay with budget hotels.
2.   To understand the safety and security issues females face during their stay.
3.   To enlist safety and security services that budget hotels should include for better stay experiences for female travelers.

The qualitative study on the safety and security features of Indian budget hotels for single lady travelers is significant for several reasons. First of all, it fills the gap in the literature by addressing the unique issues and difficulties that single women travelers in India encounter. Furthermore, the research will enhance understanding of the elements impacting female guests' choices of lodging. Thirdly, it offers information on the security and safety elements that low-cost hotels offer, which aids in determining how well they suit the demands of female tourists. The study can also help hotel owners and legislators understand what has to be changed to guarantee a safe and secure stay for single women guests.

1.   LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP
Since customers consider HSS services a critical factor when choosing hotels to stay in, it is important to comprehend the guest's impression and degree of satisfaction with these services (Hilliard & Baloglu, 2008; Sohrabi et al., 2012). Research indicates that there is a difference between hotel security managers' and guests' perceptions of the significance of safety and security measures, making it crucial to comprehend how visitors feel about different HSS services (Chan & Lam, 2013). The perception of HSS held by tourists is a complicated phenomenon that is influenced by a number of variables. When traveling with family, a business traveler may perceive a destination's HSS metrics differently (Feickert et al., 2006a; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012). The way that visitors see HSS varies depending on the generation and hotel categorization level (Anichiti et al., 2021; Rittichainuwat, 2013). Safety perception is influenced by any prior criminal experience. It has also been noted that, in contrast to males, women are even prepared to pay a higher rate for a hotel that has their chosen safety elements. Additionally, customers' willingness to pay extra for safety and security measures declines as they get older (Feickert et al., 2006a). Since most hotels cater to a variety of clientele, it becomes essential to comprehend how visitors see hotel security and safety services—both generally and in relation to specific characteristics. Aspects of safety and security services are covered in the literature that is now available on hotel safety and security. Recent research has examined the challenges faced by hotel managers in maintaining security (Efendi, 2020), creating a secure hotel experience for female guests (H. J. Wang & Wu, 2020), the impact of security issues on guest loyalty in hotels (Nwokorie & Igbojekwe, 2019), the compliance of information security policies (X. Wang & Xu, 2021), the evaluation of hotel building fire protection (Prastowo & Indriastuti, 2023), and hotel managers' opinions on the significance of safety and security measures (Anuar et al., 2019). The present literature on safety and security services does not focus on the specific needs of hotel safety and security services for solo female travelers. Therefore, this research tries to find out the specific safety and security needs of women from budget hotels in India.

2.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
The investigators used qualitative methodology to address the research topics in this study. An interpretative method is used in qualitative research to comprehend people's relationships, beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and behaviors. It allows people to share their experiences about a particular phenomenon (Kleinheksel et al., 2020; Singh & Gupta, 2023; Stemler, 2015). The qualitative research approach has been considered relevant for this study, as no study has explored working female travelers' perspectives on the safety and security of their accommodations. Only female authors conducted the interviews to make female participants comfortable so they could open up and share their views freely without hesitation.

Unique ID	State	Age (in years)	Annual Income (in INR)	Occupation	Frequency of visiting hotels (in a year)	Star Category of hotels you stay with

2.1. Population and sample

The study population was single female travelers who traveled alone for official work and stayed with budget hotels in India. As no sampling frame was readily available to identify the study participants, snowball sampling was used to reach the right respondents. Researchers used telephone interviews to gather data since reaching and accessing individuals who lived across the nation was difficult. Table 3.1 displays the socio-demographic details of the research participants. Almost every participant travels twice a year and stays with budget properties nationwide.

Table3.1: Socio-demographic profile of the respondents and the study units

Res 1.	Uttarakhand	30	5-10 lacs	Beautician	4-5 times	3 star
Res 2.	Delhi	27	5-10 lacs	Fashion Designer	2-3 times	2 and 3 star
Res 3.	Uttarakhand	29	5-10 lacs	Fashion Designer	4-5 times	3 star
Res 4.	Madhya Pradesh	33	10-15 lacs	Psychologist	1-2 times	3 and 4 star
Res 5.	Delhi	24	5-10 lacs	Beautician	5-7 times	2 and 3 star
Res 6.	Rajasthan	38	5-10 lacs	Day-care owner	1-2 times	3 star
Res 7.	Uttarakhand	35	10-15 lacs	Beautician	3-4 times	3 and 4 star
Res 8.	Delhi	23	5-10 lacs	Interior Designer	2-3times	3 star
Res 9.	Himachal	26	5-10 lacs	Interior Designer	2-3 times	3 star
Res 10	Uttar Pradesh	35	5-10 lacs	Interior Designer	5-6 times	3 star
Res 11	Uttarakhand	30	10-15 lacs	Doctor	2-3 times	3 and 4 star
Res 12	Delhi	31	15-20 lacs	Teacher	3-4 times	3 and 4 star
Res 13	Delhi	28	5-10 lacs	Digital Marketing	Twice	3 star
Res 14	Delhi	32	5-10 lacs	Kindergarten owner	2-3 times	2 and 3 star
Res 15	Uttar Pradesh	29	10-15 lacs	School owner	3-4 times	3 star
Res 16	Himachal	27	5-10 lacs	Doctor	3-4 times	3 star

2.2. Data collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand the participants' safety and security concerns during their stay with the hotel, safety, and security issues faced, as well as changes required in budget hotels to improve their safety. The interview questions were prepared based on the research inquiry. A few research questions were included to extract any additional relevant information about the participants' profiles, even though most questions were meant to address subjects linked to the study question. Interviews reached a saturation level, with participants highlighting the same safety and security services that made them feel safe during their stay with budget hotels. However, the study succeeded in identifying the themes required to address the study questions with a homogeneous sample of sixteen (Clarke & Braun, 2016; Verma & Singh, 2018). Table 3.2 displays the interview guide that was utilized for the research.

Table 3.2: Interview guide

Topic	Discussion	Questions/Prompts

Introduction	• urpose and aim	• nterviewers' introduction • im and objective of the interview. • onsent for interview and recording
General information	• ocio-demographic information of the participants	• ame, age, annual income, Occupation, Frequency of visiting the hotels, star category of hotel selected for stay
Hotel selection criteria	• otel booking procedure. • asis of hotel selection.	• ow do you book the hotel for your stay when you travel? • hat do you look for in a hotel before selecting it? • ame the top 3 things you require in the hotel for your stay. • ill you compromise with safety and security for the facilities you just mentioned?
Concerns	• orries while traveling.	• hat are your safety and security concerns while staying with budget hotels?
Issues / Problems	• ssues related to luggage safety. • ther safety issues • afety from employees • afety from other guests	• ave you faced issues related to luggage during your stay with the hotels? • ave you faced any other safety-related issues during your stay? Further interrogation was done if the answer to the above question was yes. • o you feel safe around hotel employees during your stay? • o you feel safe around other guests during your stay? If the answer was yes, then further interrogation was done.

Requirements	• uggested improvements in budget hotels • op 2-3 safety and security features	As per your experience, what safety and security measures must budget hotels provide to make you feel safe? What are 2-3 most important safety and security features without which you won't stay at the hotel?

2.3. Data analysis

All interviews were recorded once participants permitted to record their phone conversations. The interviews ranged from 13 to 24 minutes, with an average of 17 minutes. A high-quality interview transcript is described by the completeness and accuracy of oral and written communication between the researcher and the respondent (Maxwell, 1992). Transcripts of the information gathered from phone interviews were made. The primary themes and patterns from the transcripts were examined using content analysis. To analyze data, researchers in social science, psychology, healthcare, and other fields have often employed content analysis (Kim & So, 2022; Mohammed et al., 2015; Nagar, 2020). According to Krippendorff (2019), content analysis views texts, expressions, and visuals as data the mind may read, analyze, understand, and act upon. This is appropriate for the current investigation because it is used to encode and detect themes at the individual level. The content analysis procedure was conducted using the six steps outlined by Krippendorff (2019): unitizing, sampling, recording, reducing, inferring, and narrating. Each transcript was carefully read and summarized as per questions. This helped in understating the main themes from the transcript. All authors completed the data analysis and coding. The codes were developed once the transcripts had been read several times to gain familiarity. The authors then improved, added, and checked a few additional codes pertinent to the study questions. Once the themes and codes were finalized, all authors could agree. The themes and codes were examined several times to ensure no codes were overlooked. After the three authors' coding, four broad themes were established based on the study questions. It is verified that the final classification has adequate reliability because the first and corresponding author's interrater reliability in their classification was higher than the requirement of 0.8.

3. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to identify the concerns of female travelers for hotel safety before their stay, understand the safety and security challenges or issues faced by these females during their stay with the hotels, and enlist the safety and security features budget hotels must provide to make female travelers feel safe during their stay. This section presents the themes generated through content analysis. The themes developed through qualitative data analysis are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: themes derived for Indian budget hotel safety and security services from the perspective of single lady travelers.

SAFETY AND SECURITY CONCERNS BEFORE STAY	SAFETY AND SECURITY ISSUES/CHALLENGES FACED DURING STAY	SAFETY AND SECURITY EXPECTATIONS FROM HOTELS
Personal Safety Concerns • unauthorized entry • molestation • kidnapping • hidden	**Hotel-related safety and security issues** • Locating hotel during odd hours • Room denied on arrival • No emergency power backup • Non-monitoring of CCTV	**Product expectation** • Good location of the hotel • Safe location of the room • Monitored and functional CCTV • Well-illuminated public areas

camera • life threat **Belonging security concerns** • misplacing valuable items • misplacing important documents • loss of luggage • robbery/burglary	• Non-functional CCTV **room-related safety and security issues** • inside locking system in poor condition, e.g., tight bolt, loose latch, broken chain, damp doors • room allotted at a secluded area or some corner • theft of valuable item **Employee and other guest-related safety and security issues** • Employees stare the females • Ignorance of employees for potential threat • Absence of hotel employees or security guards in shady places	• Proper room locking system -inside and outside • Safety locker in room • Intercom in guest room **Service expectation** • confirmation of room booking • pick-up and drop facility • DND facility **Expectations from employees** • Grooming and hygiene • Proper training for safety and security • Presence of female staff and guards

3.1. Understanding the perception of solo female traveler for hotel selection

When females were asked about the hotel booking procedure, most of the participants stated that they made online reservations. Females who are on an official trip and whose company is selecting the hotel and making reservations are admitted to checking reviews of the hotel booked. Further, they were questioned about the hotel selection procedure, and all participants mentioned the facilities and amenities of the hotel.

"So in a hotel, what I look for, is basically location, how close it is to the railway stations, or you know, that maybe a nearest hospital maybe even a little bit, I'll look into the, you know, tourist places that I can go to, or areas that I can explore into. So that's my first and foremost, then second is my budget. Of course, like, you know, whether it is fitting into my budget". (Res4)

"Apart from other facilities and services, I always prefer a hotel at a good location. I mean it should not be very far from my place of work." (Res7)

"I don't get much of choice in selecting hotel. I usually travel alone only for official trip and in that case my company makes my booking. But I do tell them that it has to be a good hotel and a safe hotel. Just to be double sure, I take the details of the hotel and check the reviews online." (Res8)

"I always check online reviews, that whether it is you know, they are hospitable, and I also look into the factors that whether there are any incidents I should be concerned about, like, for example, that we keep hearing this in, you know, news and media of different safety, safety issues". (Res14)

Further, respondents were asked about the top three things they require in the hotel for their stay, and most of them mentioned suitable location, hygiene, and budget.

"Well, three things I want in the hotel are cleanliness, well-decorated room, and CCTV for safety reasons." (Res15)

"I would say there are more than three. But if I have to pick three things only, I would say it should fit into my budget, it should be hygienic and last I think it would be courteaous staff." (Res4)

"First, I want hotel to be in the main city, not close to railway stations. I don't know why but almost everywhere areas near to railway stations don't feel safe. Second I want the hotel to be clean and third tasty food." (Res3)

Next, females were asked to compare the top three things they wanted in hotel and safety and security services, and then they were asked if they would compromise on safety and security for better location, hygiene, or budget. All of them denied compromising the safety or security for any other feature.

"I am a woman traveling alone. I can't compromise on safety and security for anything. You are asking me to choose between other facilities and safety. I will always choose safety." (Res1)

"Okay, by asking this, you just made me realize the topmost thing I want in the hotel is safety and security." (Res6)

"No, I won't compromise my safety for any other service." (Res11)

"I think the comparison of services I want from hotel and safety and security is wrong. I mean, safety and security is a basic thing. Hotels must ensure my safety as I am their guest. It is not a luxury or something that I should expect from the hotel. It should be there without asking for it." (Res16)

3.2. Safety and security concerns before hotel stay
The responses of solo female travelers' indicated **personal safety concerns** such as unauthorized entry, molestation, kidnapping, hidden cameras, and life threats. Another concern is the **security of belongings**. Participants fear that they might misplace their valuables, important documents, and luggage. Some respondents mentioned the possible threat of robbery or burglary.

"I do expect a security guard in, you know, even low budget hotels, because if we talk about security, security comes first for anybody, you when you're traveling, you are usually alone in a new environment. You're worried about your safety." (Res9)

"I travel with important documents, so I usually worry about keeping them safe." (Res4)

" I feel lot of concerns for my safety. I mean to say there are things running around my mind that I have to be careful for my luggage, whats happening around me. I don't know if I should say this or not. But I think worst to worst also. In certain way it helps me in being prepared also. ……when I say worst to worst, I mean the worst-case scenario like someone might try to kidnap me or try to molest me. Females in India face all sorts of issues. Rape and murder being the common one. So I will keep my closeones informed of my whereabouts." (Res12)

"My biggest fear when I stay with the hotels is a hidden camera. I always think what if everything I am doing is getting recorded." (Res14)

"I can't trust employee in small hotels. I do feel concern for my cards and cash." (Res16)

3.3. Safety and security issues/challenges faced during the stay
When solo female travelers were asked to share any safety or security-related issue, they faced during their stay with the budget hotel, two females completely denied facing any type of issue. However, the rest of them agreed that they had faced safety and security issues during their stay at the hotel. These issues can be classified as safety and security issues related to the hotel, the room allotted, employees, and other guests.

3.3.1.   *Hotel related safety and security issues*
Participants have faced multiple issues, such as locating the hotel during odd hours, room denied on arrival, no emergency light backup, non-monitoring of CCTV, and non-functional CCTV.

"Once, I was staying at this hotel, I don't know why; I just asked the person on reception. Does anyone monitor these CCTVs installed in the corridor? The answer I got was no, and my myth of safety from CCTV was broken. That means if something happens to me, even in the corridor, no one is watching, and no help will reach me. They will just watch the recordings later on. I couldn't feel safe in that hotel afterward" (Res2)

"I made my reservation through a trustworthy website and the hotel denied the room. It was horrible. I reached the hotel at 10:00 pm. The hotel main entrance was locked. No guard on the gate to open it. Nobody responded. I called, and they said we didn't have rooms. All rooms are booked." (Res5)

"I reached the city midnight and could not locate the hotel. GPS wasn't showing the right location, hotel staff wasn't taking calls and I was roaming on the roads in an auto at 02.00 am trying to find the hotel. It was a nightmare." (Res6)

"..... I couldn't believe myself, how it was possible that a hotel doesn't have emergency power backup. I was relieved when the power came back." (Res15)

"Many hotels just install CCTV and don't maintain them. What the point of CCTV if its not working. I checked out of that hotel immediately." (Res12)

3.3.2. *Room-related safety and security issues*
Females' responses highlight various problems with rooms allocated to them without any regard for their safety and security. Some problems they have faced in the room are room allotted at a secluded area or some corner, inside-locking system in poor condition such as a tight bolt, loose-latch, broken chain and damp doors, and theft of valuable items.

"Small hotel don't even think that it is a single lady staying so they should assign room which make us feel safe. How can they assign room in some corner or end of the corridor? When I asked for room change they said all the rooms are full." (Res11)

"I was given a room which I couldn't lock from inside as the door got swollen because of moisture. I told the same to reception and they said mam this door doesn't get locked from inside. You leave it open only. Don't worry, no body will entre the room. We are here only. I was like are you kidding me. Give me some other room or I am leaving." (Res7)

"My debit card got stolen from the room. I kept on saying that I got misplaced from room only. The hotel didn't even agree and tried blaming me for falsely accusing them." (Res8)

3.3.3. *Employee and other guest-related safety and security issues*
Females have stated that hotel employees also failed to make them feel safe during their stay due to constant staring, ignorance of potential threats, and the absence of hotel employees or security guards in shady places. Not only employees but sometimes other guests staying in the hotel have also created problems.

"Hotels keep security guards only at the entrance. But there are other areas where they must have guards or some employees. I felt very unsafe in secluded areas. Passing through those areas is a problem every single time." (Res10)

"I have compared the time when I travel alone and with my husband. Employees stare you too much when alone. I don't know what are they thinking or what are their intentions but it is scary. Not only employees, even other guest have stared especially when I am alone." (Res9)

"I felt that this man staying in the hotel is following me every time I pass through the corridor. I complained the same to reception and they said they didn't notice. They were completely ignorant about it and not interated in taking any action." (Res6)

3.4. Safety and security expectations from hotels
The last section of the interview questions focused on the improvement required in a budget hotel to improve females' safety and security. The participants shared their expectations from budget hotels regarding their safety and security. The stated expectations have been categorised into three types: expectations in terms of products, expectations in terms of services, and expectations from employees.

3.4.1. *Product expectation*

The very first expectation of the participants is that it must be located in a good area so that it can be considered safe for females. Other expectations are the safe location of the room allotted, monitored and functional CCTV, well-illuminated public areas, proper room locking system inside and outside, safety locker in room, and in-room telephone.

"I want the hotel in good area. It should not be in a shady location." (Res4)

"Okay, another thing I expect is that hotel have working CCTV cameras on the corridors. I can always ask these employees whether the CCTV cameras are working or not. if I'm not sure about it, I'll consider another hotel." (Res3)

"After location, my request is please keep a room reserved for single ladies in a safe location. I think neither too close to reception is safe nor end of the corridor. Also, in our surroundings, please give rooms to families or other single ladies. Do not give rooms in our surroundings to single man or group of men."

"Hotel must have proper lighting in all areas and 24-hour power backup." (Res9)

"Hotel should provide locker in the room so that we can keep our valuables safe. Also they should provide a telephone in the room so that small things can be discussed over the phone. I don't want staff to knock the door for every small thing.." (Res5)

3.4.2. *Service expectation*

The participants of the study also mentioned a few services which would improve their feeling of safety and security. These are confirmation of room booking, pick-up and drop facility, and DND facility.

"Hotel should not deny room on arrival. Atleast consider, that it is a female travelling alone. If you don't want to give room to us please tell us before hand." (Res6)

"I would request these budget hotels to provide DND facility. Maybe a small hanging card type. I get scared when staff keep knocking on my door. Especially at night time." (Res10)

"At times, I reach or leave the hotel at odd hours. It will be better if the hotel can arrange for a pick-up or drop facility. Obviously they can charge. I just want them to arrange for a driver known to them so that I can feel safe." (Res13)

3.4.3. *Expectations from employees*

Respondents mentioned that hygiene and grooming of staff go a long way in making them feel safe and secure inside the hotel. Further, they mention that employees must be trained properly in safety and security. Hotels must consider hiring female employees and female security guards.

"One of the things I noticed about the small hotels is that all staff members are males. It would be great if the hotel also hired female staff, at least for reception. It feels much safer when females are around. If hotel can afford to have a female security guard. It will be like a cherry on the cake." (Res12)

"Appearance of staff in the hotel is such that some of them gives a vibe of criminals. How can I feel safe in such situations. Staff members should look presentable." (Res9)

"I expect the hotel to train their employees on basic things like being vigilant for small small things happening around." (Res8)

3.4.4. *The most important safety and security features of budget hotels for females*

Furthermore, while interrogating the expectations of females from budget hotels for ensuring their safety and security, they were also asked to name three safety and security services they expect, without which they

won't stay at the hotel. The top ten features mentioned below are according to their frequency of occurring in the transcripts. The frequency is mentioned in brackets.

1. Security guards (10)
2. CCTV (9)
3. Hotel location (7)
4. Proper lighting (6)
5. Staff training (5)
6. Presence of female staff and guards (4)
7. Safety locker in room (3)
8. Pick-up and drop facility (2)
9. Grooming and hygiene of staff (1)
10. DND facility (1)

4. DISCUSSION

The present study identified the perspective of females on safety and security services provided by budget hotels. The research reveals that safety and security concerns can affect the stay experience of females. Females, when traveling alone or to a new destination, get extra cautious for their safety and security. They feel that they are the soft target for many safety-related incidents. The fears of harassment, assault, and theft are not uncommon in females. During interviews, participants agreed to face minor to major safety challenges during their stay with the hotels. Female travelers often face challenges in reporting safety and security incidents to hotel staff or authorities. They fear that they will face retaliation, disbelief, or victim-blaming, which can stop individuals from coming forward with their experiences. Many hotels lack gender-specific safety measures crafted to meet the needs of female travelers. While security protocols and surveillance systems are in place, they may not adequately address the unique concerns and vulnerabilities faced by women.

To ensure the safety and security of female guests in budget hotels, a thoughtful approach is required that addresses females' unique concerns while balancing cost-effectiveness. The list of safety and security measures (table 4.1) mentioned by females during interviews shows that some of the features can actually be included without any extra cost. For example, the hygiene and grooming of the staff can be maintained with little effort from the owners. Maintenance is another concern hotels should look at; for example, door locks, power backup, and lighting in the area should be properly maintained. Incorporating the DND system will not cost much. Hotels already have a receptionist, and instead of a male, a female can be hired for the job. Security guards must be taking rounds of the property to make females feel safe. Employees should avoid unnecessary knocking on the female guest's door.

5. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This qualitative study provided in-depth insights into the requirements of females traveling alone and staying with budget hotels. The hotel industry may use this information to enhance females' stay experiences. The study has highlighted specific areas hotels need to work on. Most of the areas mentioned require a smaller budget for implementation. Qualitative research on the safety and security features of hotels for females contributes to theoretical frameworks in the field of hospitality management, gender studies, and tourism. Research has generated an advanced theoretical understanding of factors influencing female guest experiences, hotel operations, and social dynamics within hospitality settings. This study on the safety and security features of hotels for females uncovered key concerns and preferences of females and practices in the hospitality industry. By adopting a qualitative approach, researchers captured the nuanced perspectives of female travelers and generated insights that contribute to enhancing the safety, security, and overall satisfaction of solo female travelers during hotel stays.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's limitations restrict how broadly its conclusions may be applied and present chances for more research. Firstly, due to cultural differences, the study's findings may not be generalized to other countries. The study was limited to sixteen single female travelers contacted through snowball sampling method ranging from 23 years to 36 years of age. A different age group might provide additional insights into hotel safety and security concerns and requirements. Secondly, the results of this study might not be applied to all the hotels due to some constraints. This presents the possibility of doing comparable qualitative research with owners/managers of budget hotels and female travelers. Third, by using themes, the study used a qualitative methodology to investigate the viewpoints of working women on the status of safety and security services in budget hotels. Therefore, there is a chance to use a quantitative research technique to test the hypotheses obtained from the analysis of these themes and then create models for generalization. Fourth, in the investigation framework, this study investigated the viewpoints of only working women travelers. This broadens the field for future research, including other female groups, e.g., solo female travelers, single mothers with small kids, and solo female travelers from foreign countries coming to India.

7. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that women have discerning preferences when it comes to both product features and service delivery in the hospitality industry. From a product standpoint, females prioritize factors such as the location and safety of the hotel and its rooms, the presence of security measures such as CCTV surveillance and reliable locking systems, as well as amenities like safety lockers and intercoms for added convenience and peace of mind. Ensuring these aspects meet safety and security expectations is crucial for fostering a sense of security and comfort among guests. Moreover, the research highlighted key service expectations, including confirmation of room bookings, the provision of pick-up and drop facilities for enhanced safety, and the availability of a Do Not Disturb (DND) option to respect guests' privacy preferences. Lastly, expectations from hotel employees were identified as crucial factors in shaping the overall feeling of safety. Guests value the grooming and hygiene standards of staff, the provision of proper training for safety and security measures, and the presence of female staff and guards to enhance comfort and security for female guests.

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