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# Creating Value for Women Business Travelers: Focusing on Emotional Outcomes

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# Creating Value for Women Business Travelers: Focusing on Emotional Outcomes

## **Abstract**

Given the dramatic increase in women business travelers, addressing the needs of this market segment has become increasingly critical for hotel companies. While previous research has attempted to identify the specific items or features which women travelers want from their hotel stay, this report suggests a more holistic approach to capturing this market segment. Rather than emphasize the importance of specific items that fluctuate from one survey to the next, this study instead suggests that managers focus on how combinations of services, amenities, and facilities contribute to the desired affective responses sought by women business travelers. Based on a review of the literature on gender and emotion, a model is presented that emphasizes the flexibility managers have to accommodate women travelers within the context of a particular property. A convenience survey of hotel managers' perceptions of women's preferences shows that women are developing a clear and consistent message about the need to feel safe, comfortable, empowered, and pampered. Guided by these themes, hotel managers are in an excellent position to go beyond a focus on individual attributes and amenities to provide an experience that exceeds the expectations of this dynamic and growing market segment.

## **Keywords**

hotels, women, business travel, customer service

## **Disciplines**

Business | Hospitality Administration and Management

## **Comments**

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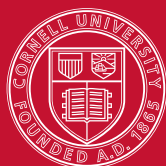
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## Creating Value for Women Business Travelers: Focusing on Emotional Outcomes

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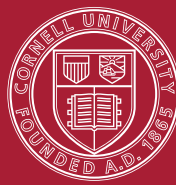
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## Focusing on Emotional Outcomes

by Judi Brownell

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Judi Brownell, Ph.D.**, is professor of organizational communication and dean of students at the Cornell University School of Hotel Administration. She has international teaching experience, and her on-line eCornell executive courses are taken worldwide. Brownell's research projects include studies on managerial listening behavior and the competencies required for global hospitality leaders. She has created tools to assess employee-organization fit and the communication of service values. Her current research focuses on listening as it relates to communicating and maintaining service quality standards in the international cruise industry. Brownell has written several textbooks, published over 80 articles, and serves on several editorial boards. She is also past president of the International Listening Association and has received awards for her research in this field. Brownell has conducted training and consulting for a wide range of hospitality organizations. Among her projects, she has designed assessment centers for hospitality leadership development. A seasoned administrator, Brownell has served as the school's associate dean for academic affairs and as its director for graduate studies. She has also been academic area director for both the organization behavior and

management communication disciplines.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**G**iven the dramatic increase in women business travelers, addressing the needs of this market segment has become increasingly critical for hotel companies. While previous research has attempted to identify the specific items or features which women travelers want from their hotel stay, this report suggests a more holistic approach to capturing this market segment. Rather than emphasize the importance of specific items that fluctuate from one survey to the next, this study instead suggests that managers focus on how combinations of services, amenities, and facilities contribute to the desired affective responses sought by women business travelers. Based on a review of the literature on gender and emotion, a model is presented that emphasizes the flexibility managers have to accommodate women travelers within the context of a particular property. A convenience survey of hotel managers' perceptions of women's preferences shows that women are developing a clear and consistent message about the need to feel safe, comfortable, empowered, and pampered. Guided by these themes, hotel managers are in an excellent position to go beyond a focus on individual attributes and amenities to provide an experience that exceeds the expectations of this dynamic and growing market segment.

# Creating Value for Women Business Travelers:

## Focusing on Emotional Outcomes

by Judi Brownell

**W**hen it comes to business travel, women have been “on their way” for quite some time now.<sup>1</sup> An early reference to women travelers appeared in 1973 in the *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, and by 1979 the *Quarterly* reported on a conference that addressed the needs of “the professional women traveler.”<sup>2</sup> At that event United Airlines reported that women business travelers accounted for 16 percent of its business, an increase from an infinitesimal figure at the beginning of that decade. The conference sought to identify women travelers’ distinctive needs, a quest the hospitality industry has now been following for some four decades. In a 1983 article urging scientific market research, Robert Lewis observed that hotel chains’ efforts to attract women included the addition of skirt hangers and women-only floors.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> S. Khan, “Aiming to Please Women Business Travel Industry Introduces More Services for Female Customers,” *USA Today*, June 10, 1999, p. 01B; and Glenn Withiam, “Wyndham: Focus on Women Business Travelers,” *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 3, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> CHRAQ News and Views, “Travel Research Association,” *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 4, p. 5; “Women Business Travelers: Satisfying the Needs of a Growing New Market,” *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (February 1979), pp. 67ff.

<sup>3</sup> Robert C. Lewis, “Getting the Most from Marketing Research, Part 1,” *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (November 1983), p. 83.



In a more recent example, Wyndham pioneered its programs and resources for women business travelers in 1995 and, just over fifteen years later, statistics indicate that nearly half of all business travelers are women. That number is projected to increase throughout the decades ahead.<sup>4</sup> As hospitality organizations confirm the significant impact this expanding market has on their bottom line, increased attention is being placed on gaining a better understanding of what women want from their business travel experiences. In this report I focus on hotel managers' perceptions of how best to satisfy this market segment through an integrated lens of travelers' emotional responses to the hotel's facilities and services.

Although some may argue that men and women want essentially the same things from their hotel experience (and they do have many needs in common), recent research suggests substantial differences in many areas, most particularly those relating to emotions.<sup>5</sup> While traditional satisfaction models have tended to focus on guests' cognitive evaluations of their travel experience, we know that emotions also have a significant effect on guest satisfaction.<sup>6</sup> Hospitality companies seeking to achieve a competitive advantage increasingly strive to create a guest experience that elicits positive emotional responses; attending to the affective components of the customer's experience has repeatedly proven to be good for both the guest and for business.<sup>7</sup>

While gender is increasingly being considered as a variable in attracting the business travel market, relatively little research has focused on distinguishing gender preferences on the basis of affective responses to the hotel experience. This should be a fruitful approach, as research makes clear that women have stronger emotional, personal responses to their

experiences than do men.<sup>8</sup> This finding suggests that creating a hotel experience with the goal of eliciting positive affect is likely to have a particularly significant impact on women travelers. Hotel managers can then create environments suited to the specific opportunities and constraints of their particular property by matching clusters of services, amenities, and facilities with desired affective outcomes.

There's little question of how important women business travelers are to the hospitality industry in general and to hotel companies in particular. Let's use that as a starting point for this report, and then look at the importance of affect and its link to guest satisfaction. I review the literature on gender and emotion to establish the importance of affect in women's decision-making processes and explain why hoteliers should identify and address women business travelers as a distinctive market segment. Then I propose a model that highlights the ways in which hotels might create more positive travel experiences for women and analyze the items which women business travelers have identified as important to their satisfaction in terms of the affective states they elicit. Finally, I present a convenience survey of hotel managers that assesses their perceptions of women's preferences as a starting point for those interested in attracting this particular market. In particular, I consider the degree of alignment between what women business travelers have reported as important to them and what hotel managers view as best practices. The implications of this study are that managers should focus on how best to generate key emotional responses through a holistic approach rather than seeking to identify any one specific service, amenity, or facility that all women business travelers prefer.

## Women Business Travelers: A Strong and Growing Market

As women in all businesses move up the career ladder they are traveling more frequently, and women have become the fastest growing segment of business travelers in the United States.<sup>9</sup> In 2010, women accounted for nearly half of all

<sup>4</sup> Marti Barletta, *Marketing to Women: How to Increase Your Share of the World's Largest Market* (Chicago, IL: Dearborn Trade Publishing, 2006); and U.S. Travel Association, "U.S. Travel Forecasts," <http://www.ustravel.org/sites/default/files/page/2009/09/ForecastSummary.pdf>, as viewed on January 21, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Francine Newth, "The New Strategic Imperative: Understanding the Female Business Traveler," *International Business & Economics Research Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 11 (2009), pp. 51-64; and Wayne W. Smith and Barbara A. Carmichael, "Domestic Business Travel in Canada with a Focus on the Female Market," *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (2006), pp. 65-76.

<sup>6</sup> Heesup Han and Ki-Joon Back, "Assessing Customers' Emotional Experiences Influencing Their Satisfaction in the Lodging Industry," *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2007), pp. 43-56; and Michael D. Johnson, Line Lervik Olsen, and Tor Wallin Andreassen, "Joy and Disappointment in the Hotel Experience: Managing Relationship Segments," *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2009), pp. 4-30.

<sup>7</sup> Alexandra Coghlan and Philip Pearce, "Tracking Affective Components of Satisfaction," *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (2010), pp. 42-58; and Madeleine E. Pullman and Michael A. Gross, "Ability of Experience Design Elements to Elicit Emotions," *Decision Sciences*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (2004), pp. 551-578.

<sup>8</sup> Marta Sinclair, Neal M. Ashkanasy, and Prithviraj Chattopadhyay, "Affective Antecedents of Intuitive Decision Making," *Journal of Management and Organization*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2010), pp. 382-398; Peter C. Verhoef, Katherine N. Lemon, A. Parasuraman, Anne Roggeveen, Michael Tsiros, and Leonard A. Schlesinger, "Customer Experience Creation: Determinants, Dynamics and Management Strategies," *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (2009), pp. 31-41; and Jochen Wirtz and John E. G. Bateson, "Consumer Satisfaction with Services: Integrating the Environment Perspective in Services Marketing into the Traditional Disconfirmation Paradigm," *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (1999), pp. 55-66.

<sup>9</sup> Tracy Carbasho, "Survey Offers Insight into What Female Business Travelers Seek," *Pittsburgh Business Times*, Vol. 22, No. 7 (September 6, 2002), p. 24 <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=18&did=164199881&SrchMode=3&sid=1&Fmt=3&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1273681099&clientId=8424&aid=1> as viewed

## EXHIBIT 1

### Hotels respond to women business travelers

The industry's response to women travelers has been accelerating as more properties plan for the growth of this market segment. An increasing number of hotels are developing spa-like, relaxing environments designed especially to meet women's preferences.<sup>1</sup>

- San Francisco-based Kimpton Hotels and Restaurants began their Women in Touch program to celebrate women travelers by anticipating their needs.<sup>2</sup>
- The Pan Pacific San Francisco supplies their female guests with a personal escort to their room.
- In Illinois, both Loews and Wyndham hotels set aside networking tables in their restaurants for solo women who prefer to dine with others.<sup>3</sup>
- W Hotels provides their female travelers with "Wonder Woman" packages designed to make their stay more relaxing.
- Crowne Plaza has made the 11th floor of their hotel women only, and has further addressed women's preferences by providing covered parking close to the lobby entrance of other properties.<sup>4</sup>
- In Miami, Don Shula's Hotel & Golf Club has created the Patrician floor of 18 rooms exclusively for women, and experiences an average of 95-percent occupancy. The property also keeps a complete history of female guests so that they can better anticipate their needs upon return.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Theodora Aggeles, "Hospital's New Women's Unit Designed for Spa Ambience," *St. Petersburg Times*, May 11, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Andrea Cambern and Marcey Goulder, "Increase in Female Business Travelers Prompts Hotels to Add Amenities," *The Columbia Dispatch*, April 16, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Dawn McCoy-Ullrich, "Along on the Road: Travel Industry Responds to Women's Security Needs," *American Woman Road & Travel*, February 1, 2002, pp. 5-7.

<sup>4</sup> Herman Trend Alerts, "Catering to Women Travelers," <http://www.guyotbrothers.com/fun/catering-to-women-travelers.htm> as viewed January 7, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Bella Kelly, "Hotels Cater to Female Business Travelers," *Ehotelier.com*, August 8, 2006, [http://ehotelier.com/hospitality-news/item.php?id=A8936\\_0\\_11\\_0\\_M](http://ehotelier.com/hospitality-news/item.php?id=A8936_0_11_0_M) as viewed January 7, 2011.

business travelers, up from 43 percent in 2003 and approximately 25 percent in 1991—and that compares to less than 5 percent just forty years ago.<sup>10</sup> While attention has been focused on women business travelers as a separate market segment for several decades (Exhibit 1), much of the early

May 10, 2010; Lori A. Pennington-Gray and Deborah L. Kerstetter, "What do University-educated Women Want from Their Pleasure Travel Experiences?" *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (2003), pp. 49-56; and Tiffany Wlazlowski "As Women Business Travelers Increase, Hospitality Industry Takes Note, Adapts," *The Daily Record*, p. A5.

<sup>10</sup> Wendy Hart, "What Women Want," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 5 (1993), p. 10; Newth, *op.cit.*; and U.S. Travel Association, *op.cit.*

## EXHIBIT 2

### Profiles of women business travelers

#### Cluster 1—The Connective

- 10 or more years of travel experience
- Annual income bracket of over \$100,000
- Most prevalent age group of 51–60 (36.9%)
- High percent of women with graduate degrees (41.9%)

#### Cluster 2—The Empowered

- 7–10 years of travel experience
- Highest percent of women earning annual income over \$250,000
- More women across ranks
- Most women in the 31–40 age group
- Most women with graduate (42.5%) and post-graduate (24.7%) education

#### Cluster 3—The Productive

- Most women with 4–6 years of travel experience
- Greatest percent of women with annual income between \$150,000 - \$200,000
- Greatest percentage of women in middle management
- Greatest percentage of women 41–50 years (45.5%)
- Highest percentage of respondents with undergraduate education only (39.8%)

Source: Adapted from Newth, 2009.

travel-related literature proposed things women could do for themselves to ensure a smooth and safe travel experience.<sup>11</sup> Times have changed.

A 2003 survey by the Tisch Center at New York University described the typical woman traveler as a baby boomer who has a bachelor's degree, is married with no children at home, and takes at least four trips a year. These women view business travel as necessary to their career advancement.<sup>12</sup> When Newth examined women travelers on the dimensions of experience, income, rank, age, and education, she found that variations in personal characteristics, needs, and behaviors could be clustered into one of three distinct demographic groups which she labeled connective, empowered, and productive (Exhibit 2).<sup>13</sup>

Women are not only traveling more frequently, they are traveling differently than their male counterparts. Over half of room-nights spent by women are associated with

<sup>11</sup> Marilyn Much, "Women Cope with Being on the Road," *Industry Week*, Vol. 194, No. 3 (1977), pp. 38-41.

<sup>12</sup> NYU Tisch Center Survey, "Coming of Age: The Continuing Evolution of Female Business Travelers," 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Newth, *op.cit.*

multi-night stays for meetings, conferences, or conventions (a statement that could also have been made 40 years ago). Men, on the other hand, are more transient and often have single-night stays for sales or consulting purposes.<sup>14</sup> Importantly, women more frequently include personal time as part of their business trip; 44 percent incorporate leisure experiences into their travel and over 20 percent of women business travelers add vacation days to extend their stay.<sup>15</sup> The manner in which women approach their travel is also distinctive. Women book rooms further in advance, make fewer itinerary changes, and more frequently travel economy class.<sup>16</sup>

The Tisch Center's study is one of the most comprehensive surveys of women business travelers made to date. Built on an earlier 1999 survey, the 2003 study asked a range of questions regarding the travel preferences and experiences of 596 women from both professional organizations and not-for-profit women's associations. Contrary to popular belief, researchers found that women travelers seldom took their families on business trips. The majority of respondents felt little stress or guilt about traveling and being away from home. Nearly 80 percent of the women surveyed indicated that they viewed travel as essential to their job and few saw it as disrupting family life. The women who responded felt that business travel contributed to their professional advancement and provided freedom from daily routines.

## The Importance of Affect

Emotion can be seen as a valenced reaction to perceptions of a specific situation; in this case, we are interested in women business travelers' affective response to their hotel experience.<sup>17</sup> Much research supports the notion that positive affect—including consumption emotions such as comfort and pleasure—is directly related to customer satisfaction and subsequent loyalty.<sup>18</sup> Desirable emotional reactions in

the lodging context occur when services, facilities (including design elements), and amenities combine to create a positive and memorable response.

Research has established that there are significant gender differences in the perceived importance of specific attributes related to business travel in general and hotels in particular.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, there seems to be little question that women respond to the emotional aspects of their service experience to a substantially higher degree than do men.<sup>20</sup> Emotional awareness and emotional intensity appear to be stronger for women; that is, they pay more attention to and respond more directly to affective elements.<sup>21</sup> Women also use emotion in decision making to a much greater degree than do their male counterparts, processing more comprehensive information to form assessments.<sup>22</sup> Further, men and women do not perceive their physical surroundings in the same manner due to established gender differences in information processing and decoding capacities.<sup>23</sup>

Raman and his colleagues, for example, concluded that women used emotion in making choices to a much greater

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Strandvik, "Emotions in Service Satisfaction," *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1997), pp. 148-169; and Linda L. Price, Eric J. Arnould, and Sheila L. Deibler, "Consumers' Emotional Responses to Service," *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1995), pp. 34-63.

<sup>19</sup> Fang Meng and Uysal Muzaffer, "Effects of Gender Differences on Perceptions of Destination Attributes, Motivations, and Travel Values: An Examination of a Nature-based Resort Destination," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (2008), pp. 445-466.

<sup>20</sup> Rae Carlson, "Sex Differences in Ego Functioning: Exploratory Studies of Agency and Communion," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (1971), pp. 267-277; and Dana L. Joseph and Daniel A. Newman, "Emotional Intelligence: An Integrative Meta-analysis and Cascading Model," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (2010), pp. 54-78.

<sup>21</sup> Frank Fujita, Ed Diener, and Ed Sandvik, "Gender Differences in Negative Affect and Well-being: The Case for Emotional Intensity," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (1991), pp. 427-434; Robin W. Simon and Leda E. Nath, "Gender and Emotion in the U.S.: Do Men and Women Differ in Self-reports of Feelings and Expressive Behavior?" *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 109, No. 5 (2004), pp. 1137-1176; and Sinclair *et al.*, *op.cit.*

<sup>22</sup> Kenia M. Castellanos, Judith A. Hudson, Jeannette Havilandjones, and Patricia J. Wilson, "Does Exposure to Ambient Odors Influence the Emotional Content of Memories?" *American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 123, No. 3 (2010), pp. 267-277; Steve Pan and Chris Ryan, "Gender, Framing, and Travelogues," *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (2007), pp. 464-474; and Laurette Dubé and Michael S. Morgan, "Trend Effects and Gender Differences in Retrospective Judgments of Consumption Emotions," *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1996), pp. 156-162.

<sup>23</sup> Cheryl Ganesan-Lim, Rebekah Russell-Bennett, and Tracey Dagger, "The Impact of Service Contact Type and Demographic Characteristics on Service Quality Perceptions," *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 22, No. 7 (2008), pp. 550-561; and Anna S. Mattila, Alicia A. Gradey, and Glenda M. Fisk, "The Interplay of Gender and Affective Tone in Service Encounter Satisfaction," *Journal of Service Research*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (2003), pp. 136-143.

<sup>14</sup> D. K. Shifflet and Pawan Bhatia, "Hotels Must Change to Meet Needs of Female Travelers," *Hotel and Motel Management*, Vol. 213, No. 16 (1998), pp. 32-33.

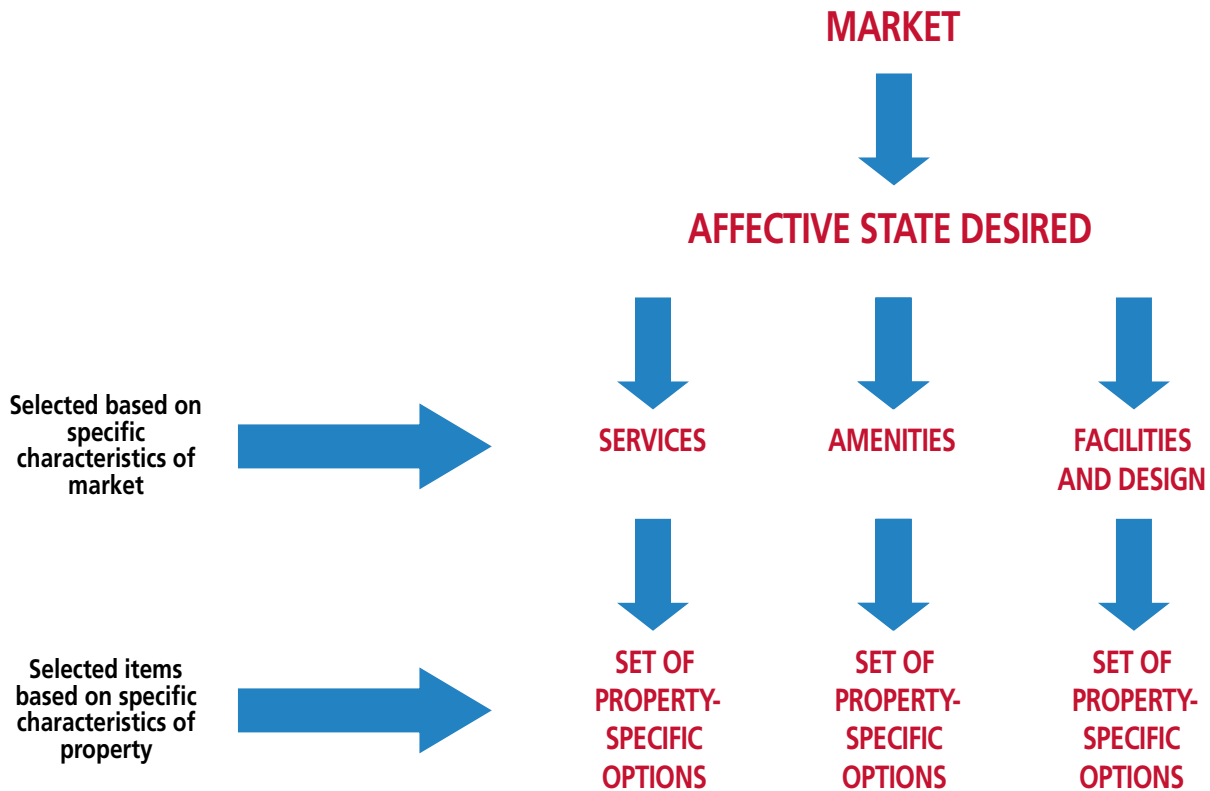
<sup>15</sup> NYU Tisch Center, *op.cit.*

<sup>16</sup> Runzheimer International Travel Management, "Women Business Travelers," Vol. 19, No. 11 (2000), pp. 1-14.

<sup>17</sup> Gerald L. Clore, Andrew Ortony and Mark A Foss, "The Psychological Foundations of the Affective Lexicon," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (1987), pp. 751-755; and Marc Gobe and Sergio Zyman, *Emotional Branding: The New Paradigm for Connecting Brands to People* (New York: Allworth Press, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Jonathan Barsky and Leonard Nash, "Evoking Emotion: Affective Keys to Hotel Loyalty," *Cornell Hospitality and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2002), pp. 39-46; J. Enrique Bigne, Anna S. Mattila, and Luisa Andreu, "The Impact of Experiential Consumption Cognitions and Emotions on Behavioral Intentions," *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (2008), pp. 303-315; Richard L. Oliver, "Cognitive, Affective, and Attribute Bases of Satisfaction Response," *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (1993), pp. 418-430; Veronica Liljander and Tore

Model for selection of services and amenities based on desired guest affective responses



degree than did men,<sup>24</sup> a finding that applies to how women assess the quality of their hotel stay. Men, on the other hand, have been found to be more outcome-focused and consider fewer cues in making their judgments of quality.<sup>25</sup>

For hoteliers, then, paying close attention to the ways in which the hotel environment influences affective responses is a particularly fruitful approach to attracting women business travelers.<sup>26</sup> Rather than try to identify a particular

amenity or service or facility that women particularly prefer, managers need to provide a requisite cluster of services, facilities, and amenities. This more individualized approach makes particularly good sense when the wide variations among individual properties and differences in managers’ ability to implement change is also considered.

With that realization, I present a conceptual model that draws attention to the importance of affect in the hotel experience.<sup>27</sup> The model highlights the considerations hotel managers need to address when their goal is to meet the needs of women business travelers by creating an experience most likely to produce the targeted affective response (Exhibit 3). When this framework is applied, managers focus on identifying the appropriate elements—amenities, services, and facilities—in their particular hotel context.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Niranjana V. Raman, Prithviraj Chattopadhyay, and Wayne D. Hoyer, “Do Consumers Seek Emotional Situations: The Need for Emotion,” *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 22 (1995), pp. 537-542.

<sup>25</sup> Dawn Iacobucci and Amy Ostrom, “Gender Differences in the Impact of Core and Relational Aspects of Services on the Evaluation of Service Encounters,” *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1993), pp. 257-286; Michel Laroche, Gad Saad, Mark Cleveland, and Elizabeth Browne, “Gender Differences in Information Search Strategies for a Christmas Gift,” *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 17, No. 6 (2000), pp. 500-514; and Kirk L. Wakefield and Jeffrey G. Blodgett, “Customer Response to Intangible and Tangible Service Factors,” *Psychology & Marketing*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1999), pp. 51-68.

<sup>26</sup> Gayle Letherby and Gillian Reynolds, *Gendered Journeys, Mobile Emotions* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009).

<sup>27</sup> Johnson *et al.*, *op.cit.*; and Ken W. McCleary, Pamela A. Weaver, and Li Lan, “Gender-based Differences in Business Travelers’ Lodging Preferences,” *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 51-58.

<sup>28</sup> Coghlan and Pearce, *op.cit.*; Thomas Davenport and John C. Beck, *The Attention Economy: Understanding the New Currency of Business* (Boston:

## Affect: Emotional Reaction to the Hotel Experience

Most surveys designed to identify amenities and services that women business travelers seek have been based on the idea of focusing on specific amenities or services, rather than the amenities' contribution to the overall stay.<sup>29</sup> By contrast, the proposition put forth in this report—that women want positive affect, not a specific item—allows managers to make more informed and individualized judgments regarding the most reasonable and appropriate means of satisfying their female guests.

Based on studies of women business travelers in the past two decades, I developed a preliminary list of the emotions women seek. Four affective states were identified as recurring themes, as follows:

(1) *Feelings of safety.* Above all, women want to feel safe.

John Portman and Associates, for instance, conducted a survey of what women want when they travel.<sup>30</sup> This study of 13,000 women from *Fortune* 1,000 companies confirmed what numerous previous studies of women's travel needs had revealed; women wanted to know that the hotel was concerned with keeping them safe when away from home.<sup>31</sup> Unlike male travelers, who were satisfied with little more than information about fire exits

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Harvard Business School Press, 2002); Joseph P. Forgas, "Mood and Judgment: The Affect Infusion Model," *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1995), pp. 39-66; and Han and Back, *op.cit.*

<sup>29</sup> Emma Allen, "What Women Want," *Caterer & Hotelkeeper*, Vol. 198, No. 4528 (2008), pp. 64-65; Christine Blank, "Packages Cater to What Women Want," *Hotel & Motel Management*, Vol. 220, No. 16 (2005), pp. 26-52; C. Caldwell, "Philadelphia Crowne Plaza Hotel: An Ideal Place to Stay in the Heart of America," *American Woman Road & Travel*, Vol. 15 (2002), pp. 12-13; Eric S. W. Chan and Simon C. K. Wong, "Hotel Selection: When Price is Not the Issue," *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2006), pp. 142-159; Roger Collis, "For Women, Life on the Road Can Still Be Problematic," *The International Herald Tribune*, April 20, 2007, p. 24; F. Daniel, "Triad Hotels Follow National Trend of Offering Services Targeting Women," *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*, April 24, 2006, p. 1; Danielle Derringer, "Hotels Offer Amenities to Suite Female Travelers," *Rochester Business Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 17 (2006), p. 26; Paul Burnham Finney, "Women-friendly Hotel Floors Return, with Modern Twists," *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/05/business/worldbusiness/05iht-05women.15010505.html> as viewed May 10, 2010; Izumi Miyachi, "Business Hotels Wooing Women," *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*, June 17, 2005, p. 1; Sarah Muxlow, "The Competition to Cater for Women Business Travellers," *4Hoteliers.com*, June 25, 2007; Gail Sammons, Pat Moreo, Lori Fox Benson, and Fred DeMicco, "Analysis of Female Business Travelers' Selection of Lodging Accommodations," *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1999), pp. 65-83; and Randi Schmelzer, "JW Marriott Responds to Female-only Floor Concerns," *PR Week (US)*, June 4, 2007, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Carbasho, *op.cit.*

<sup>31</sup> Mary-Lane Kamberg, "Travel Industry Sets Sights on Women Travelers," *Women in Business*, Vol. 53, No. 6 (2001), p. 30; and Dawn McCoy-Ullrich, "Along on the Road: Travel Industry Responds to Women's Security Needs," *American Woman Road & Travel*, February 1, 2002, pp. 5-7.

and in-room safes, women preferred a more comprehensive approach to ensure their personal safety from intruders or assaults.<sup>32</sup> Examples of specific measures hotels have taken include well-lit hallways, covered parking, and deadbolts on doors.<sup>33</sup>

(2) *Feelings of comfort.* Women are more concerned about getting a good night's sleep than their male counterparts. In a joint study, the National Sleep Foundation and Hilton Hotels discovered that nearly 20 percent more women than men are concerned with travel-related sleep issues. Nearly 80 percent of women surveyed believed that sleep is itself a valuable use of time, while 30 percent of their male counterparts saw sleep as "a waste of time."<sup>34</sup> Women take sleep seriously and are twice as likely as men to bring their own pillow when they travel. Hotels have taken notice, with such innovations as Westin's Heavenly Bed and other bed-related amenities.<sup>35</sup> Numerous attributes of the hotel room environment itself—heat, light, sound, color—contribute to perceptions of comfort and relaxation, with increasing numbers of hotels striving to create a spa-like ambience.<sup>36</sup>

(3) *Feelings of empowerment.* When Newth studied women business travelers, the one thing all women in her sample had in common was the desire to feel empowered.<sup>37</sup> Surveys reveal that women seek business travel to broaden their horizons, contribute to their professional advancement, and provide them with freedom from daily routines. Room service and the convenience of in-room facilities play an important role in helping women travelers achieve a sense of independence and well-being.<sup>38</sup> A 2001 study, for instance, found that over

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<sup>32</sup> Andrea Newell, "Do Female Business Travelers Have Different Needs? Survey Says: Yes," <http://www.theglasshammer.com/news/2009/06/05/do-female-travelers-have-different-needs> as viewed January 7, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Alison Coleman, "Should Women Receive Special Treatment?" *Director*, Vol. 56, No. 5 (2002), p. 45; and Wlazlowski, *op.cit.*

<sup>34</sup> C. Hamilton, "You Are Getting Sleepy: Do Women Make Better Business Travellers Than Men?" *CMA Management*, Vol. 73, No. 7 (1999), p. 38.

<sup>35</sup> Shelley Swift, "Hotels, Airlines Catering to Women Travelers," *Indianapolis Business Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 5 (2000), pp. 23-25.

<sup>36</sup> Julie Baker and Michaelle Cameron, "The Effects of Service Environment on Affect and Consumer Perception of Waiting Time: An Integrative Review and Research Propositions," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1996), p. 338-349; and Timothy R. Hinkin and J. Bruce Tracey, "The Service Imperative: Factors Driving Meeting Effectiveness," *Cornell Hospitality and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 5 (1998), pp. 59-67.

<sup>37</sup> Newth, *op.cit.*

<sup>38</sup> Joe Sharkey, "Hotel Lore from Female Travelers," *The New York Times*, August 6, 2002, p. C6; and Joe Sharkey, "One Woman's Account of Two

**EXHIBIT 4****Respondents' demographic profile**

Job Title	Total N = 116	Men N = 77	Women N = 39
General Manager	89 (77%)	69 (90%)	20 (51%)
Manager or Director	20 (17%)	6 (8%)	14 (36%)
Other	7 (6%)	2 (3%)	5 (13%)
Years in Current Position	Total N = 116	Men N = 77	Women N = 39
Less than 5	28 (24%)	19 (25%)	9 (23%)
5 to 10	35 (30%)	22 (29%)	13 (33%)
More than 10	53 (46%)	36 (47%)	17 (44%)
Years Worked in Hospitality	Total N = 109	Men N = 72	Women N = 37
Less than 5	2 (2%)	1 (1%)	1 (3%)
5 to 10	14 (13%)	5 (7%)	9 (24%)
11 to 15	14 (13%)	10 (14%)	4 (11%)
16 to 20	23 (21%)	13 (18%)	10 (27%)
Over 20	56 (51%)	43 (60%)	13 (35%)

Note: Based on a survey of 116 hotel managers.

75 percent of women order room service at least once a day compared to 54 percent of men.<sup>39</sup> In a 2003 study, the top-ranked “must haves” for women business travelers included mini-bars (71 percent) and spa services on the premises (47 percent).<sup>40</sup> In addition, women seek hotels with an on-site fitness center.<sup>41</sup> In fact, when women business travelers were surveyed by Kempinski hotels, workout facilities ranked first among the features of an “ideal” accommodation.<sup>42</sup>

- (4) *Feelings of being valued.* Beyond standard services, women also appreciate an array of amenities that make them feel pampered and valued. A recurring theme that has emerged in recent surveys is that women travelers do not feel that the hospitality industry values them. Hotels have begun to respond to this concern by providing an array of items including upgraded amenities, brand-name bath products, make-up mirrors,

Hotel Experiences,” *The New York Times*, July 30, 2002, p. C7.

<sup>39</sup> Carbasho, *op.cit.*

<sup>40</sup> Brown, *op.cit.*

<sup>41</sup> Coleman, *op.cit.*

<sup>42</sup> Hart, *op.cit.*

fresh flowers, and flavored coffees and teas. Women also enjoy large windows, light-colored walls, and stylish room furnishings.<sup>43</sup>

### Hotel Managers' Perceptions of Women's Preferences

A key element in the chain of customer satisfaction for women travelers is the perceptions of hotel managers regarding women's preferences. Managers' views are important, since they are responsible for creating and implementing the aspects of the guest experience that should create the affective environment preferred by their female guests. With this in mind, I conducted an on-line survey to learn more about hotel managers' perceptions and activities related to women business travelers.

### Survey Questions and Design

The on-line survey was sent via email to those registered in the Center for Hospitality Research database with the title of “general manager.” After three weeks, I had received a respectable response of 116 usable surveys.

The survey was divided into three sections. The first section asked several broad-based questions regarding managers' beliefs about women business travelers' preferences and practices. Included were topics regularly covered on previous surveys, such as how important they thought it was to address women's hotel preferences and the extent to which they believed women associated various emotions with their travel experience.

The second section presented respondents with a list of 37 items drawn from the literature (and reviewed by women business travelers) and asked them to rate the relative importance of each item to women business travelers on a Likert scale of from 1 = unimportant to 5 = extremely important. The 37 items were arranged in the following four categories for clarity: hotel room location, hotel room amenities, food and beverage, and hotel attributes and services. The third and final section of the survey requested demographic information.

### Respondents' Demographic Profile

Sixty-six percent of the survey respondents were men, and 90 percent of these respondents (69 people) indicated that their title was general manager (see Exhibit 4). On the other hand, only 51 percent of the female respondents (20 people) were general managers. Instead, 36 percent of the women responding indicated that their position was either department manager or director. The respondents were generally industry veterans, as only about one-quarter of both men and women had held their position less than five years. The percentage of men and women holding their positions for

<sup>43</sup> Coleman, *op.cit.*; and Swift, *op.cit.*

more than ten years was also similar, with 47 percent of men and 44 percent of women placing themselves in that category. While only 8 percent of the male respondents had worked in the hospitality industry fewer than 10 years, 27 percent of the women indicated they had worked in hospitality ten years or less. On the other end of the scale, 78 percent of men and 62 percent of women had worked in the industry over 15 years—and 60 percent of the men had worked in the industry over 20 years.

A substantial number of hotels served business travelers. Twenty percent of respondents indicated that over 75 percent of their guests were business travelers, and another 39 percent reported that at least half of their guests were business travelers. At the other end of the spectrum, approximately 19 percent of respondents worked in hotels where fewer than 25 percent of their guests were there on business. When answering a related question, “What percentage of your business guests are women?” 15 percent of respondents indicated that over half of their guests were women business travelers. Another 50 percent of the managers worked in properties where over a quarter of their guests were in this category. Of the total sample, only 27 percent indicated that their hotel makes special accommodations for women business travelers, and yet 60 percent believed that addressing the needs and preferences of women travelers was a priority for the hospitality industry. Twenty-two percent were unsure. When asked the same question on a 5-point scale from 1=unimportant to 5=extremely important, the mean score of the 116 respondents was 4.25 (see Exhibit 5).

### Managers’ Perceptions of Women Business Travelers

Respondents were asked several broad-based questions, such as which gender they believed was more likely to provide feedback on their hotel stay and which gender was most likely to express dissatisfaction with their stay. Thirty of the 40 women who responded (77 percent) said that women were most likely to provide feedback, but only 44 of the 76 men who were surveyed (58 percent) believed this to be the case. The remaining ten women thought there was no difference between the genders, and none of the female respondents thought that men were more likely than women to provide feedback. Both men (56 percent) and women (59 percent) believed that women business travelers are more likely to express dissatisfaction with their stay than their male counterparts. In both cases, 23 percent of respondents felt that there was no difference between the genders on this dimension (Exhibit 6).

The managers were then asked to indicate the degree to which they believed business women experienced each of seven emotions that previous research had associated with the travel experience. The results are presented on the

#### EXHIBIT 5

##### Profile of guests served

<b>Guests: Business Travelers</b>	<b>Total N = 108</b>	<b>Men N = 72</b>	<b>Women N = 36</b>
Over 75%	22 (20%)	15 (21%)	7 (19%)
51-75%	42 (39%)	30 (42%)	12 (33%)
25-50%	24 (22%)	15 (21%)	9 (25%)
Less than 25%	20 (19%)	12 (17%)	8 (22%)
<b>Guests: Women Business Travelers</b>	<b>Total N = 108</b>	<b>Men N = 72</b>	<b>Women N = 36</b>
Over 75%	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
51-75%	16 (15%)	10 (14%)	6 (17%)
25-50%	54 (50%)	39 (54%)	15 (42%)
Less than 25%	37 (34%)	23 (32%)	14 (39%)
<b>Special Accommodations for Women Business Travelers</b>	<b>Total N = 109</b>	<b>Men N = 73</b>	<b>Women N = 36</b>
Yes	29 (27%)	22 (30%)	7 (19%)
No	80 (73%)	51 (70%)	29 (81%)
<b>Women Business Traveler as High Priority</b>	<b>Total N = 108</b>	<b>Men N = 72</b>	<b>Women N = 36</b>
Yes	65 (60%)	46 (64%)	19 (53%)
No	19 (18%)	11 (15%)	8 (22%)
Not sure	24 (22%)	15 (21%)	9 (25%)
<b>Importance of Addressing Needs of Women Business Travelers</b>	<b>Total N = 116</b>	<b>Men N = 77</b>	<b>Women N = 39</b>
Means (Scale 1-5)	4.25	4.25	4.26

Note: Based on a survey of 116 hotel managers.

#### EXHIBIT 6

##### Respondents’ expectations on guest communication

###### Guests most likely to provide feedback on hotel stay

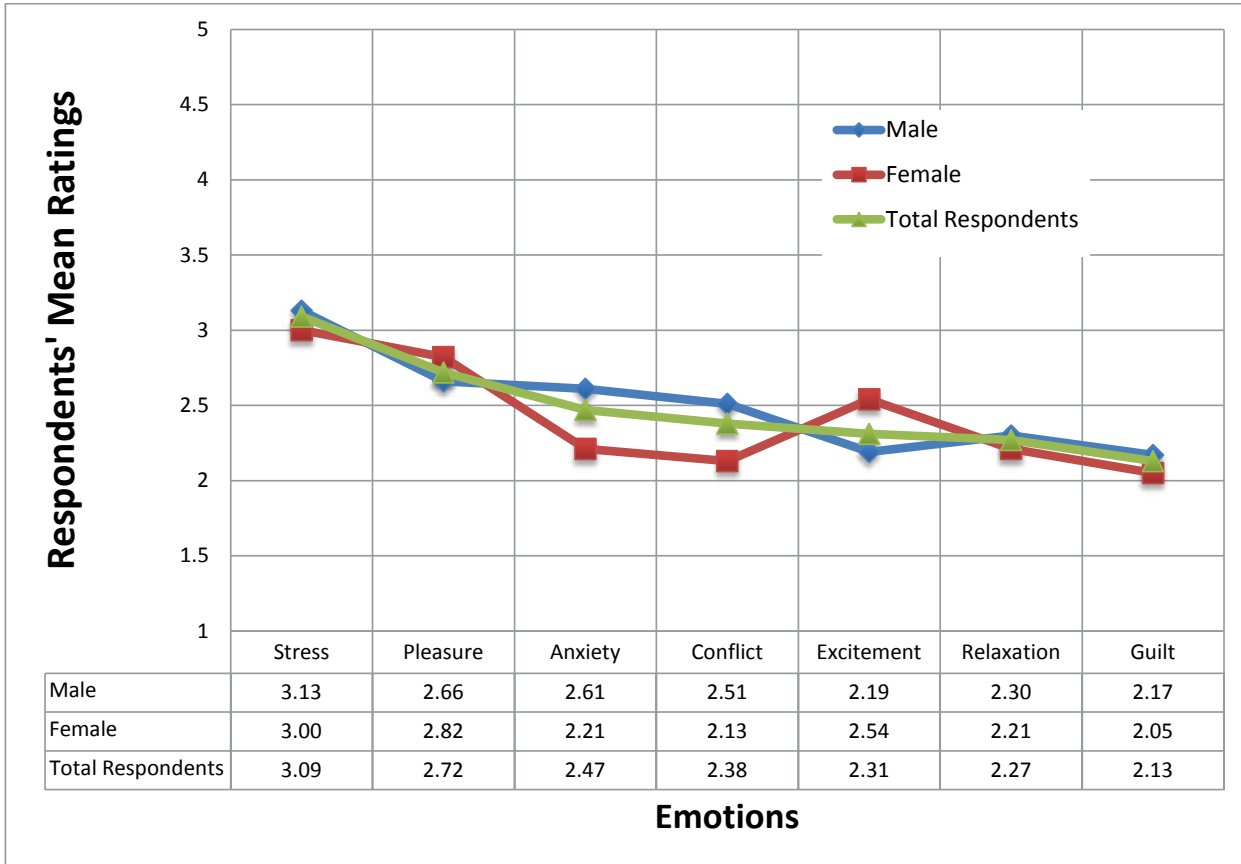
<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Male guests</b>	<b>Female guests</b>	<b>No Difference</b>
Male	6.5%	58.4%	35.1%
Female	0.0%	76.9%	23.1%

###### Guests most likely to provide feedback on hotel stay

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Male guests</b>	<b>Female guests</b>	<b>No Difference</b>
Male	20.80%	55.80%	23.40%
Female	17.90%	59.00%	23.10%

Note: Based on a survey of 116 hotel managers.

Respondents' perception of womens' emotions while traveling on business



graph in Exhibit 7. Stress was rated highest by both male and female respondents with a mean of 3.09. Pleasure (mean of 2.72) and anxiety (mean 2.47) followed, and guilt received the lowest mean score from both genders (2.17 by men and 2.05 from women). The greatest differences between the perceptions of male and female managers had to do with their ratings of the degree to which women business travelers experienced anxiety (difference of .40), conflict (difference of .38), and excitement (difference of -.35). Female managers believed that women business travelers felt more excitement and pleasure and experienced less conflict from their travel experience than did their male counterparts.

**How the Hotel Experience Feels**

Based on the importance ranking of the 37 hotel attributes, I calculated mean scores for the respondents as a whole and also for the male managers and the female managers to determine managers' perceptions of the relative importance of those individual items to women business travelers

(shown in Exhibit 8, next page). I'll note four items on which male and female managers had the greatest mean difference scores. Men thought that women wanted a tub in the bathroom (mean difference, .42) and fresh flowers (mean difference, .42) to a far greater degree than the women managers did. On the other hand, the male managers thought covered parking (mean difference of -.48) and complimentary garment pressing (mean difference, -.40) were less important than the female managers did.

While those findings can be helpful for hotel operators, my purpose here is to apply my model to examine the relative value these managers placed on each of the four affective states previously hypothesized to be important to women travelers—once again because overall affect regarding the stay is far more important to customer satisfaction than a particular amenity might be. An examination of clusters of items associated with each affective response reveals a broader view of managers' perceptions related to women's preferences. To create these groupings, three trained student



**EXHIBIT 8**

**Respondents' perception of womens' assessment of hotel features and amenities**

		Means			
		Total	Male (N=77)	Female (N=39)	Difference
<b>1. Room Attributes</b>					
a.	Room location	3.71	3.73	3.67	0.06
b.	Touch screen controls	2.09	2.05	2.18	-0.13
c.	Full length mirror	3.99	3.95	4.08	-0.13
d.	Large bathroom	3.65	3.65	3.64	0.01
e.	Luxurious ambience	3.21	3.19	3.23	-0.04
f.	Quiet room	3.90	3.90	3.90	0.00
g.	Tub in addition to shower	3.00	3.14	2.72	0.42
h.	Deadbolts on doors	4.32	4.31	4.32	-0.01
i.	High thread-count bedding	3.30	3.27	3.36	-0.09
<b>2. Room Amenities</b>					
a.	Top of the line bath products	3.47	3.48	3.44	0.04
b.	Personalized stationery	2.33	2.38	2.23	0.15
c.	Bathrobes	3.19	3.16	3.26	-0.10
d.	Fresh flowers	2.59	2.73	2.31	0.42
e.	Exercise equip. in room	2.18	2.16	2.23	-0.07
f.	Pillow choices	3.12	3.09	3.18	-0.09
g.	Flavored coffee/tea	3.03	2.96	3.15	-0.19
h.	In-room emergency alarm	3.24	3.22	3.28	-0.06
i.	High-speed internet in room	4.33	4.29	4.41	-0.12
j.	Personal interest magazines	2.77	2.71	2.87	-0.16
<b>3. Food and Beverage</b>					
a.	Notify prior to room delivery	3.47	3.42	3.59	-0.17
b.	Guides to local restaurants	3.16	3.09	3.31	-0.22
c.	Networking tables in restaurants	2.35	2.28	2.54	-0.26
d.	Dependable room service	3.61	3.62	3.59	0.03
<b>4. Hotel Attributes and Services</b>					
a.	Safe hotel location	4.46	4.44	4.49	-0.05
b.	Secure access floors	3.96	3.97	3.92	0.05
c.	Executive lounge	3.03	2.96	3.15	-0.19
d.	24-hour exercise facility	2.88	2.79	3.15	-0.36
e.	Gender-designated floors	2.14	2.25	1.92	0.33
f.	Security personnel making rounds	3.45	3.48	3.38	0.10
g.	In-room massage available	2.31	2.36	2.21	0.15
h.	Complimentary garment pressing	2.94	2.81	3.21	-0.40
i.	Personal shopper available	2.03	2.05	2.00	0.05
j.	Complimentary full breakfast	3.31	3.22	3.49	-0.27
k.	Child care service	2.22	2.27	2.13	0.14
l.	Covered parking garage	2.81	2.65	3.13	-0.48
m.	Self check-in/out	2.62	2.53	2.79	-0.26
n.	Security cameras in hallways	3.60	3.49	3.82	-0.33
o.	Late check-out available	3.47	3.45	3.51	-0.06
p.	Spa services on premises	2.91	2.92	2.90	0.02

## Affective states women business travelers seek

### Feelings of Safety

These services and amenities make guests feel safe and secure. They reduce anxiety about threats related to personal safety and the security of belongings.

### Feelings of Comfort and Relaxation

These services and amenities increase guests' comfort and enable them to more fully rest and relax while away from home.

### Feelings of Empowerment

These services and amenities allow guests to pursue their personal well-being and make the most of the hotel stay. They create a feeling of independence and freedom.

### Feelings of Being Valued as a Woman Traveler

These services and amenities make women business travelers feel that they are pampered and acknowledged as having distinctive preferences and needs.

*Note:* Based on Literature Review 1995–2010.

assistants were given definitions of each of the four affective responses (Exhibit 9). Individual survey items were provided on separate cards, and assistants were asked to sort each item according to how it contributed to feelings of safety, feelings of comfort, feelings of empowerment, and feelings of being valued. Items that did not fit into one of these four categories were labeled as either “business needs” or “other.” Subsequent analysis involved only those items viewed as belonging to the same category by all three assistants and myself.

After completing this process, three of the final clusters comprised six items and the fourth cluster had seven items, as shown in Exhibit 10, on the next page. (Five items were considered “business needs,” and the remaining seven “other” items were discarded because they were neither consistently associated with business purposes nor with one of the affective states being examined.) Hotel managers rated safety items as having the greatest importance, with a mean score of 3.69. This was followed by items related to women’s desire to experience comfort (mean of 3.26) and to feel valued (mean 2.90). The overall mean for the seven items representing empowerment was just slightly lower, 2.82. The mean of the five items representing “business purpose” was 3.28.

## Discussion and Implications for Management Practice

This study confirms a long-established principle. Both women travelers and the managers responsible for their stay are concerned with the women’s personal safety. Thus, hotel managers should review the ways they can reinforce their hotel’s safety, including covered parking, secure locks, well-lit hallways, and thoughtful room location.

The desire to feel special and pampered is reflected in many hotels’ use of flowers and upscale amenities, but again specific amenities are less important than an overall “luxurious ambience.” Based on this finding, women travelers may well choose hotels that demonstrate an interest

in making them feel special and pampered. Surveys have repeatedly concluded that women do not feel valued by the travel industry. The customer care expressed through fresh flowers and top-of-the-line bath products may be one way to counteract that feeling.

The male managers in this survey characterized women’s business travel experience as more stressful and less positive than the female managers, and (based on previous studies) the women themselves. Contrary to the perception found in this survey, studies indicate that women travelers, regardless of their particular profile, find travel empowering. These feelings of empowerment, well-being, and pleasure can be enhanced on the road by giving women opportunities to exercise on site, request room service, or take advantage of the executive lounge. In sum, regardless of the constraints of a particular property or budgetary requirements, managers can feel confident that any efforts directed to enhancing one or more of the above four affective experiences will contribute to a more positive hotel stay for women business travelers.

## Limitations and Future Research

Although research on women travelers extends back nearly half a century, some elements of the hotel industry still profess to wonder “what women travelers want.” By examining industry professionals’ view on this question, this report is intended to serve as a catalyst for future studies that address questions related to attracting this important segment of the travel market. It suggests an approach to understanding women’s hotel preferences that focuses on affect as an outcome rather than individual items as indicators of satisfaction. While limited in scope and modest in its analysis, this review serves as a starting point for managers who want to address the needs of women business travelers by focusing on emotional outcomes, rather than just looking at specific amenities or property attributes. This study also provides a glimpse of hotel managers’ perceptions, which may facilitate

Hotel attributes associated with key affective states

Feeling of safety	Means Total	Mean Men	Mean Women	Difference
Deadbolts	4.32	4.31	4.32	-0.01
In-room alarm	3.24	3.22	3.28	-0.06
Safe hotel location	4.46	4.44	4.49	-0.05
Secure access floors	3.96	3.97	3.92	0.05
Security make rounds	3.45	3.48	3.38	0.10
Covered parking	2.81	2.65	3.13	-0.48
Security cameras in hallways	3.60	3.49	3.82	-0.33
Average mean	3.69	3.65	3.76	-0.11

Feeling of feeling valued	Means Total	Mean Men	Mean Women	Difference
Luxurious ambience	3.21	3.19	3.23	-0.04
Personalized stationery	2.33	2.38	2.23	0.15
Fresh flowers	2.59	2.73	2.31	0.42
Flavored coffee/tea	3.03	2.96	3.15	-0.19
Personal interest magazines	2.77	2.71	2.87	-0.16
Top of the line bath products	3.47	3.48	3.44	0.04
Average mean	2.90	2.91	2.87	0.04

Feeling of comfort	Means Total	Mean Men	Mean Women	Difference
Large bath	3.65	3.65	3.64	0.01
Quiet room	3.90	3.90	3.90	0.00
Tub & shower	3.00	3.14	2.72	0.42
High thread bedding	3.30	3.27	3.36	-0.09
Pillow choices	3.12	3.09	3.18	-0.09
Bathrobes	3.19	3.16	3.26	-0.10
Average Mean	3.36	3.37	3.34	0.03

Feeling of personal empowerment	Means Total	Mean Men	Mean Women	Difference
Exercise equipment in room	2.18	2.16	2.23	-0.07
Room service	3.61	3.62	3.59	0.03
Executive lounge	3.03	2.96	3.15	-0.19
24-hour exercise facility	2.88	2.79	3.15	-0.36
In-room massage	2.31	2.36	2.21	0.15
Spa services on premises	2.91	2.92	2.90	0.02
Average mean	2.82	2.40	2.87	-0.47

Note: Based on respondents' ratings from 1 = unimportant to 5 = extremely important

an alignment between what hotel managers think women want from their travel experience and the self-reports from women business travelers.

The model presented in this paper suggests a number of future research questions, among them:

- (1) How do women's experiences and preferences compare to hotel managers' perceptions? In what ways might these two dimensions be better aligned?
- (2) What role do emotions play in women business travelers' decision making regarding their hotel choices? Is there a hierarchy of women business travelers' needs that hotel managers would be well-advised to consider?
- (3) What services, amenities, and facilities have the most direct influence on women's affective responses? Is there a threshold related to various affective states?
- (4) Can the women business traveler market be further segmented? What variables most directly affect women's needs and preferences?

- (5) What impact does women's travel have on work and family balance? On career advancement? Are there different consequences for men's and women's travel?

Conclusion

To remain competitive in today's dynamic market, it seems clear that hotel companies must be able to develop and focus their services to meet the needs and preferences of women business travelers. In this report I suggest that, rather than follow the fluctuating and often contradictory list of specific preferences reported in previous surveys, managers focus instead on how combinations of services, amenities, and facilities contribute to the desired affective experience sought by business women travelers.

Although the question of what women want has sometimes proven elusive, women business travelers have begun to define the hotel experience with a clear and consistent message about the need to feel safe, comfortable, empowered, and pampered. Guided by these themes, hotel managers are in an excellent position to exceed the expectations of this dynamic and growing market. ■

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Vol. 11 No. 3 *Compendium 2011*

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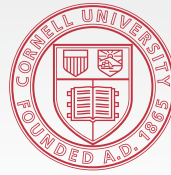
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