

WANDERLUST WOMEN: *Understanding the solo Indian women traveler*

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Abstract: *From the nomadic Cave dweller to the modern Homosapien, man has the constant desire to explore. The “wanderlust gene” could be one of the reasons that make Travel and Tourism the second largest industry in the world. It is capable of building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and therefore has great potential to fight problems like climate change without compromising the future needs of the future generations.*

With the advancement in technology, women empowerment and general increase in awareness among women, more and more women travel these days for leisure, holiday or for work. Not all women have confidence to travel alone, but at the same time they want to explore and have fun too while travelling as they do when in company of others. That is how this idea was born, women travelling in groups who have the same concept of enjoying and relaxing while on the move. Women find it a great way to catch up with old friends and make new. A trip for a woman means fun, energy, rejuvenation and me time. Something must for every woman.

Keywords: *Woman, travel, tourism.*

Introduction: The number of women travelling for pleasure or business is increasing each day. Some hotels compete for these clients with special offer

for businesswomen and for woman travelling alone. They offer spa and beauty packages and advertise their rooms boasting luxury bathrooms and other conveniences. Sometimes they have entire floor reserved for women, such as the Bella Sky Comwell in Copenhagen. In 2011, when its entire floor was dedicated to women, called bella donna floor, a lawsuit was filed for banning men on these floor.

Uta Brandes, a professor at an International School of Design, produced results of her research on the wishes of female business travellers. She concludes that there are three main areas which are important to (business) women as guests: sensuality (well-equipped room's design specially bathroom), safety (good orientation within the hotel) and sociality (personal address by the hotel staff). Tour operators these days offer women's holidays, arguing that women have other demands and wishes for their journeys or tours than men, ranging from accommodation over sports and activities to cultural interests. Women travelling alone often report bad experiences such as poor hotel rooms, harassment and ignorance. By choosing the hotels, tour guides, activities and offers wisely, tour operators try to respond to women's needs. Such trips schedule includes spa offers, fitness, culture, education and creativity. Several tour operators try to consciously support women in the destinations.eg. by cooperating with accommodation, restaurants and shops that are run by women or by hiring women as guides and contact persons in the destination.

Need and Importance of the Study: The reasons why women travel is large and wide. But the commonest of it all is "to do things as and when I want". Solo travelling by women is to express their sense of identity, there were trends of individualism and independence emerging in the 1960s and 1970s, and since then the trends have been followed by generations of women. Apart from this women continue to play the traditional roles as primary

caretakers of children and dependent parents. The urge to travel solo is most often to take a break and do self-care.

To understand how a safe and supportive environment for women can be created, to come together, to share their stories and step into one's full potential. To understand how resilience of women is increased by endurance, which simultaneously help them grow, learn, change and thereby changing the world. Women too love to travel irrespective of age, background and from all walks of life. They are united in the thought of travel as a passion for gaining new experiences in the world. To understand how each trip is different from the other and it promotes a deep sense of connection with oneself, with other similar thinking women and with the world around them. And while they travel they look for curated local, national and international travel opportunities enveloped by a community of likeminded and supportive women.

Travel fuels personal transformation and empowers them. Most women travel to escape from the mundane routine tasks of the day. One trip leads to another and gives them a sense of liberation. Moments earned in such trips enables to understand oneself as a person and rise above challenges in life. It enables one to understand how to overcome separation or bereavement in personal life. Another important fact is emerging communities and online support systems permit women to encourage and support one another to reach their travel destinations, especially those that need to be done alone.

Objectives of the Study

- 1) To understand the reason for travel for women.
- 2) To expand one's horizon for thoughts and travel.
- 3) To build confidence while forming enduring friendships and have a fabulous time in doing so.
- 4) To understand that women from all walks of life tour and travel and in doing so take out well deserved time for them.

Methodology of the Study

The data collected for the study is from both secondary and primary sources.

The sources are as under:

- 1) Information from clubs, travel blogs and women tour operators.
- 2) Discussion with friends, family and acquaintances.
- 3) Question has been distributed to various women above 16 years of age.

Scope of the Study: This study is based on both primary and secondary data, i.e., the secondary data which is already available on various research studies conducted on wanderlust aspect of women. Further, the primary study is confined to understanding the concept of wanderlust women, in which the research has conducted on 50 women from various regions of India and different backgrounds. In this research the author collect information women visited individually for destinations and the results and consequences of a satisfied wanderlust woman. In this research the author has collected and analysed the data that has collected.

Review of Literature

A. P. Gerald, P. Kumar & E. YJ Tee (2017) in their research paper titled *The Relationship between Wanderlust and Discrete Positive Emotions* aimed at studying the various emotions associated with travel. It mentions Wanderlust, as a personality characteristic which is a strong desire to travel and is always associated with positive emotional experiences. But little is known about this individual difference and how it transforms the quality of travel experiences. The study also aimed to find out relationship between trait wanderlust and discrete positive emotions. A tremendous positive correlation between wanderlust and being in awe, interest, inspiration and joy were hypothesized, based on the consistency between nature of travel and the other four positive emotions.

This research paper adopted non experimental correlation design where 102 participants between the ages 18 and above answered questionnaire about wanderlust with the emotions associated during their past leisure travel experiences. Analysis of the data was done using ordinal logistic regressions in order to test the hypothesis while controlling for openness about experience, gender and number of earlier trips done. Their results showed that higher levels of wanderlust were associated with odds of experiencing higher intensities of awe and joy during all travel for leisure. But, wanderlust was not correlated with interest and inspiration.

This way two hypothesis was supported, suggesting that the higher wanderlust levels correspond to higher intensities of awe, joy and happiness during leisure and vacation travel. This study contributes to original and personal experience understandings of wanderlust. It gives the travel and hospitality industry with plenty of information about potential clients, business. It also gives an insight into potential mental health benefits of

leisure travel and makes individuals comprehend their streak in being wanderlust and positive emotional experiences through them.

E. Gurung (2018) in her research paper titled *The Solo Indian Women Tourist* aimed to study the reasons why increasing number of women are wanting to travel solo and about their experiences. The study also aimed to understand the limit to being an Indian woman affects solo travelling decisions and understanding how to deal with these limitations and difficulties in a patriarchal society which idolises solo male travelling but goes to questioning female solo travelling.

The data was collected from 20 detailed interviews, and it collected information about travel motivations, their experiences and the difficulties they went through. The results showed that all these women chose to travel as they wanted to experience freedom. For few it was planned travel whereas for others it was unplanned itinerary and to experience flexibility. More than half of the women felt men have more freedom to choose destinations and indulge in activities at their choice of destinations. This study has also given a reason to understand that women travel to escape identity and roles with which the society associates them.

Women wanted to escape role played as daughters, wives, employees or students and wanted this time in their life to introspect themselves. Solo travel gives them a chance to understand themselves properly, giving them an opportunity to focus on their well-being than of others. Few were also of the opinion that lack of companion while travelling gives them more flexibility and freedom on deciding about their destination and itinerary they wanted to follow.

It was concluded that the study attempted to understand reasons why Indian women take up solo travelling. Indian women solo travellers have to undergo many difficulties in all phases of their travel. The main difficulty was to explain family why is the need to travel alone. Main concern for family was the safety and security during travelling. It was also found that many women did not have the freedom and flexibility in their mind as the main reason for solo travelling but it was the lack of a companion as usually people are busy these days with their professional lives and do not find a convenient time for their own self. Also, once these women decided to travel alone, there was no reason which could stop them from not continuing with the travel. A common thing found in all the women travellers was the desire to travel solo after their first adventure and then enjoy the other destinations in their own terms than depending on someone else or someone else's itinerary.

K. E. McNamara (2010) in her research paper titled A Typology of Solo Independent Women Travellers aimed to study the profile of solo women travellers in Tropical North Queensland and describe their main motivations for travel and behaviours, and then locate this group on a typology of solo independent travellers in Australia. The earlier research has portrayed solo women on one hand as fearful and risk adverse while at the other end as brave risk takers who has less concerns about safety within their destination. This analysis was based on visitor surveys conducted for 21 months at the Cairns Airport numbering 2618. The results also showed about 228 women independent travellers felt safe in the destination and participated in a variety of activities including those with an amount of risk.

G.Jogratnam (2006) in his research paper titled Why Do Women Travel Solo for Purposes of Leisure? Wanted to understand why women choose to travel alone instead of travelling with others or with groups. The study also

explored to understand why women travel alone for leisure. The method of data collection was an online questionnaire from 194 women who travelled alone for pleasure. Analysis was done by factor analysis approach, whereby five motivational dimensions for women who travel alone were derived at. They are escape, relaxation, social needs and self-esteem.

The importance of these factors was based on demographic and trip characteristics of the different respondents. The purpose of their research was to discover travel motivations of the increasing number of influential women travellers. Lastly, independent sample tests and one way ANOVA's were conducted for exploring significant differences in level of importance attributed to motivational dimensions. It was concluded that culture, travelling, knowledge were the elements which was important for female solo travellers. Travelling alone is still considered a status oriented activity for women and there are safety concerns and solo travelling is not an easy task. Research has indicated that self esteem influences travel motivations.

Their study also confirms the previous conclusion of McArthur who stated that solo travellers are economic travellers. She stated that many women solo travellers stay at reasonably priced hostels, ate the local food and went ahead with their trips by backpacking. Results also showed different motivational factors among travellers based on when solo trips occurred, the length of their solo trips, marital status and different categories of income levels. A promotional campaign specifying motivations of new experience and escape, e.g., adding of some cultural activities at a spa, may attract women who wants to escape from mundane routine pressures and then see and experience something different and interesting.

The results also showed that women who took short vacations got away from pressures and responsibilities than women who took longer trips. The tour planners can plan short trips which are of less hassle, with few activities at a vacation oriented destination to fulfil the escape need of certain group of solo women travellers.

O. Junek (2006) in their research paper titled *All Female Travel: What Do Women Really Want?* Studied the importance of women only element to women travellers and the benefits one can get from this type of travel. A survey questionnaire was completed by their past clients of an all-female Australian travel company, to understand and measure the client satisfaction with previous travel and also to find out the advantages of all female travel, their further personal plans for future travel and their demographic information.

Qualitative and quantitative information was collected for data analysis. The participants selected for their study were women over 40years, mostly in the age group of 50-69. These women were experienced travellers as 89% of them had travelled previously and 64% of them had travelled more than four times. The information collected assisted in comparison of importance of certain criteria before and after the tour. An increasing confidence in tour leader, any destination and its culture and not being a mass tourist were seen as important before and after the tour. Travelling in an all-woman group was great company, being cared for and pampered was feeling to be cherished for and sharing accommodation increased in its importance after each tour. There were numerous benefits in women group travels. These also included a more relaxed, congenial and intimate atmosphere in the group, sharing of similar interests and absence of any competitions and tensions.

S. Hamid & others (2021) in their research paper titled *Solo Travel and Well Being Amongst Women: An Exploratory Study* attempted to contribute

towards solo travel of women. Secondary data collection was done and the discussion aimed impact of solo travel experiences on women's well-being. Numerous research papers, articles, blogs and other social media contents were reviewed to get conclusive results for their study. It was found that self-transformation and positive changes in well-being came as the major factors for the reason to travel solo. And the reasons for solo travelling were found to be to overcome and handle stress and depression, to bring positive change in present state of life, to escape, happiness, feeling of empowerment, self-growth and self-realisation. Their study also added to further researches on women solo travelling trends by giving insights into independent form of travel. They also tried to bring attention to women's health and its importance.

It was found that solo travelling brings about positive changes in women in terms of a feeling of freedom, creativity, happiness, self-growth, bonding's in the outside world, a feeling of contentment, self-realisation etc. A solo travel brings about a feeling of giving meaning to life and transforms one's life too. This is because this form of travel provides women their personal space and time for reflection and self-development away from family and friends. This kind of travel experience gives more self-confidence and empowerment, taking into account their life decisions.

Other than fears and challenges women face a lot of restrictions while opting for solo travelling but these limitations are different for different women in different parts of the world. Difficulties and challenges faced by women in India are different from those of other Asian countries or in western parts of the world. The women in the west are comparatively braver and bolder while taking solo trips. It was also found that in many cases women left their jobs to travel to escape monotonous and unhappy life. This shows that women are now concerned towards their health and they understand it pretty well when

they need to take a break from their job, family and mundane daily life to keep them stress free. Women have overcome these and have developed a feeling of self-care and self-love for their own greater good.

It was concluded that women travelling alone constitute an increasing segment of international travel. The travel providers and planners can market efforts on delivering service to this market segment by understanding and recognising travel motivations for women. Destination planning managers should promote safe travel space, atmosphere as security is one prime concern of Asian solo women travellers, when going on a solo adventure it could also facilitate a feeling of safety and comfort. All the women travelling from emerging developing economies are important participants in any change in social process. It was suggested in future research, there is a need to enhance understanding of country wise preferences and needs of solo women travellers so as to provide information to cater to the needs of this rising segment of travellers and to spread the knowledge beyond wider academic community to raise consciousness on women travel and bring about a real change.

H. Osman & others (2019) 7 in their research paper titled *The Travel Motivations And Experiences Of Female Vietnamese Solo Travellers* explored main motivations and limitations of 10 female Vietnamese students solo travellers through in depth interviews. It was found that travel motivations can be categorised into personal factors like freedom and flexibility, self-empowerment, independence and exploration, social interaction factors include lack of companions and getting to meet new people. Travel limitations related to being women, solo travelling and being of Asian descent.

This study aims at understanding of this important market segment. This study can lead to tourism providers and destination marketing organisation

(DMOs) to capitalise by developing their products and marketing. This study is informed of personal situations of a co-author, an international Vietnamese student, studying in UK, who is passionate to travel solo in between study breaks. The findings are useful for travelling marketers who design and promote travel packages for student market generally and also for solo student travel specifically.

This study wanted to explore experiences and motivations of Vietnamese solo student travellers, qualitative approach gave best access to participant stories. Interview was chosen as the best method for data collection, which allowed to explore experiences, motives and opinions and to observe world from others perspectives. The interview guide included student background, reasons for solo travel, and their feelings of solo trips and about their encounters at their travel destinations. The researcher tried to remain open, flexible during entire interview process and tried to use prompt and probe questions to encourage interviewees to share as much information as possible.

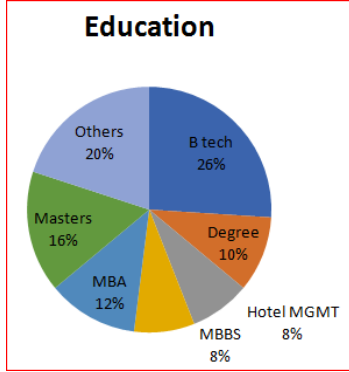
It was found that the participants travel motivations were governed by their curiosity and desire to learn about different cultures. Participants were driven by feelings of excitement about exploring different ways of life and new experiences. Some participants stayed with locals to immerse themselves into their culture. Taking a trip alone enhanced their chance to know locals better. The freedom to explore a different land with its distinct civilization and local norms was a deciding factor to travel solo.

Additionally, empowerment and independence were quoted as major factors to travel solo. All the challenges involved in solo travel and the need to negotiate the limitations were faced by women alone. Riley (1988) mentioned that women are likely to increase their sense of independence and self-control by travelling solo. Nhung mentioned facing and overcoming

difficulties and challenges was empowering. It also gives an opportunity to be independent and develop your self-esteem.

It was concluded that the participants in the study were all young who were inspired to travel alone based on ideas on being free, autonomous and being curious about the outside world. Solo travel was considered as an inner journey of self-growth. Social interaction with localites enabled cultural exchange and formed new friendships. An unanticipated study from the research reveals contemporary Vietnamese women who enjoy high level of education and freedom are still influenced by a history of war and colonisation which accompanies them on travel and gives them a sense of lower self-worth. It was interesting to note that historical baggage can affect tourist experience and the relationship with their destination.

In this present research the author has conducted research on women above 16 years of age from various regions of the country. In this research the author has target to collected data from 50 people from the country. The researcher has collected data, analysed the data. So that one can be understand solo women travellers. The researcher has utilised t-test to analyse the data. The t- distribution revolutionised statistics and the capability to work with small samples. Prior to this time, statistical work was grounded largely on the value of z, which was used to designate a point on the normal distribution where population parameters were known. The z value is the divagation of the sample mean from the mean of the population and is expressed in terms of friction within a typically distributed population (qualtrics.com, 2022).



In the research one can find that the most of the participants those who have took part in this research 43% of the participants are between 25 years to 35 years of age. 25% of the participants have studied B- Tech, 22% of the participants have studied PG or MBA and 10% of the participants have studied Bachelors degree.

In the present research the researcher has noticed that the participants who have travelled internationally have spent maximum amount of their money and it was between Rs. 2 lakhs and 5 lakhs. Going deep down into the summery it is observed that per day maximum about spent was Rs. 45,000 per day and it is an international visit & minimum amount spent per day is Rs. 500 on local trip. It is observed that the women have travelled in between 2 to 21 days and they have visited mostly destinations nationally. From the table on can understand two variables ie., Amount spent on the trip v/s total number of days spent on the trip.

Table 1

**Amount spent
V/S Days spent**

The researcher understood that the amount spent and the days spent may be significant but it

<p>Note:- Treatment 1: Amount spent; Treatment 2: Days Spent Significance Level: 0.05 One-tailed or two-tailed hypothesis: Two-tailed</p> <p>Difference Scores Calculations Mean: -124132.46 $\mu = 0$ $S^2 = SS/df = 1696408858916.42/(50-1) = 34620588957.48$ $S^2M = S^2/N = 34620588957.48/50 = 692411779.15$ $SM = \sqrt{S^2M} = \sqrt{692411779.15} = 26313.72$</p> <p>T-value Calculation $t = (M - \mu)/SM = (-124132.46 - 0)/26313.72 = -4.72$</p> <p>The value of t is -4.717405. The value of p is .00001. The result is significant at p < .05.</p>

is not significant as the tourist travelled to various destinations ranging from local, national and international destinations. So based on the destination the expenses made by varied.

Travel destination v/s Profession
Significance Level: 0.05
Difference Scores Calculations
Mean: 1.66
$\mu = 0$
$S^2 = \frac{SS}{df} = 251.22 / (50-1) = 5.13$
$S^2M = S^2/N = 5.13/50 = 0.1$
$SM = \sqrt{S^2M} = \sqrt{0.1} = 0.32$
T-value Calculation
$t = (M - \mu)/SM = (1.66 - 0)/0.32 = 5.18$
The value of t is 5.183988. The value of p is < .00001. The result is significant at p < .05.

Table 2 choice of Destination V/S Profession of the respondents

The table 2 is explaining the relationship between

the choice of destination and the profession of the tourist. It is observed the value is significant. As the researcher feels that the profession can help an individual may travel based up on their earnings and the feasibility of their work schedules. If we take a women working in a private entity may have less holidays that that of a women working for government sector. It is observed those women with more number of dependents are travelling over those women with no dependents or less number of dependents.

Chart 1: Amount spent on average by women on various categories.



From the research it is understood that 4% of the respondents are widows and it has noticed that they are spending more money on solo women trips than other categories of women. The reason has

been understood that they are travelling to various locations ranging from Local tours to International tours.

In this research one can find people who are willing to travel by Private transportation are more in Number (56%) and only (44%) are by public transportation. Out of this 56% of (18% of the people are willing to travel on eco-friendly way) 20% of the people are like to travel by their personnel Car's. Only (12%) of the women travellers are willing to book through a travel agent with a complete package (all inclusive) in the price. 30% of women are booking through On-line with all Inclusive package and 52% of the women are willing to Travel as Free individual travellers mostly not booking everything and they are booking at the tourist destination based up on their frame of mind at that particular destination.

From the research it is clear to some extent that Women in India are also willing to travel as a solo women traveller as there is an increase of Education, Knowledge of tourist destination, Information about the destination, Safety for solo women travellers, and increase in disposable income of women in the society could be some of the common reasons for the increase in the number.

Suggestions: A more accepting society is the need of the hour today where women should be considered at par with men. Women should have the freedom to choose destination for travel where they too can indulge in activities of their choice. Women majorly want to travel to escape their stereotyped identity and roles which the society has usually associated with them. It could be the role of being a daughter, wife, an employee or a student, they want to utilise this leisure time of travel to introspect their life. Solo travelling enables one to understand themselves better and it also gives them an occasion to focus on their well-being alone than with whom they usually are.

Women's travelling alone gets a chance to challenge them in any unknown place. Indian women upbringing has been that of protected and in a conservative environment. Travelling alone gives them an opportunity to understand whether they can handle difficulties or they need a person to rely on. This gives them an opportunity to increase their confidence and to look at life with a different approach. People are busy in their professional life these days, but it should not hold back the need to travel because of a lack of companion. This should rather give them flexibility and freedom to decide on their destination, location and to choose and create their own itinerary of travel.

Conclusions: Many papers have been presented and numerous discussions keep occurring on how and why to understand the need for women on wanderlust. This is another attempt to study the same, but there is always a dearth on the understanding of Indian women's urge to travel solo. This study has tried to shed light in understanding at least few reasons for Indian women to take up and encourage solo travelling. In a conservative society like India the patriarchal nature considers women a weaker sex in comparison but they have come a long way by overcoming all types of obstacles along their solo trip phases.

This is understood and stood the test of times by the recently concluded Olympic Games at Tokyo. Many women from different strata of society have overcome these challenges by proving themselves and excelling at it in different arena of games. It is often very difficult to explain friends or families the need to travel alone. It is right so as the safety and security of solo travelling women is always still a matter of concern.

Often if the woman in consideration is employed it is a little less matter of concern, nevertheless the fact still remains. In the current evolving society things are changing but still a lot needs to change. Slowly unemployed

women are also discovering the passion to travel and explore things themselves.

Many women still continue to fear from exploring the unknown because of the insecurities involved and an earlier travelling in protected and safe environment. It is noticed that once women decide to travel and explore taking that ultimate challenge first time nothing in the world can stop them or make them take a back stage. It is this determination which makes them chalk out well planned itinerary to have an enjoyable trip. Once a solo trip is successfully accomplished more and more trips keep following.

There were limitations to the study as some people gave their references, some shared experiences and some spoke at great length to their details of travel. However, these could be only considered as majority opinion for the study. Literature reviews gave global opinion of women elsewhere and their nature of wanderlust. Women travelling solo or in any groups generally aim for better self-confidence, exploring self-introspection and gives them a lot of time to think and care about themselves, which usually in a routine day they try to avoid as there are more demanding things to accomplished. By such trips women gain a lot by understanding shared experiences and the ways and means to cope different situations in a better manner. This also leads to good companionship, building camaraderie's and networking for later use. This study would help organisations in building strategies for promoting such services encouraging more Indian women to take up solo or group travel.

There is scope for further research to understand if women continue to remain restricted throughout their life and how it can affect solo or group travel affecting the tourism industry at large. Another area which also needs to be explored is how travelling for Indian women is different from women in other parts of the world. Sooner or later the pandemic will end and the

global tourism industry will soon prosper. If the limitations get lessened there is scope for a better tomorrow and better times to come for tourism industry.

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