

Understanding critical success factors and customer expectations for Indian travelers after COVID-19

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Abstract

This research examines the identity of critical success factors (CSFs) in the leisure lodging segment and growth in India, coming out of the perspective of the domestic travelers representing the demand side of the lodging segment. Understanding the distinctions in CSFs deems to be critical to the growth of the leisure lodging segment. With the help of 319 questionnaires, the results identified eight dimensions of CSFs (i.e., Physical Product, Hotel Room Policy, Value-added Facilities, Room Booking channel, Brand Image, Services Quality, Food & Beverage services, and COVID-19 Safety) as being the most important that travelers will look in hotels/budget hotels and luxury hotels before making a reservation. However, the level of significance of each dimension differed, where Brand Image and Food and Beverage service show the least importance. The principal component analysis also highlights that the top three CSFs for Indian travelers show the highest variance inflexible checkout time, Design/Look of the guestroom, and online reservation system. It gives insight into how the Indian lodging industry must not overlook these three critical success factors to regain trust, earn back loyal customers, and ultimately become profitable.

Keywords

COVID-19, Critical Success Factors, Customer Expectation, Leisure travel, Services Quality, Physical Product

Imprint

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1 Introduction

India positioned itself tenth among 185 nations with the travel and tourism industry's 6.8% contribution to the Gross domestic product in 2019 (CARE Ratings). As of 2019, the Tourism sector employed 8 % of the total workforce in India, distinguishing itself as among the largest employing sectors in India. Indian tourism sector acquires 83% of revenue from Domestic tourists (WTTC's Economic Impact 2020).

However, India's travel and tourism industry is more dependent on the free movement of individuals and is gazing at vanishing employment and a dim future due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. With the COVID-19 outbreak, the GDP is expected to perform the worst in the two decades at 3% (Edelweiss Research) [1].

According to the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism & Hospitality, FAITH, the sector's employee base will be hit with an estimated loss of 70% or 3.8 crore jobs of the 5.5 crores strong workforce (ET Hospitality World)

While the Government of India's impetus on reviving demand through policy initiatives like Dekho Apna Desh and promoting offbeat travel destinations that naturally support social distancing, and helping the sector with soft loans, working capital, and deferment on loans, Financial Express. (2020, June 17) It is ever more imperative for hoteliers to understand the perception of leisure travelers in India, which will help hotel/resorts/accommodation provider's design, stays that rebuild trust and confidence of domestic travelers in taking up leisure travel [2].

The previous studies on identifying critical success factors on which travelers book an accommodation have not been conducted in the Indian subcontinent they also focus on conditions where there is no restriction on free travel movement. Hence, it is imperative to identify the Indian leisure traveler's expectation in choosing the accommodation for his/her first domestic leisure travel since COVID-19. The research questions can be found below:

1. How soon will he/she take the first leisure travel since COVID-19?
2. Choice of accommodation (based on the budget) to be taken for exploring new leisure destinations since COVID-19?
3. What are the top critical factors that he/she will look at before booking the hotel?

2 Literature review

The pandemic has left deep wounds on how human life and society functions. The Indian lodging industry is seeing the brunt of the pandemic. Ultimately, the coronavirus pandemic has placed human life, just as the economy, at serious risk. With no vaccine in sight, it has presented a danger to an individual's life and livelihood and connected to it [3]. It has affected businesses due to the enforced lockdown and social distancing measures. The leisure hotel segment has endured a huge hit because of lockdown and travel restrictions. However, the Leisure Lodging segment needs to be prepared for the reopening hotels to gain customer trust.

2.1 Leisure travel

Leisure travel is one of the most significant travel segments. Everybody appreciates a leisure vacation, which implies that leisure travelers comprise explorers from all ages, sexes, and societies.

According to www.rdaep.com, the possibility of accommodation is the thing that lies at the focal point of the travel industry. In an older era, localities used to let the tourist lay on floorings or in additional areas. There were no rest houses for travelers till religious communities chose to build one, which brought forth lodging services. In the last part of the 1700s, Inns appeared. Inns were only a safe house on the route, where tourists could halt and get something to eat. Inns likewise took care of carts till the time they rested [4]. Here is when the seeds of the advanced lodging facilities were sown. The industry we experience in the present results from the development seen in the previous two centuries. Here is how the housing offices developed with time.

By the middle of the 1800s, Inns became the main accommodation provision accessed by travelers. Many Inns were built up earlier 19th century. Regardless, the dwelling was not just about sheet material and resting facility. In the construction of lodging facilities in the 1900s, they began giving food and beverages to the explorers. In the 20th century, hospitableness, a part of society, opened a huge profit-making industry. Opportunists began opening lodges and fused them with an ever-increasing number of offices. Advancements in transportation frameworks empowered an increasing population to travel [5].

Although it all started from just giving just a space to rest, the segment has grown to become the segment

we know in the last 200 years. Despite the segment has witnessed notable changes since its inception, the customer has been at the core of it.

Furthermore, in 2008, Airbnb introduced us to a huge sector in lodging. Airbnb has been positioned to link individuals wishing to lease outhouses/real estate with the people in need of it. Since an ever-expanding number of people venture out for leisure, this provides them with a favorable and moderate option. Also, there has been seen a rise in the number of solo travelers. These independent travelers little made a fuss over the pleasantries. They would not mind living in shared accommodation [6]. They look forward to meeting and collaborating with other individual travelers. Furthermore, this is the cause why ideas of youth hostels and home stays have picked up popularity.

2.2 Critical success factors

CSFs name predetermined components, which guarantee a sustainable edge for an organization over competitors, according to Rockart. Precisely, Critical Success Factors are elements that should be satisfied to guarantee a business' overall target achievement, as stated by Brother ton. CSFs are subdivided into two. Internal Critical Success Factors are elements in a business' control for its endurance in industry, for instance, product, price, processes, etc., as observed by Berry, Seiders, and Greshan, Duchessi, Schaninger, and Hobbs. External CSFs, for example, market competitors and economic situations, are not in control, as researched by Brotherton's and Shaw. In reality, external circumstances are significant as well [7]. On the functional level, Critical Success Factors can support scholars and professionals in recognizing essential components basic for achieving an organization's objectives from the complex, dynamic truth of exercising businesses, as researched by Butler and Fitzgerald. Moreover, businesses identifying Critical Success Factors and actualizing their use through right forecasting achieved a better yield on the offering compared with businesses, which did not use Critical Success Factors, as studied by Jenster.

The use of CSFs in businesses has existed for quite a while, especially in Information Systems (IS), as recorded by Brotherton's and Leslie; Davis; Hicky; Robson; Rockart. Even more, as of late, Critical Success Factors are used to investigate the board, especially in the procedure/activities of the organization. Considering the Tourism sector, little researches have been

done to recognize Critical Success Factors [8]. An investigation was led by Goldman and Eyster on CSFs concerning Hotel F&B leases, which was embraced by Lee of critical success factors for the success of restaurants. Critical success factors were explored by Croston for Hotel profitability, which was investigated - the Peacock for the Hotel operators. CSFs were examined by Hinkin and Traceys for effectual meets. As stated by Brotherton's recognized it and arranged critical success factors in UK Budget Hotel operations, which is pertinent for the research. Analyst recognized 36 critical success factors in UK Budget Hotels in the Table 1 that were classified into seven dimensions: [9] core product, consistency, customer service, hygiene, and quality, strategic control, pricing, and location.

2.3 Customer expectation

Various research - Knutson, Stevens, Wullaert Patton, and Yokoyama, Wilensky, and Buttle - led to the identification and understanding of travelers' expectations to select to stay in which type of accommodation [10]. The discoveries proposed that tourists may contemplate the accompanying characteristics while settling on the decision concerning room selection: location, price, security, service quality, and the Hotel reputation, according to Knutson et al.; Wilensky and Buttle. Knutson, Stevens, Patton., and Thompson found that regular tourists, surveyed in three lodging types: economy, mid-price, and luxury; considered following while choosing the accommodation: clean and comfortable rooms, convenient location, prompt and courteous service, safe environment, and friendly and courteous employees. In another research, Knutson et al. utilized LODGSERV to contrast traveler expectation and Service quality. Data recommended that reliability and quality assurance had all the earmarks of significant components foreseen by tourists over the three budget-based Hotel classifications [11].

Ananth, DeMicco, Moreo, and Howey studied 510 tourists, who were asked to mark the significance from 57 lodging properties for their lodging decision. Price and quality stood out as significant characteristics over all-age groups, trailed by security and convenient location belonging to the hotel. Correspondingly, Atkinson found that the hygiene, well-being, and security, value for money, the hospitality of the staff did get recognized as traits of priority for travelers in lodging decision determination [12]. It was outlined

by Wilensky and the Butte that travelers assessed personal service, the physical attractiveness of the hotel, opportunities for relaxation, standards of services, and appealing image, and value for money[13]. The physical attractiveness of the hotel, opportunities for relaxation, standards of services, an appealing image, and value for money Shea and Weaver analyzed those individuals on official trips, separated among mid-price and luxury stays. Their discoveries uncovered that individuals on an official trip at mid-priced lodgings anticipated moderately lower-priced family eateries and a pre-check-in bill, while individuals on official trips at higher-end stays anticipated bellboys, a concierge, specialty cafés, a wraparound, and a hair-drying machine. A similar trend for visitors staying at the economical and low-priced accommodation will anticipate that minor items and offering should match his/their essential demands [14].

3 Research methods

Table 1 shows the survey questionnaire was created dependent on 36 critical success factors, found in Brotherton's research with added adjustments. The 23-object questioner was utilized in this research, keeping in mind India's post-COVID-19 situation. While a comparable questionnaire was utilized, this research essentially varied with Brotherton's research in two facets. Especially, respondents were distinct. Brotherton's research surveyed just lodging administrators in the United Kingdom, not from the demand side [15]. This investigation gathered data points in India with the help of an online survey questionnaire with leisure travelers. These respondents encompassed the demand side of the leisure accommodation industry. The incorporation of respondents created

Table 1
Critical success factors in UK budget hotels

Central sales/reservation system	Customer loyalty/repeat business
Convenient locations	Disciplined operational controls
Standardized hotel design	Speed of guest service
Size of hotel network	Efficiency of guest service
Geographic coverage of hotel network	Choice of room type for guests
Consistent accommodation standards	Guest security
Consistent service standards	Low guest bedroom prices
Good value restaurants	Limited service level
Monetary value for accommodation	Hygiene and cleanliness
Recognition of returning guests	Quality audits
Warmth of guest welcome	Staff empowerment
Operational flexibility/responsiveness	Strong brand differentiation
Corporate contracts	Customer survey/feedback
Smoking and non-smoking rooms	Staff training
Design/look of guest bedrooms	Added-value facilities in guest rooms
Size of guest bedroom	Staff recruitment and selection
Guest bedroom comfort level	Standard pricing policy
Responsiveness to customer demands	Quality standards

another comprehension of lodging segment advancement from an Indian perspective. Secondly, Brotherton's research explored as well as contemplated two subdivisions (Leaders. Laggards) of budget Hotels in the UK. This research considered the accommodation industry a congruent group, including standard hostels, home stays, budget hotels, and branded hotels. The lodging industry in India has been in a burgeoning stage before the pandemic.

The Likert scale-based questioner approach was suitable towards average replies from the traveler. A total of 316 questionnaire responses were collected, distributed in August 2020 from individual leisure travelers based in various cities of India. Survey questionnaires were distributed using Social media groups on Face book and personal messaging application of Whatsapp, given the travel restrictions due to COVID-19 [16].

4 Data analysis and results

4.1 Profile of respondents

Table 2 summarizes the demographic profile of respondents. 74.9% Men, 42% women, and 0.4% individuals who preferred not to disclose their gender were represented among the 319 respondents. 74.9% were between 23 and 30 years old. 13.2% of individuals were between the ages of 31-60 years, and 11.9% were between the ages of 18-22 years. 64.6% of respondents chose home stays/budget hotels as the choice of accommodation (budget accommodation), 19.4% chose Branded Hotels/resorts (mid-range and luxury), and 16% chose hostels (economical) as a choice of accommodation. The willingness to travel by respondents showed results contrary to the expectation [17]. The hypothesis was that majority of the respondents would choose their first travel since COVID-19 will be after the arrival of a vaccine. However, only 38.9% of the respondents showed their willingness to travel after the vaccine's arrival. 12.9% chose 'First leave from work,' 0.10% chose 'after two months,' 23.8% chose 'after six months, and 14.4% chose 'after a year,' as their willingness to travel for the first time the start of COVID-19 pandemic. 47.6% of respondents earned no income, and 23.5% of respondents earned below Rs. 5, 00,000 per annum, which can be attributed to the high percentage of respondents choosing Home stays/budget hotels as their choice of accommodation.

Table 2
Respondent profile, N=319

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
18-22	38	11.9
23-30	239	74.9
31-60	42	13.2
Gender		
Male	184	57.6
Female	134	42
Prefer not to say	1	0.4
Education and Employment Status		
Pursuing Under-graduation	11	3.4
Pursuing Post-graduation	120	37.6
Not Working	29	9.1
Salaried	130	40.8
Self-Employed	29	9.1
Annual Income		
Dependent	152	47.6
Below 5,00,000	75	23.5
5,00,000- 12,00,000	64	20.1
Above 12,00,000	28	8.8
Choice of Stay		
Hostels (Economic Stay)	51	16
Home stay/Budget Hotel (Budget stay)	206	64.6
Branded Hotels (Mid-range and luxury)	62	19.4
Willingness to Travel		
First, leave from work	41	12.9
After two months	32	10
After six months	76	23.8
After a year	46	14.4
Not willing till a vaccine comes	124	38.9

4.2 Top critical success factors from customer expectation

The variance of the 23 CSFs was computed, resulting in the top eight CSFs: Flexible checkout time (0.832), Design/Look of the guestroom (0.805), Online Reservation System (0.794), Library (0.783), Gymnasium (0.776), Provision of Wi-Fi (0.75), Presence of Social Distancing Floor Markers in Hotel Lobby, and Public areas (0.74), hotel Look and Design (0.737), indicating the priority of the future leisure traveler while making a reservation for accommodation.

Social Distancing Floor Markers in Hotel Lobby and Public areas is essential to affect the traveler's choice of accommodation. Thus, hotels, resorts, Home

stays, and hostels must ensure public display of floor markers to earn the trust of the leisure traveler. The provision of Wi-Fi signifies the importance of Internet service to travelers. Traveling to various locations can hamper their connectivity with the outside world. Hence, this is a necessary service for hotels to provide. Online reservation system shows the significance of traveler's dependence on websites and mobile applications for making a reservation of accommodation.

4.3 Dimensions identified

Using SPSS 21, principal component analysis was executed to identify principal constructs and divide the 23 Critical Success Factors into reduced constructs. The CSFs identified are Design/Look of the guestroom, Hotel Look and Design, Guest room size, Flexible check-out time, Low Room price, Cancellation Policy, Library, Gymnasium, Swimming Pool, Online reservation system, Convenient Location, Customer Reviews, Offers, and Discounts, Provision of Wi-Fi, Choice of guestrooms, Security, Brand Loyalty, Trust in Brand of Hotel, Smoking guestroom, Dine-in restaurant, Complimentary Breakfast, Presence of social distancing floor markers in the hotel lobby and public areas, Hygiene, and cleanliness. With the help of the above-mentioned CSFs, the questioner is drafted to ask for the traveler's expectation on a five-point Likert scale, where 1=Not at all important, 2 = Not very 3 = Fairly important, 4 = Very important, 5 = Extremely important.

The eigenvalues of 1.00 and the factor cutoff of 0.60 were utilized as rules to incorporate a factor and variables. Cronbach's alpha value is 0.804, indicating high internal reliability.

The KMO estimates the inspecting amplexness (which decides whether the response given with the items is sufficient or not), which ought to be close to .5 for an agreeable principal component analysis to proceed. Kaiser suggested .5 (KMO value) as barely accepted, values in the range of .7 and .8 acceptable, and over .9 as superb. In Table 3 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin mea-

asures is 0.772 and hence acceptable. In Table 3 also, we can see that the Bartlett's test of sphericity is significant (.000), which is less than 0.05. Table 4 explained in communalities.

Table 4
Communalities

	Initial	Extraction
Dine-in restaurant	1	0.607
Hotel Look and Design	1	0.626
Guestroom size	1	0.571
Smoking guestroom	1	0.528
Design/Look of the guestroom	1	0.733
Choice of guestrooms	1	0.558
Swimming Pool	1	0.666
Gymnasium	1	0.673
Library	1	0.643
Hygiene and cleanliness	1	0.674
Complimentary Breakfast	1	0.609
Provision of Wi-Fi	1	0.68
Security	1	0.533
Trust in Brand of Hotel	1	0.614
Flexible check out time	1	0.75
Cancellation Policy	1	0.673
Presence of social distancing Floor-markers in hotel lobby and public areas	1	0.692
Low Room price	1	0.688
Brand Loyalty	1	0.685
Offers and Discounts	1	0.614
Customer Reviews	1	0.551
Online reservation system	1	0.692
Convenient Location	1	0.562
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis		

Table 5 shows Interpretation: First factor= 21.978, Second Factor = 8.857, Third factor = 7.397, Fourth factor = 6.165, Fifth factor = 5.37, Sixth factor = 5.237, Seventh factor = 4.668, Eight factor = 4.497

Inference: The extracted sums of the squared loading values of First factor = 21.978, Second Factor = 8.857, Third factor = 7.397, Fourth factor = 6.165, Fifth factor = 5.37, Sixth factor = 5.237, Seventh factor = 4.668, Eight factor = 4.497 indicated that other factors are not significant.

Inference: The eight dimensions identified are Physical Product, Hotel Room Policy, Value-added Facilities, Room Booking channel, Brand Image, Services Quality, Food & Beverage services, and COVID-19 Safety Procedure, as shown in Table 6. The top three CSFs to affect the booking decision of travel-

Table 3

KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.772
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square
	1803.188
	df
	253
	Sig.
	.000

Interpretation: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy = .772

Bartlett's test of sphericity Sig (p value) = .000.

Table 5

Total variance explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	4.917	21.378	21.378	4.917	21.378	21.378	2.432	10.572	10.572
2	2.037	8.857	30.234	2.037	8.857	30.234	2.134	9.277	19.849
3	1.701	7.397	37.632	1.701	7.397	37.632	2.028	8.816	28.664
4	1.418	6.165	43.796	1.418	6.165	43.796	1.941	8.44	37.104
5	1.235	5.37	49.166	1.235	5.37	49.166	1.63	7.089	44.193
6	1.204	5.237	54.403	1.204	5.237	54.403	1.588	6.903	51.096
7	1.074	4.668	59.071	1.074	4.668	59.071	1.458	6.34	57.436
8	1.034	4.497	63.568	1.034	4.497	63.568	1.41	6.132	63.568
9	0.907	3.943	67.511						
10	0.803	3.49	71						
11	0.775	3.369	74.37						
12	0.722	3.14	77.509						
13	0.67	2.912	80.422						
14	0.618	2.686	83.107						
15	0.602	2.617	85.724						
16	0.56	2.435	88.159						
17	0.496	2.158	90.316						
18	0.44	1.912	92.228						
19	0.416	1.808	94.036						
20	0.389	1.692	95.729						
21	0.364	1.582	97.31						
22	0.315	1.37	98.681						
23	0.303	1.319	100						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 6

Rotated component matrix

	Component							
	Physical Product	Hotel Room Policy	Value Added facilities	Room Booking Channel	Brand Image	Service Quality	F&BSer-vice	COVID 19 safety Procedure
Design/Look of the guestroom	0.805							
Hotel Look and Design	0.737							
Guestroom size	0.68							
Flexible check out time		0.832						
Low Room price		0.726						
Cancellation Policy		0.703						
Offers and Discounts								
Library			0.783					
Gymnasium			0.776					
Swimming Pool			0.678					
Online reservation system				0.794				
Convenient Location				0.659				
Customer Reviews				0.627				
Brand Loyalty					0.712			

	Component							
	Physical Product	Hotel Room Policy	Value Added facilities	Room Booking Channel	Brand Image	Service Quality	F&BService	COVID 19 safety Procedure
Trust in Brand of Hotel					0.614			
Smoking guestroom								
Provision of Wi-Fi						0.75		
Choice of guestrooms								
Security								
Complimentary Breakfast							0.658	
Dine-in restaurant							0.633	
Presence of social distancing Floor markers in hotel lobby and public areas								0.74
Hygiene and cleanliness								0.733
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.								
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.								
Rotation converged in 10 iterations.								

ers are ‘Flexible checkout time’ (0.832) concerning the highest coefficient of correlation, followed by ‘Design and Look of the guestroom’ (0.805) and ‘Online reservation system’ (0.794).

Table 7 explained in component transformation matrix.

5 Discussions

There is discernment and various implications, which come from the observations of this research. The leisure lodging segment is expected to offer pleasant, favorable, helpful, and clean facilities for travelers. Such an economy, particularly in the post-COVID-19 era, does not mean low pricing, yet more significantly other factors. The leisure lodging segment needs to focus, improve, and maintain ‘Hotel Room Policy,’

‘Physical Product,’ ‘Booking Channel Feature,’ ‘Value Added Facilities,’ ‘Service Quality,’ and ‘COVID-19 safety.’

It also highlights that the top three CSFs for Indian travelers showing the highest variance in Flexible checkout time, Design/Look of the guest room, and online reservation system. The results have been consistent with the whole respondent data. It gives an insight into how the Indian lodging industry must not overlook these three critical success factors. Hotels not meeting these expectations or not giving the expected flexibility can hamper the customer’s loyalty and, hence, the property’s profitability. It also indicates that the critical success factors: Choice of guest rooms, smoking room availability, Offers and Discounts, and security have the least variance reflected and hence the

Table 7
Component transformation matrix

Component	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	0.507	0.381	0.332	0.399	0.292	0.345	0.271	0.226
2	0.446	-0.459	0.582	-0.315	-0.207	-0.176	0.185	-0.212
3	-0.397	0.655	0.457	-0.324	-0.249	-0.024	0.144	-0.128
4	-0.381	-0.232	0.42	-0.07	0.568	-0.219	-0.111	0.487
5	-0.213	-0.123	0.307	0.736	-0.485	-0.195	-0.165	0.058
6	0.406	0.273	0.013	-0.218	-0.206	-0.206	-0.686	0.397
7	-0.174	-0.268	0.124	-0.173	-0.282	0.822	-0.16	0.267
8	0.019	-0.025	-0.237	-0.115	-0.36	-0.213	0.579	0.647
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.								
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.								

least importance, which indicates that not providing these factors as facilities may not hamper the traveler in choosing the property. However, security from the lodging can also be considered an unstated offering the lodging facility has to provide because travelers may expect security from stealing, fraud, abduction, assaults, etc., as a prerequisite lodging facility.

In addition, CSFs in this investigation might be viewed as conventional as opposed to relevantly unexpected. Hence, this recommends that the operational situations, procedures, and key performance indicators utilized inside leisure lodging offers are more homogeneous than heterogeneous, which gives rise to the question of competitive advantage issues. If the elements of the operational situation, procedures, and key performance indicators, achievement are common. Prerequisites over the leisure lodging segment are just two likely sources of competitive advantage. The foremost might be named additionality, for example, the arrangement of value-added services/products and the style of service separate one lodging from another. The next is execution, or all the more explicitly unrivaled execution regarding the traveler's needs and needs. The same has been highlighted in the findings from the research.

Value-added services have focused on customers and stand out as a dimension that the traveler considers while making a room reservation. It is essential for leisure hotel owners to offer value-added facilities and services to keep the traveler engaged and enjoy his stay to the fullest. Leisure accommodations must regulate service quality, and appropriate staff development through Total Quality Management is recommended to keep up and enhance service quality. In addition, strict adherence to government guidelines concerning COVID-19 standard operating procedures must be followed and displayed to earn the trust of the traveler. Accommodation managers should keep in mind that it is necessary to register the accommodation with online travel agents to tap into a convenient reservation system.

They identified eight critical success factors dimensions demonstrated by and large as liable to be more significant in the upcoming years truly mirror the traits and improvement of the leisure lodging segment in India. The burgeoning growth of the Indian lodging segment, though paused by the COVID-19 pandemic, cannot completely cease the growing Indian population from taking up leisure travel.

6 Conclusions

This study examined the leisure hotel segment and development from the demand side perspective, i.e., leisure travelers. The questionnaire was utilized to find customer expectations.

Three findings can be drawn out from the research. The first eight Critical Success factors are related to 'Hotel Room Policy,' 'Physical Product,' 'Booking Channel Feature,' 'Value Added Facilities,' 'Service Quality' and 'COVID-19 safety,' respectively, which reflect the importance of 'above-mentioned dimensions to domestic travelers in Indian Leisure Hotel segment. 'Brand Image' and Food and Beverage services are not considered important as other dimensions among the leisure travelers, who would make a reservation for accommodation. For newly planned leisure accommodations focus should be more on the design and look of the guest room and the hotel. In addition, the provision of value-added services should also be made in the facility so that the travelers generate experiences, which may result in repeat or loyal customers. The leisure segment must also focus on online reservation systems or being registered with leading online travel agents, like MakeMyTrip.com, Agoda.com, etc., to tap into the demand for convenient accommodation booking. This study also supports the notion that since COVID-19, Domestic Indian leisure travelers will prioritize COVID-19 safety precautions for the first leisure travel. Enhancement and ensuring COVID-19 safety procedures, service quality, and visibility of booking channels may revive leisure travel and loyal customers with regained trust in the Leisure hotel segment.

It is a matter of time before the growth factor of the COVID-19 cases starts to drop and perhaps also the introduction of a vaccine. The leisure property, which is ready and offers accommodation with the identified CSFs, maybe the first choice of a traveler in the destination chosen

7 Limitations and future research

Two limitations can be improved in future studies. Firstly, the testing method could be improved. Future researches may include respondents in additional specific locations in India. Second, an analysis of variance can be tested to check the differences between the various demographics collected as a part of the survey and check if the traveler expectation differs with age, sex, income level, employment status, etc.

8 Disclosure statements

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest.

Author contributions

The authors read the ICMJE criteria for authorship and approved the final manuscript.

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