

# MTW MARKETING TO WOMEN

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## Hotels Attempt To Attract Women Travelers Through Amenities, Value-Adds, And, Naturally, Low Prices

At a time when consumers are cutting back on everything but the bare necessities, travel is often one of the first expenditures eliminated or drastically altered. Instead of flying, a person drives. A 7-day trip becomes a long weekend.

Women, in particular, are more apt than men to cite the current economic climate as a reason to cancel both business (47% vs. 34%) and leisure travel (58% vs. 47%), according to Ipsos.

Yet despite the gloomy outlook, the hotel brands that MTW spoke with are upbeat about the upcoming summer travel season. "Women may be short on time, but they still have their vacation days and plan to use them," says Wyndham Hotel's Alyson Johnson. Omni Hotels' Caryn Kboundi adds, "Women are savvy today and there are lots of opportunities for them to stretch their money effectively."

Under the mindset that vacation is still going to happen, hotel brands are unveiling varying tactics and strategies to attract guests to their properties. Cost-savings, naturally, underlines all of their efforts. "It's really not about price, but about the value-added options, like three-nights for the price of two, or [free] Internet coverage," says *Hotel* magazine's Jeff Weinstein.

Nearly all hotel executives say their outreach efforts are gender-neutral, yet they add that women's preferences are important considerations since women act as the key decision-maker in 70% of travel plans, according to a Meredith survey. "We do recognize that women are most often the ones making the travel decisions these days," says Johnson.

### Women-Friendly Amenities

The Internet is the primary link to a woman's relationship with a hotel brand. Initially she goes online for research and price comparison, and afterward, she ends up posting comments — both good and bad — on either blogs or the company's own website.

In turn, hotels are listening and responding. In fact, women are responsible for the now-stan-

dard amenities found in most hotels, such as in-room coffee pots, full-length mirrors, and various hanger sizes. "It's not as if men don't think about these things, but women are more vocal. Of course, men appreciate [these amenities] once they are there," Johnson jokes.

Allergy-free rooms are one of the more recent additions that have been popular among moms, notes Johnson. "It ties into the whole 'be well' movement. They want healthier menu selections and exercise DVDs in the rooms. They want to keep fit while traveling."

Other popular female-friendly amenities featured by hotel brands include make-up mirrors, chenille throw blankets, ionic hair dryers, jewelry holders, and special bath products.

Hotels are also emphasizing security. The Crowne-Plaza's Washington DC and Bloomington, Minnesota, locations, among others, offer "women-friendly" floors. The Premier Hotel in Times Square New York features women-only floors with oversized bathtubs and stools at the sink so women can put on their make-up.

Not all female-specific efforts are effective. In 2007, a Marriott hotel in Michigan announced it would offer woman-only floors only to reverse its decision after protests from guests and questions over its legality.

Individual resorts and hotels are also unveiling promotions to appeal to local women. For example, The Ritz-Carlton, New York, Central Park and its in-house spa, La Prairie, have noticed a sharp increase in the number of mother-daughter weekend bonding trips. Increasingly teens are dragging their mothers in for a visit, a reverse of the situation a few years ago when moms initiated such trips, the hotel tells MTW.

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