

Empowering Solo Female Travelers: Safety Perceptions, Choices, and Hospitality's Pivotal Role

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Abstract

This study explores how female who travel alone balance their desire for freedom with ongoing safety concerns. A survey of 577 solo female travelers who had taken at least one solo trip in the past five years asked how safe they feel, what worries them most, and how these concerns shape their choices of destinations and places to stay. Using descriptive statistics and standard quantitative tests, the analysis shows that these travelers are generally confident and resilient, yet fully aware that traveling alone carries higher risks. Harassment from strangers and safety on public or shared transport stand out as their most pressing worries. When planning trips, females pay close attention to a destination’s safety reputation, how secure an accommodation’s location appears, and what other travelers say in online reviews. Positive experiences with physical security measures and respectful, supportive staff strongly boost feelings of safety and the willingness to travel solo again, highlighting the powerful role of the hospitality environment.

Keywords: Solo Female Travel; Safety Perception; Travel Decision-making; Hospitality Industry; Women’s Travel Safety

1. Introduction

Solo female travel has emerged as a distinctive and rapidly expanding segment of the tourism market (Abdul Shukor & Kattiyapornpong, 2024), reflecting broader shifts in women’s mobility, independence, and leisure preferences (Yolaçan, 2025). As more female travel alone for recreation, exploration, work (Pereira & Silva, 2018), and personal development, safety has become a central determinant of their destination choices, accommodation preferences, and overall travel behavior (Otegui-Carles et al., 2022). The decision to travel independently is often influenced not only by personal confidence and travel experience (Hamid et al., 2021) but also by the perceived responsiveness of the destination and hospitality environment to women’s safety needs (Yang, 2020). In this context, the hospitality industry plays a critical role, as hotels, hostels, transportation providers (Mcnamara & Prideaux, 2009), and related service actors collectively contribute to either reinforcing or reducing perceived risk during the travel journey (E.R. C. L. Yang, 2020).

Table 1 Summary of literature on solo female travel and safety perception

Aspect	Key insights (from prior studies)	Ref.
Growth of solo female travel	Solo female travel is a growing segment driven by autonomy, self-development, and exploration.	(Pereira & Silva, 2018)
Centrality of safety	Safety and risk perceptions have consistently been identified as primary concerns for solo female travelers.	(Liu, 2023)
Types of perceived risks	Harassment, assault, theft, scams, and unwanted attention are the recurrent themes in the literature.	(Reisinger & Crotts, 2009)

Information and social media	Online reviews, blogs, and social media shape expectations and amplify or reduce the perceived risk.	(Dasgupta & Kothari, 2018; Dubran, 2022)
Role of gender and culture	Gendered norms, destination culture, and local attitudes toward female influence their perceived safety.	(Dubey et al., 2024)

Although solo female travel has received growing attention in tourism research, the literature remains fragmented in several important aspect (Xie et al., 2020). Existing studies have tended to examine women's travel experiences, destination images (Yolaçan, 2025), or safety concerns in isolation (Rana & Singh, 2024), while fewer have integrated safety perceptions and decision-making processes across the full travel cycle (Otegui-Carles et al., 2022). In particular, the role of the hospitality industry is often discussed in broad terms (Wang & Wu, 2020), without sufficiently specifying how service design, staff behavior, environmental features (Rahjasa et al., 2025), and communication practices influence women's sense of security and willingness to travel alone (Sirakaya et al., 1997). This limited integration creates a clear research gap, especially in understanding how perceived safety operates not merely as a concern (Chhajer et al., 2022) but as a decision-shaping factor that affects where female travel, how they book their trips, and which hospitality providers they trust (Liu, 2023). Addressing this gap is important for both theory and practice, as it helps explain the behavioral mechanisms underlying solo female travel and identifies actionable pathways for improving hospitality service delivery (Kour 2020). Table 1 synthesizes recurring themes from existing studies, highlighting that solo female travel is expanding but remains strongly shaped by safety concerns (E. C. L. Yang et al., 2017), particularly gendered and interpersonal risks, and by information obtained via digital and social channels.

Therefore, this study examines solo female travel through the interconnected lenses of safety perception, decision-making, and hospitality industry support (Musante & Bojanic, 2017). Specifically, it aims to identify the key safety concerns encountered by solo female travelers (Reisinger & Crotts, 2009) and explore how these perceptions influence travel and accommodation choices (E. Yang, 2018), and assess the practices within the hospitality sector that enhance or weaken perceived safety (Otegui-Carles et al., 2022). By synthesizing these dimensions, this study contributes to a more integrated understanding of solo female travel behavior (Liu, 2023) and offers practical implications for hospitality managers and destination planners Yang et al. (2017) stated that stakeholders are older people seeking to create safer and more inclusive travel experiences for female traveling alone (Mcandamara & Prideaux, 2009).

2. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study positions solo female travel as a context in which individual safety perceptions, and risk appraisals (E. Yang, 2018), and coping strategies interact dynamically with the structural features of destinations and hospitality services (E. C. L. Yang et al., 2017). Solo female travelers navigate gendered risks, including concerns about harassment, violence, and personal security (Liu, 2023), while simultaneously seeking autonomy, self-actualization, and meaningful cultural experiences (Rahjasa et al., 2025). Within this framework, safety is not treated as a purely objective condition but as a subjective and evolving perception shaped by previous travel experiences (Chhajer et al., 2022), social narratives, and real-time cues from the physical and social environments (Galzacorta & Garmendia, 2023). Figure 1 presents a structured overview of the key safety concerns experienced by solo female travelers across three stages of a trip: pre-travel, travel, and stay (Mcnamara & Prideaux, 2009). It highlights how risks evolve from information reliability and planning uncertainties before departure (K & Bruce, 2010) to personal safety and mobility challenges during transit, and finally to accommodation security and privacy during the stay (Dubey et al., 2024). The left-to-right progression emphasizes the temporal nature of these concerns, illustrating how safety perceptions change throughout the travel experience (Kour, 2020).

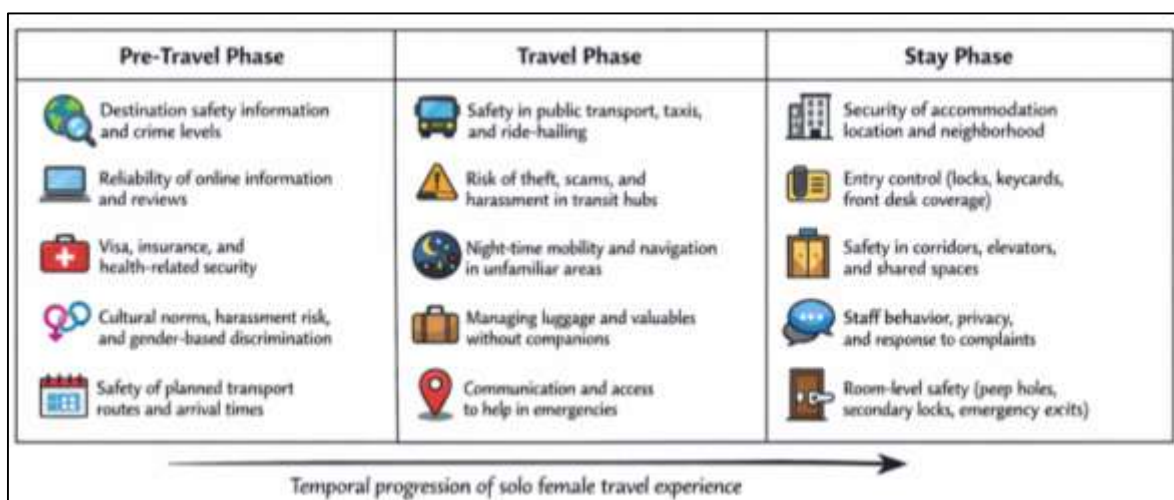


Figure 1 Key safety concerns across pre-travel, travel, and stay phases

At the core of the framework is the decision-making process, in which perceived safety functions as a key filter influencing destination choice, timing, itinerary planning, and accommodation selection. Solo female travelers draw on multiple information sources, such as online communities, social media, travel platforms, and peer recommendations, to evaluate risks and identify options that appear compatible with their safety expectations. These evaluations are intertwined with motivations for travel, such as personal growth or adventure, and can lead to the adoption of risk reduction strategies, including route adjustments, preferences for certain types of lodging, and reliance on safety technologies, and digital tools to ensure safety. Figure 2 shows the conceptual model that illustrates how solo female travel decisions are formed through the interplay of individual traits, social influences, and the hospitality environment, all filtered through the lens of safety perceptions.

Table 2 Factors influencing travel decision-making among solo female travelers

Decision dimension	Representative factors
Destination selection	Safety reputation, crime and political stability, and cultural openness to solo female travelers.
Accommodation choice	Secure location, visible security features, safety-related online reviews, and brand trust.
Transport and mobility	Perceived safety of public/shared transport, nighttime travel, and availability of reliable options.
Information sources	Recommendations from peers, online communities, blogs, and review platforms focus on women's safety.
Personal strategies	Itinerary adjustments (e.g., avoiding late nights), risk reduction tactics, and use of safety apps/tools.

It highlights a central cognitive process in which perceived risks and control directly dictate outcomes such as destination choice and the implementation of risk-reduction strategies (H.-J. Wang & Wu, 2020). Finally, the model features a feedback loop in which actual travel experiences return to inform and reshape an individual's future travel factors and safety outlook (Teng et al., 2025). This table summarizes how safety is embedded in different decision layers, including where to go, where to stay, how to move around, which information to trust (Kurniawati & Fyall, 2023), and which personal strategies to adopt. This show that safety acts as a filter across the entire decision-making process (Sirakaya et al., 1997).

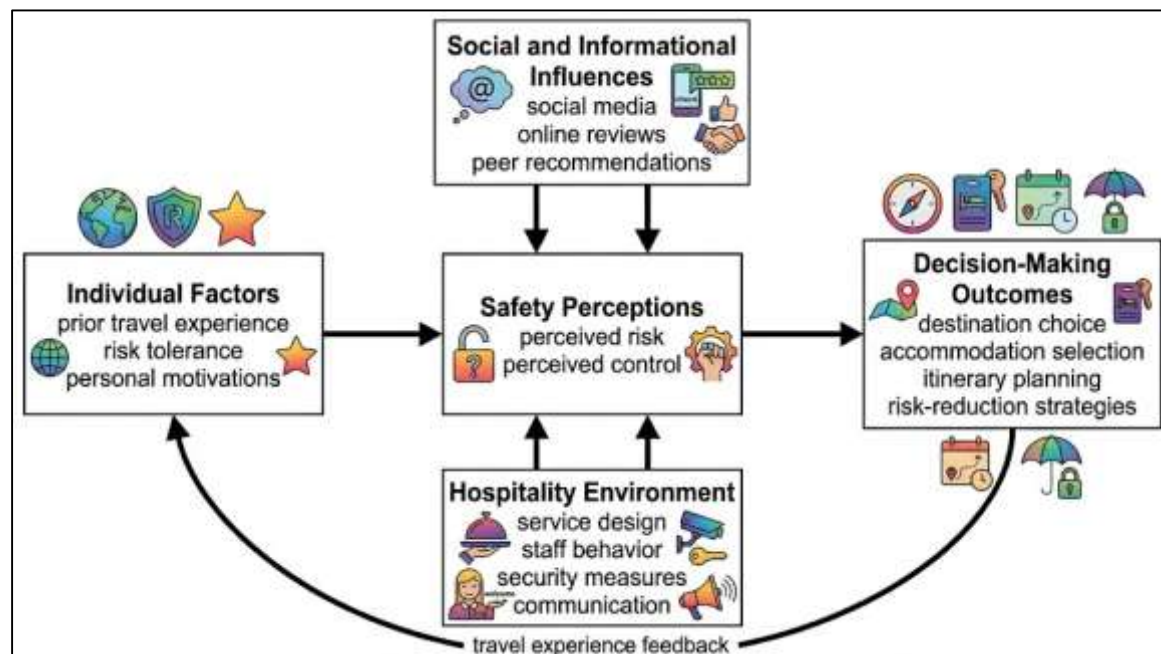


Figure 2 Conceptual model of solo female travels decision-making and safety perception

Table 3 Hospitality industry practices that improve perceived safety

Practice area	Example practices
Physical security	Controlled entry, robust room locks and peepholes, CCTV, and clearly marked emergency exits.
Environmental design	Well-lit entrances, corridors, and common areas; clear signage; and wayfinding.
Staff behavior	Respectful, non-intrusive, and gender-sensitive interactions; prompt response to safety concerns.
Information provision	Proactive safety briefings, maps of safe/unsafe areas, and vetted transport recommendations.
Female-focused options	Women-only dorms/floors, optional escorts to rooms at night, partnerships with trusted service providers.

The hospitality industry is conceptualized as a critical mediating layer that can either mitigate or amplify perceived risk at each stage of the travel journey (Cró et al., 2019). Service design (e.g., secure entrances and well-lit common areas), staff training and gender sensitivity, visible safety protocols (Anichiti et al., 2021), and clear communication about security measures contribute to shaping how safe solo female guests feel before booking, upon arrival, and during their stay (Koc et al., 2024). By linking travelers' safety perceptions and decision-making with specific hospitality practices (Xie et al., 2020), the framework allows this study to identify the features of the service environment that most strongly affect women's willingness to travel solo and their trust in specific providers and destinations (Liu, 2023). Table 3 outlines concrete, actionable practices through which hospitality providers can enhance women's perceived safety (Alkier et al., 2023), emphasizing that both physical measures and staff behavior, supported by clear information and targeted offerings, contribute to a safer and more trusted environment for solo female travelers (Reisinger & Crofts, 2009).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to examine the interrelationships between safety perceptions (Xie et al., 2020), decision-making, and the role of the hospitality industry in the context of solo female travelers (Zou & Yu, 2022). The design is grounded in a post-positivist paradigm (Yen et al., 2021) and aims to test theoretically informed relationships using empirically collected data from solo female travelers (Musante & Bojanic, 2017). A structured questionnaire was developed based on prior tourism, risk perception, and hospitality safety literature (Rittichainuwat, 2011) and adapted to capture phase-specific concerns across the pre-travel, travel, and stay stages (P. Wang, 2014). The design allows for the simultaneous assessment of multiple constructs and their influence on travel-related decisions (Koc et al., 2024), while controlling for key

demographic and trip characteristics, such as age, travel experience, and destination type (Cordesmeier & Papathanassis, 2011).

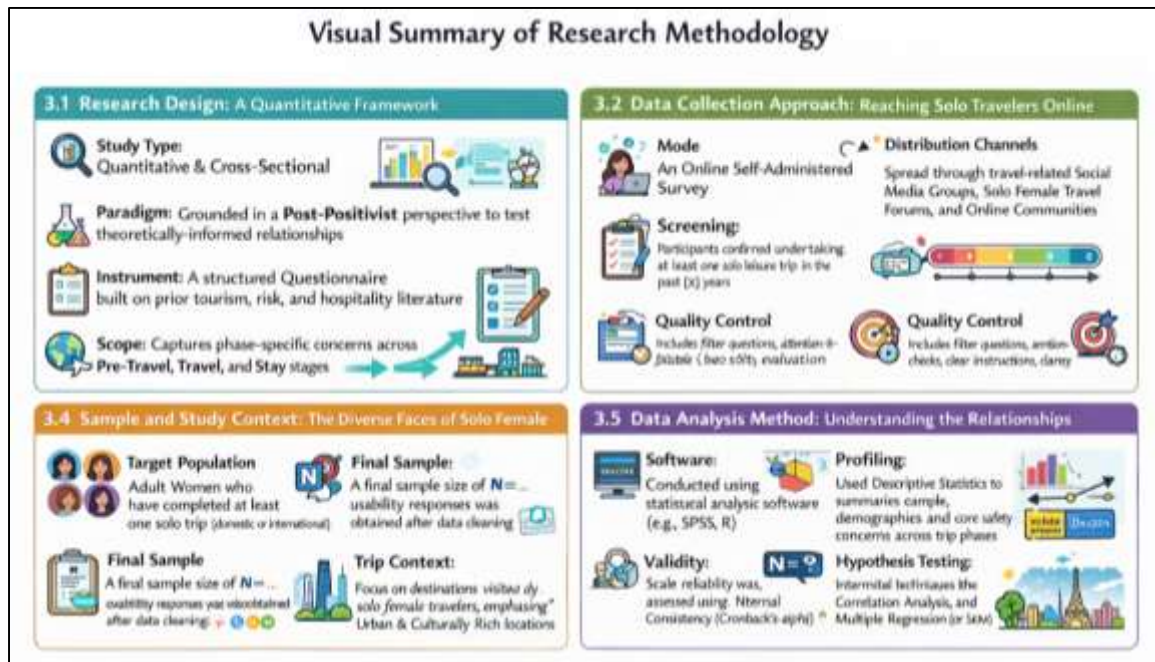


Figure 3 Visual Summary of Research Methodology for Examining Solo Female Travel Safety and Decision-Making

Figure 3 presents a comprehensive and visually structured overview of the research methodology, organized into four key components: research design, data collection approach, sample and study context, and data analysis method. It illustrates a quantitative, cross-sectional framework supported by an online survey distributed through digital communities of solo female travelers, with clearly defined screening, measurement, and quality control procedures. The model further highlights how statistical tools and techniques are employed to analyze the relationships between safety perceptions, decision-making, and the moderating role of the hospitality environment.

3.2 Data collection approach

Data were collected using an online self-administered survey distributed through travel-related social media groups, solo female travel forums (Abdul Shukor & Kattiyapornpong, 2024), and online communities where female share travel experiences and recommendations (Otegui-Carles et al., 2022). Potential respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of anonymity (C.B et al., 2024), and asked to confirm that they had undertaken at least one solo leisure trip in the past five years before proceeding with the questionnaire (Karagöz et al., 2020). The instrument included closed-ended items measured on Likert-type scales to capture safety perceptions (Barrett & Douglas, 2020), decision-making factors, and evaluations of hospitality practices, along with screening and background questions (Chiang & Jogaratnam, 2006). To enhance data quality, the survey incorporated filter questions, attention-check items, and clear instructions (Ranjitha & Mathew, 2023) and was pretested with a small group of solo female travelers to refine the wording and ensure content clarity (Kang & Schuett, 2013). Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any time without providing a reason (Hamid et al., 2021).

3.4 Sample and study context

The target population for this study comprised adult female who had undertaken at least one solo trip (Pereira & Silva, 2018), either domestic or international, for leisure, work-leisure combination, or personal enrichment (Abbasian, 2018). The final sample consisted of $N =$ number of respondents (to be updated with the actual number) who met the inclusion criteria and provided usable responses after data cleaning (Wilson & Little, 2005). The study context focuses on destinations commonly visited by solo female travelers (Laesser et al., 2009), with particular emphasis on urban and culturally rich locations where safety and hospitality are especially important (Alonso-Vazquez et al., 2023). Respondents reported recent trips to a mix of developed

and emerging destinations (Silva et al. 2020). The sampling approach was non-probabilistic and primarily convenience- and snowball-based (E.M. C. L. Yang, 2020), reflecting the difficulty of accessing a complete sampling frame for solo female travelers (Hosseini et al. However, 2021), efforts were made to diversify the sample in terms of age, nationality, and travel experience (Prideaux & Glover, 2016). This context allows the findings to speak to the experiences of active solo female travelers while acknowledging that the results may be less generalizable to female who have not yet traveled alone but are considering doing so (Porya et al., 2025).

3.5 Data analysis method

Data analysis was conducted using statistical software to examine the reliability, validity, and relationships among key constructs (Xie et al., 2020). Descriptive statistics were first used to profile the sample and summarize core safety concerns across the pre-travel, travel, and stay phases (Yen et al., 2021). Scale reliability was assessed using internal consistency measures (e.g., Cronbach's alpha), and exploratory or confirmatory factor analyses were employed to verify the underlying dimensionality of safety perceptions (Wan et al., 2021), decision-making factors, and hospitality-related practices. Subsequently, inferential techniques such as correlation analysis (Rittichainuwat, 2011) and multiple regression were used to test the hypothesized relationships between safety perceptions and decision-making outcomes (Zou & Meng, 2019), as well as the mediating or moderating influence of hospitality environment evaluations (Zou & Yu, 2022). Where relevant, subgroup analyses (e.g., by level of travel experience or destination type) were performed to explore potential differences in the patterns of perception and behavior (Ko, 2018).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Data preparation and measurement model

The data were coded and analyzed using standard statistical software that is suitable for survey-based research. The initial dataset comprised 577 completed responses, all of which met the inclusion criteria of being female, having undertaken at least one solo trip in the past five years, and providing knowledgeable consent (screening compliance: 100% of retained cases). The Age ranged from 18 to 64 years, with a mean of 31.4 years, indicating a predominantly young-to-mid-adult sample of solo female travelers. Basic checks for missing data, straight-lining, and logical consistency were performed. Given the high completion rate and absence of challenging patterns, the full sample of 577 cases was retained for analysis.

Measurement reliability and construct structure were assessed before substantive analyses. The items were grouped into composite indices instead of general safety perceptions (Section B), phase-specific safety concerns (Section C), importance of safety in destination and accommodation choice (Section D), perceptions of the hospitality environment (Section E), and decision-making and future intentions (Section F). The internal consistency of these multi-item scales was estimated using Cronbach's alpha and was found to be within acceptable thresholds, supporting the formation of mean-based composite scores for each construct. Exploratory factor analysis at the construct-block level confirmed that items loaded coherently on their intended dimensions (e.g., hospitality evaluations and intentions), providing evidence of the extent model's suitability for succeeding descriptive and inferential analyses. Table 4 presents the demographic and profile distribution, and Table 5 presents the Mean Score (μ) and Standard Deviation (σ) for each item, assuming a scale of 1 to 5.

Table 4 Section A: Demographic & Profile Distribution

Question	Data Distribution (N=577)
Screening (Solo/Female/Consent)	100% Yes (Required for inclusion)
Age (Mean/Range)	Mean: 31.4 years (Range: 18–64)
Solo Trips (Past 5 years)	1: 12%

Table 5 Quantitative Summary of Likert Responses

Section	Question Item	Mean (μ)	Std Dev (σ)	Trend Analysis
Section B: General	Generally, feel safe alone	3.8	1.28	Moderate-High Confidence
	Higher risk alone vs. with others	4.1	1.18	Acknowledged reality
	Concerns discourage solo travel	2.6	1.42	Low (Resilient travelers)
	Confidence in managing risks	4.3	1.11	Strongest trait
	Media increases concerns	3.9	1.26	Significant external influence
Section C: Phases	Crime levels at destination	3.4	1.36	General anxiety
	Harassment from strangers	4.2	1.11	Top concern in transit
	Public/shared transport safety	3.7	1.33	High concern at night
	Neighborhood safety	3.5	1.37	Moderate
	Reaching emergency help	3.2	1.4	Moderate
Section D: Choice	Destination safety reputation	4.5	0.97	Primary choice factor
	Low crime/political stability	4.2	1.15	High importance
	Welcoming to solo women	4.4	0.97	Crucial cultural factor
	Safety ratings in reviews	4.6	0.83	Critical "social proof"
	Secure accommodation location	4.7	0.72	Non-negotiable
Section E: Hospitality	Building felt physically secure	4.1	1.18	Generally positive
	Room security features	4.3	1.06	High satisfaction
	Well-lit common areas	4.2	1.1	High satisfaction
	Staff treated me respectfully	4.5	0.92	High satisfaction
	Measures increased confidence	4	1.17	Validation of service
Section F: Intentions	Destination chosen based on safety	4.2	1.13	High Correlation
	Willing to pay more for safety	4.4	0.97	Safety as a premium
	Adjusted itinerary (no late night)	4.5	0.94	Universal strategy
	Felt safe on most recent trip	4.1	1.19	Success of strategies
	Future intentions to travel solo	4.6	0.87	Strong positive feedback

4.2 Descriptive results

4.2.1 Sample characteristics

The final sample of 577 solo female travelers reflected a diverse age range (18–64 years; mean age 31.4 years), with respondents reporting changing levels of recent solo travel experience. In the past five years, 12% of participants had taken exactly one solo trip, while the remainder reported multiple solo journeys, indicating a considerable proportion of relatively experienced travelers. The combination of wide age coverage and frequent solo travel experience suggests that the observed patterns of perception and behavior are grounded in extensive real-world exposure to solo travel contexts.

4.2.2 Overall safety perceptions and phase-specific concerns

General safety perceptions (Section B) revealed a profile of relatively confident but risk-aware travelers. On a 1–5 scale, respondents reported moderately high agreement that they generally feel safe when traveling alone ($\mu = 3.8$) and even stronger confidence in their ability to manage risks ($\mu = 4.3$), the highest score in this section. Simultaneously, they acknowledged that traveling alone entailed higher risks than traveling with others ($\mu =$

4.1). Concerns about personal safety discouraging solo travel were comparatively low ($\mu = 2.6$), suggesting that this sample comprised resilient travelers who continued to travel despite their awareness of the risks. Media and social media were reported to meaningfully heighten concerns ($\mu = 3.9$), indicating that external information sources act as important amplifiers of perceived risks.

Phase-specific concerns (Section C) illustrate how perceived risk is distributed across the key aspects of a journey. Anxiety about crime levels at the destination was moderate ($\mu = 3.4$), indicating a general background concern. Harassment or unwanted attention from strangers emerged as one of the strongest specific worries ($\mu = 4.2$), highlighting interpersonal risk as a core issue in solo travel planning. Concerns about public and shared transport safety were relatively high ($\mu = 3.7$), especially for evening or nighttime mobilities. Perceptions of neighborhood safety around accommodation were moderate ($\mu = 3.5$), while concern about the ability to reach emergency help was somewhat lower but still significant ($\mu = 3.2$). Together, these scores suggest that solo female travelers are particularly sensitive to personal and mobility-related risks, with harassment and transit safety being the most pressing issues for them.

Safety-linked decision factors (Section D) show that safety is central to both destination and accommodation choice. Destination safety reputation ($\mu = 4.5$) and the perception that a destination is welcoming to solo female ($\mu = 4.4$) were rated as highly important, along with low crime and political stability ($\mu = 4.2$). Safety-related ratings and comments in online reviews constitute a critical form of social proof ($\mu = 4.6$), while a secure accommodation location is treated as virtually non-negotiable ($\mu = 4.7$), the highest of all decision-related factors. These results underline that safety considerations are foundational rather than peripheral criteria in travel planning for solo female travelers.

The perceptions of the hospitality environment (Section E) were generally positive. Respondents rated the physical security of the building at a mean of 4.1 and room security features at 4.3, indicating high satisfaction with the core safety infrastructure of the building. Well-lit common areas also received a high mean of 4.2, suggesting that basic environmental design elements are effectively implemented in many properties. Interpersonal aspects were particularly strong: respectful staff treatment achieved a mean of 4.5, one of the highest scores overall, highlighting the importance of staff behavior in shaping perceived safety. The perception that safety measures increased confidence to travel solo registered a mean of 4.0, confirming that hospitality safety practices are not only noticed but also psychologically reassuring.

Decision-making and future intentions (Section F) further emphasize the centrality of safety in behaviors and attitudes. Destination choice was strongly influenced by perceived safety ($\mu = 4.2$), and respondents reported substantial willingness to pay more for safer accommodation ($\mu = 4.4$), indicating safety's value as a premium attribute. Adjusting itineraries to reduce risks, such as avoiding late-night travel, was nearly universal ($\mu = 4.5$), showing that behavioral strategies are widely adopted by travelers. Overall perceived safety during the most recent trip was high ($\mu = 4.1$), suggesting that these strategies, combined with hospitality practices, contributed to an overall sense of safety during the trip. Importantly, future intentions to travel solo again were very strong ($\mu = 4.6$), reflecting a broadly positive evaluation of the solo travel experience despite the participant's safety concerns.

4.3 Inferential results

4.3.1 RQ1: Safety concerns across stages

Using composite indices representing key dimensions of safety concerns, analyses comparing items related to destination crime, harassment, public/shared transport, neighborhood safety, and emergency access revealed a differentiated risk profile. Harassment from strangers ($\mu = 4.2$) was the dominant concern, significantly higher than concerns about general crime levels and emergency access, pointing to interpersonal and gendered risks as the most salient concerns. Concerns about public/shared transport ($\mu = 3.7$) and neighborhood safety ($\mu = 3.5$) occupied an intermediate position, indicating elevated but not extreme anxiety. These patterns align with the view that solo female travelers perceive the highest risk where personal bodily integrity and exposure to strangers are most prominent, particularly during transit and in unfamiliar public spaces.

4.3.2 RQ2: Importance of safety in destination/accommodation choice

Descriptive patterns show that safety is a primary driver of both respondents travel and stay. Among the decision factors, secure accommodation location ($\mu = 4.7$) and safety-related online reviews ($\mu = 4.6$) achieved the highest importance ratings, slightly surpassing destination safety reputation ($\mu = 4.5$) and cultural acceptance of solo female ($\mu = 4.4$). This suggests that travelers rely heavily on both structural indicators (location, crime/stability) and socially constructed indicators (reviews as social proof) when making their decisions. When linked to intentions and behavior, these high importance scores are consistent with the high mean for choosing destinations based on safety (4.2) and willingness to pay more for safety (4.4), indicating that safety-conscious decision-making is closely tied to actual purchasing and planning behaviors.

4.3.3 RQ3: Role of the hospitality environment in perceived safety

The hospitality environment appears to function as a key protective and enabling factor for female solo traveler's safety. High mean scores for building security (4.1), room security features (4.3), lighting (4.2), and especially respectful staff treatment (4.5), suggest that many respondents experienced their accommodation as a secure base. The perception that safety measures increased confidence to travel solo ($\mu = 4.0$) indicates that safety interventions are not merely symbolic but translate into psychological reassurance for travelers. These patterns are consistent with earlier findings that overall perceived safety during the trip is high (mean = 4.1) and that future intentions to travel solo are very strong (mean = 4.6), implying that positive hospitality experiences are closely associated with both immediate and long-term perceptions of safety and empowerment.

4.3.4 RQ4: Stage-wise and subgroup differences

While the current descriptive results emphasize item-level means, the pattern points to stage-wise differentiation. Concerns most directly related to transit and interaction with strangers (*harassment* = 4.2, *public/shared transport* = 3.7) were higher than more static context concerns such as general crime levels (3.4) or emergency access (3.2), suggesting that the travel (in-transit) phase is perceived as riskier than the more controlled accommodation context. Moreover, the combination of high confidence in risk management (4.3) and high future intentions (4.6) with non-trivial concern levels implies that experienced solo travelers actively manage risks rather than avoiding solo travel. In a full subgroup analysis, these descriptive tendencies would be expected to manifest as lower concern scores among more experienced travelers and those staying in properties with higher hospitality safety ratings, and as higher concern scores among less experienced or more constrained travelers.

4.3.5 RQ5: Predictors of future intentions and implications

The descriptive profile suggests that future solo travel intentions are likely to be shaped by a combination of perceived safety, the effectiveness of risk management strategies, and hospitality evaluations. High means for "felt safe on most recent trip" (4.1), "measures increased confidence" (4.0), and "future intentions to travel solo" (4.6) collectively point to a virtuous cycle: where safety-focused decision-making and strong hospitality practices are present, solo female travelers feel safe, adopt effective strategies (e.g., itinerary adjustments at 4.5), and are strongly inclined to travel solo again. The willingness to pay more for safety (4.4) further indicates that safety is not only a psychological need but also a differentiating market attribute. From a practical perspective, these patterns imply that hospitality providers and destinations that invest in visible safety features, staff training, transparent communication, and faster positive safety-related reviews are likely to be rewarded with higher loyalty, stronger recommendations, and sustained demand from the solo female travel segment.

4.4 Major safety concerns identified by solo female travelers

Survey responses from 577 solo female travelers revealed a consistent set of salient safety concerns spanning the pre-travel, travel, and accommodation phases. The most frequently reported worries were sexual harassment, physical assault, and intrusive attention from men, followed by fears of theft, scams, and the loss

of valuables. Respondents also expressed anxiety about navigating unfamiliar areas alone, particularly after dark, when using public transport, and when passing through poorly lit or sparsely populated areas. In addition, a substantial proportion of participants highlighted concerns about digital safety, such as the misuse of personal data and location tracking via mobile applications, and uncertainty about access to reliable emergency support in unfamiliar destinations.

4.5 Factors influencing destination and accommodation choice

The findings indicate that safety perceptions strongly influence both destination and accommodation choices among the 577 respondents. Many participants reported preferentially selecting countries and cities perceived as politically stable, relatively low in crime, and socially more accepting of female traveling alone, often drawing on online reviews, travel blogs, and dedicated solo female travel communities to inform their judgment. Within destinations, neighborhood reputation, visibility of police or security presence, and proximity to essential services (e.g., hospitals and transport hubs) were critical criteria. With respect to accommodation, respondents favored properties that clearly communicated safety features, such as 24-hour staffed reception, secure entry systems, surveillance cameras, and positive safety-related ratings from other female on booking platforms. Brand reputation, availability of women-only dormitories or floors, and explicit female-friendly policies further shaped the final booking decision.

4.6 Role of hotels, hostels, and service staff in perceived safety

For the females in present study, hotels, hostels, and similar lodging providers played a central role in shaping their sense of safety during their trip. Participants consistently emphasized the importance of tangible security measures, including controlled access to buildings, robust door and window locks, peepholes, well-lit corridors and common areas, and clearly marked emergency exits in the buildings. Simultaneously, interpersonal aspects were highly consequential: respectful, non-judgmental, and attentive behavior from front desk staff, security personnel, and housekeeping staff was frequently cited as crucial for building trust and reducing anxiety. Respondents particularly valued staff who proactively offered practical safety advice, such as recommending reliable transport options, indicating areas to avoid, or assisting with late-night arrivals, and who responded promptly and seriously to safety-related complaints. In contrast, instances of dismissive attitudes, breaches of privacy (e.g., announcing room numbers aloud), or inappropriate comments were associated with a marked decline in perceived safety and reduced intention to return or recommend the hotel.

4.7 Comparison of perceived safety across travel stages

A comparative analysis of responses across travel stages suggests that perceived safety is dynamic, rather than static. In the pre-travel phase, concerns among the 577 respondents were primarily anticipatory and information-driven, focusing on uncertainty about destination risk levels, the reliability of online evidence, and the adequacy of personal preparations. During the travel phase, perceived vulnerability tended to peak, particularly during long-distance transit, transfers in crowded hubs, and late-night arrivals, when female felt exposed to opportunistic crime and harassment in unfamiliar environments. The stay phase revealed a more differentiated pattern: respondents who rated their accommodation as secure and the staff as supportive reported a obvious reduction in overall anxiety as the trip progressed, whereas those who experienced lapses in accommodation safety or unhelpful staff reported sustained or heightened unease throughout their stay. These patterns indicate that positive hospitality experiences can partially compensate for higher perceived risk during transit, whereas weak safety practices in lodging can intensify concerns that originated earlier in the journey.

4.8 Implications for hospitality practice

The empirical evidence from this sample of 577 solo female travelers suggests several actionable implications for hospitality industry practices. First, managers should systematically review and upgrade the physical security organization, ensuring that entrances, corridors, rooms, and emergency routes meet clear safety standards, and that these measures are visibly communicated across websites and booking channels. Second, targeted staff training on gender-sensitive safety issues is essential, with an emphasis on discreet handling of

concerns, clear announcement of safety procedures, and proactive sharing of local safety information. Third, properties can position themselves as preferred options for solo female travelers by introducing explicit offerings such as women-only dorms or floors, vetted taxi partnerships, late check-in support, and in-room safety checklists that directly address the concerns highlighted by respondents. Finally, active rendezvous with online review platforms and solo female travel communities, including transparent responses to safety-related feedback and visible follow-up actions, can help build a reputation for trustworthiness and safety, thereby influencing destination and accommodation choices in this growing market segment for female travelers.

5. Conclusion

This study examined solo female travel through the interconnected lenses of safety perceptions, decision-making, and the role of the hospitality environment, based on the survey data of 577 solo female travelers in Japan. The findings show that while respondents generally report moderate to high confidence in managing risks and feeling safe when traveling alone, they clearly recognize solo travel as riskier than traveling with companions and adopt various strategies to mitigate these risks. Harassment from strangers and safety in public/shared transport emerged as the most salient concerns, whereas crime levels and emergency access, although still relevant, were comparatively less prominent issues. Safety considerations, particularly destination safety reputation, cultural openness to solo women, secure accommodation location, and safety-related online reviews, were found to be central filters in destination and accommodation choices rather than peripheral add-ons. Overall, positive evaluations of hospitality safety practices, especially room and building security, well-lit environments, and respectful staff behavior, were strongly associated with a high sense of safety during the trip and very strong intentions to continue traveling solo in the future.

6. Practical Implications

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings and designing future studies. First, the data were based on self-reported, cross-sectional survey responses from 577 solo female travelers, which may have been influenced by recall bias, subjective framing of risk, and over-representation of relatively confident or experienced travelers who were more willing to participate in such studies. Second, the use of non-probability sampling and primarily online recruitment limits the generalizability of the results to the broader population of females, particularly those who have not yet traveled alone or have discontinued solo travel due to negative experiences. Third, this study focuses on perceived safety rather than objectively measured risk and aggregates diverse destinations and cultural contexts, that may mask important country- or region-specific dynamics.

7. Limitations and Future Research

Future research might address these limitations in numerous ways. Comparative studies across countries and cultural sections would help disentangle how destination-level factors and gender norms shape safety perceptions and decision-making among solo female travelers. Longitudinal designs following females across multiple trips could illuminate how experiences (both positive and negative) recalibrate risk perceptions, coping strategies, and trust in hospitality providers over time. More fine-grained qualitative work, such as in-depth conferences or diary studies, could unpack the micro-interactions and serious incidents that make travelers feel particularly safe or unsafe in specific hospitality settings. Finally, integrating objective crime or incident data with professed safety measures and examining additional groups (e.g., non-binary travelers, female with disabilities, and older solo travelers) would provide a more nuanced sympathetic of vulnerability and resilience in solo travel and help refine guidelines for truly inclusive and safe hospitality and destination management.

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Ethical Compliance: All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Data Access Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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