

Solo Travel: Understanding the Travel Motivations and Constraints of the Gen-Z Solo Male Traveler

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Master of Science in Hospitality and Tourism Management

Supervisor:

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Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

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BUSINESS
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I would like to dedicate this research paper to everyone who second-guesses themselves and their ability to embark on solo travel. As the findings show, the silver lining is on the other side of this transformative experience.

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I would like to express my appreciation to everyone who has contributed to creating this master thesis in any way. I sincerely thank you All for the encouragement, wisdom, and understanding I have received during these times.

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Resumo, Palavras-chave e Classificação JEL

O mercado de viagens a solo é um dos segmentos com o crescimento mais rápido nas últimas décadas, devido a diversos fatores, tais como mudanças sociais, o aumento do rendimento disponível e do número de indivíduos interessados na autodescoberta. Apesar do crescente interesse em viajar sozinho, as viagens a solo continuam a representar uma área pouco explorada no campo da gestão da hospitalidade e do turismo. A maioria dos estudos existentes que aplicaram uma abordagem baseada no género focam-se apenas na perspetiva feminina e analisam o fenómeno das viajantes a solo. Assim, este estudo visa preencher uma lacuna na literatura sobre viagens a solo, identificando os fatores motivacionais e as restrições percebidas pelos viajantes a solo do sexo masculino da Geração Z, para fins de lazer. Aplicando um método de pesquisa qualitativa e tendo por base o quadro conceptual da Teoria das Motivações Push e Pull e do Modelo das Restrições de Lazer, foram realizadas discussões de grupo para estudar o que leva esses indivíduos a viajar sozinhos. Os resultados do estudo revelam que um conjunto de fatores push, como – autoconfiança, liberdade, autorreflexão, fuga da rotina diária – e fatores pull, como – experiências culturais autênticas, história, estilo de vida costeiro, áreas urbanas, relações sociais e significado pessoal atribuído ao destino – são as fontes de motivação para os viajantes a solo. As principais restrições de viagem identificadas incluíram insegurança e ansiedade, falta de apoio do ambiente social e restrições orçamentais. As conclusões sugerem aos profissionais da indústria do turismo o desenvolvimento de experiências de viagem a solo personalizadas e estratégias de marketing que promovam atividades de fortalecimento da confiança, experiências transformadoras e ofertas económicas.

Palavras-chave: *viagens a solo, viajantes da Geração Z, viajantes do género masculino, motivação para viajar, restrições de viagem*

JEL Classificações: L83, Z32

Abstract, Keywords, and JEL Classification

The solo travel market has been one of the fastest-growing subsets in recent decades due to numerous factors, such as societal changes, increased disposable income, and the number of individuals interested in self-discovery. Despite the increased appeal of traveling alone, solo travel continues to represent an underexplored area in the field of hospitality and tourism management. Most existing studies that applied a gender-based approach only focus on the female perspective and explore the female solo traveler phenomenon. Therefore, this study aims to fill a gap in solo travel literature by identifying the underlying motivating factors and constraints focused specifically on Gen-Z solo male travelers for leisure purposes. By applying a qualitative research method within the frameworks of the Push and Pull Motivation Theory and the Leisure Constraints Model, a series of focus group discussions were conducted to understand what makes these individuals travel alone. The research findings suggest that a mix of push factors such as – self-confidence, freedom, self-reflection, escaping everyday routine – and pull factors like – authentic cultural experiences, history, coastal lifestyle, urban areas, social connectivity and personal significance attached to the destination – are the strongest source of motivation for solo travelers. The main travel constraints identified included self-doubt and anxiety, lack of support from the social environment, and budgetary constraints. The findings call for tourism industry professionals to develop tailored solo travel experiences and marketing strategies to promote confidence-building activities, transformative experiences, and cost-effective offerings.

Keywords: *solo travel, Gen-Z travelers, male travelers, travel motivation, travel constraint*

JEL Classifications: L83, Z32

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Glossary of Acronyms

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

FOMO – Fear of Missing Out

NCL – Norwegian Cruise Line

OAT – Overseas Adventure Travel

OFG – Online Focus Group

OTA – Online Travel Agency

SM – Social Media

TBP – Theory of Planned Behavior

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Solo Travel Trend Being On The Rise

The concept of traveling alone is a phenomenon that has been around for a while among current tourism trends. Existing literature suggests that the solo travel market has been one of the fastest-growing tourism subsets in the past decades, partially driven by shifts in social structures and changes in increasingly individualized lifestyles (Jordan & Gibson, 2005; Mehmetoglu, Dann & Larsen, 2001). A combination of several factors, such as the aging population, the social shift of getting married later in life, childless couples, an increase in disposable income, and the rising number of 'singles' - as their relationship status - have all been contributing to substantial changes in travel expectations and demand (Laesser, Beritelli, & Bieger, 2008).

However, the trend is rising again because of a new wave in *solo travel*, which could be witnessed among travelers. More and more individuals decide to enjoy the experience of traveling alone (Statista, 2022). Even before the appearance of COVID-19, the World Tourism Organization suggested the potential rise of solo tourists as the type of traveler the tourism industry should pay attention to (International Tourism Group, 2022). According to Statista (2022), the pandemic has also strongly accelerated this trend, as the weeks spent in lockdown awakened the pursuits of self-discovery and self-awareness within people. These pursuits resulted in solo travelers' increased appetite for travel. A study conducted among American travelers shows that in the pre-pandemic era, only 14% of the respondents would consider traveling alone, which has increased to 23% by 2022, with an 85% increase overall (Statista, 2022). In addition, online searches for the term 'solo travel' increased by 267% from December 2020 to April 2022 (Piva, 2022). On a global level, a survey by Klook (2019) indicated that 76% of nearly 21.000 respondents would be interested in solo travel. The global solo travel market grew even further in the post-pandemic era, as many travelers did not waste any time waiting for a travel partner to join them; they decided to go alone. A joint survey conducted by Overseas Adventure Travel (OAT) and Solo Traveler suggested that 68% of participants consider themselves independent travelers, and the solo travel trend expanded to a point where OAT's traveler base became more than 50% consisting only of solos. Based on these results, Forbes predicted 2024 would be the year of the solo traveler (Elliott, 2023). When it comes to the airline industry, Kayak reported a 36% increase in searches for solo flights in 2023 compared to 2022 (Butcher, 2024). Kayak's well-known rival, Skyscanner's Travel Trends 2023 report, also showed that 54% of its users considered traveling alone within the following

year (Jacobs Media Group, 2023). In response to the increased interest in solo travel, many Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) have already started to tailor their offerings to this segment with specialized tours and services. Such agencies include OAT, Intrepid Travel, Airbnb, and Booking.com (Elliott, 2023; Yang, Liang & Lin, 2023). Among Expedia's website offerings, there is a separate vacation category named 'Solo', which outlines top solo travel destinations and shares resources and tips on what to consider when traveling alone (Expedia.com, 2023). Tripadvisor has created a 'Solo Travel Forum' that allows solo travelers to connect and share their experiences, give ratings, and review certain destinations and accommodations (Tripadvisor.com, 2023). Hostelworld's budget-conscious focus has a dedicated 'Solo Travel' section on its website, with solo travel advice, trip planning, and an app where travelers can connect and share experiences with each other (Hostelworld, 2023). Brian FitzGerald, the CEO of OAT, believes that solo travelers should not be punished for not having someone to travel with, and the industry should become more welcoming towards single travelers. Therefore, in 2023 they were selling their single supplements below the industry average and added 24.000 single spaces for 2024 (Elliott, 2023).

Tourism destination operators and accommodation providers have also responded to the phenomenon with different strategies. The Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) was the first to introduce solo cabins on cruise ships with studio lounges for single travelers back in the 2010s and is still leading the single cabin options on the cruise market in 2024. However, Virgin Voyages, Fred Olsen, Riviera Travel, and many other lines are also jumping on the trend of extending their solo cabins in numbers and variety. NCL's published research from January 2024 shows that 66% of respondents had booked their solo trips to take a break or treat themselves, while 17% decided to go on a solo cruise after a break-up to reconnect with themselves (Butcher, 2024). The Trafalgar Travel Tours also extended their solo travel accommodation options with a 'Solo Room Share' option (Trafalgar.com, 2023). According to National Geographic Traveler UK, cruising is one of the fastest-growing markets for solo travel. Intrepid Travel also accelerates this by saying solo travelers love the freedom of leaving the ship to explore but enjoy the comfort and safety of returning to the cabins at the end of the day (Butcher, 2024). There is a great impact on the architecture of hotels, too, which are now being redesigned or renovated to create shared spaces within the same property, open-air lounge areas, or game rooms, all for travelers to meet and be able to spend time together (Elliott, 2023).

1.2. The Understudied Solo Male Traveler Phenomenon

Despite the increasing appeal of traveling alone, solo travel continues to represent an underexplored area in hospitality and tourism management. Many studies have applied a gender-based approach to researching the solo travel experience. The majority of those, however, only focus on the female perspective and are dedicated to specifically exploring the *female solo traveler* phenomenon (Ejupi & Medarić, 2022; Hassan & Damir, 2022; Osman, Brown & Phung, 2019; Pereira & Silva, 2018).

The general intrigue towards exploring the female solo travel experience is not unreasonable, as from an early on, women have substantially contributed to the emergence of the trend (Yang, Nimri, & Lai, 2022). Google searches for the term ‘solo women travel’ have shown a 230% increase in 2019, and the number of women traveling solo worldwide has increased from 54 million in 2014 to 138 million by 2017 (International Tourism Group, 2022). OAT’s and the Solo Travelers survey conducted that 85% of the solo travelers are women. According to OAT’s CEO, women tend to be more social and open to seeking adventure and interacting with locals from other cultures (Elliott, 2023). The Opodo search engine also supports this argument by saying that men and women travel for different reasons, with women wanting to explore more while men wanting to meet new individuals during their solo trips (Butcher, 2024). A variety of female-focused research has been centered around gender equality in tourism, women’s fear of traveling alone, safety risks, and travel anxiety. For instance, the surveillance impacts on the experiences of women traveling alone (Jordan & Aitchison, 2008), the analysis of the female travel risks, anxiety, and travel intentions (Karagöz, Işık, Dogru & Zhang, 2020), the ‘normality around the unsafety’ for solo female travelers in India (Thomas & Mura, 2018) and many more. However, the findings of these solo female travel studies cannot be generalized entirely to males (Yang, Lai & Nimri, 2021). A gender-mixed approach has been applied in a handful of cases, focusing on travel constraints, intentions, and motivations (Bianchi, 2016; Yang, Lai & Nimri, 2022; Yang, Nimri & Lai, 2021).

A clear research gap in the male perspective can be concluded when solo travel studies are examined using this gender-based approach. A significantly smaller number of cases focus specifically and only on solo male travelers, which do not sufficiently explain their travel motivations or the constraints they come across (Heimtun, 2015; Tham, 2020). These male-specific studies either focused on a certain nation of solo travelers or examined a certain age group. Both studies concluded that the male perspective significantly differs from the female solo travel experience. They are often fueled by trying to make sense of their current

relationship status and are motivated by the freedom of choice that comes with traveling alone (Heimtun, 2015; Tham, 2020). However, the interest in traveling solo is also present in the case of male travelers. A July 2023 study looked at travelers planning to travel alone in the upcoming 12 months worldwide, where results showed that 63% of surveyed men had the intention of taking a solo trip while 54% of surveyed women said the same (Statista, 2023).

1.3. Research Aim, Questions, and Objectives

For all the above-mentioned reasons, this study aims to identify the underlying motivating factors focused specifically on male solo travelers for leisure purposes. According to a study conducted in 2022, Generation Z showed the greatest interest in solo travel (Piva, 2022). Therefore, since a clear research gap has been identified regarding this traveler type, the primary question of this research is (1) what are the main drivers and motivations of the Gen-Z solo male travelers? Furthermore, this research additionally explores the question of (2) what kind of travel constraints does this age group of solo travelers encounter before and during their trip?

Due to the limited academic insights available regarding solo male travelers, the primary objective of this study is to develop a perceptive and detailed understanding of what makes this type of tourist travel alone. Further objectives include identifying the kind of constraints solo male travelers encounter by thoroughly exploring what they consider travel restrictions when preparing for their trip and during their time spent traveling. Supported by the above-introduced statistical overview, the solo travel market shows no signs of slowing down as it is becoming to account for a significant segment among traveler types (Statista, 2022). Therefore, from a broader perspective, an additional objective of the study is to understand the distinct characteristics and unique preferences of these types of travelers from destination management perspectives and support the development of targeted marketing strategies for solo travelers.

1.4. Research Structure

This study on solo male traveler motivations and constraints is divided into six chapters and additional subchapters. The first chapter explains the rise of solo travel and its impact on the tourism market and outlines the research gap, aim, questions, and objectives. It also details the theoretical, social, and managerial contributions that are expected to be formulated based on a deep dive into this segment of travelers. Considering these guidelines, the second chapter introduces a succinct and thorough theoretical overview. The literature review starts by looking

at the characteristics of leisure travelers, then the notion of travel and solo travel experience, as well as how previous studies defined this developing concept. With motivation and travel constraints being the central pillars of this research, existing theories about different approaches are introduced next. Dann's Theory of Push and Pull motivations and the Leisure Constraints Theory both function as conceptual guidelines for the research; therefore, the conceptual overview is included in this chapter. The literature review's last subchapter identifies the research's target population and the Gen-Z traveler profile. Due to the relative novelty of this traveler segment and the limited studies available, few conceptual models have been implemented. Thus, the third chapter introduces research propositions formulated based on previous solo travel study results. This is followed by the fourth chapter, which gives a detailed overview of the research design and why focus groups have been chosen to conduct this research. This chapter includes a detailed overview of the research context, data collection, and treatment. The fifth chapter presents the research findings with a mixed-method descriptive and narrative content analysis approach and discusses the results. The sixth chapter draws conclusions about the research results obtained. In addition, the theoretical, social, and managerial contributions are reflected on and concluded. The chapter closes with limitation disclosures and suggestions for future research purposes.

1.5. Expected Theoretical, Social & Managerial Contributions

The findings of this study aim to broaden existing knowledge regarding solo travel with a special focus on the male perspective, which has not been researched enough in an academic context yet. Furthermore, besides providing a deeper insight into the motivating factors of the solo male traveler, the results are expected to add to this research area by exploring the travel constraints this tourist segment considers when deciding to travel alone and throughout their trip.

As an emerging tourism trend, solo travel is strongly involved in achieving the UNWTO's 'Tourism and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals' program. Since the start of the current leadership mandate in 2018, UNWTO has laid a strong emphasis on the importance of investing in new ideas. A dedicated team of the UNWTO Innovation Network works to address new tourism challenges and trends and promote the exchange of knowledge (UNWTO.org, 2022). Besides contributing to exploring this fast-growing tourism subset, the obtained results can function as new and valuable knowledge about one of the current trends dominating this industry.

Regarding the expected managerial contributions, the discoveries of this study can provide a better understanding of the motivations and needs of this rising segment of leisure tourists for tourism industry professionals. Since travel packages are oftentimes targeted to couples or families with kids, this research can also help tourism destination managers and hotel managers target the solo traveling market on new and more effective levels with customized marketing strategies and vacation offerings. Recognizing what motives this type of traveler can lead to assessing their needs more effectively, which can eventually turn into higher levels of satisfaction, which is vital for a tourism destination's success. With solo travel being a continuously growing market, it is essential for the supply side to understand and be aware of how it behaves.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1. Leisure Tourism & Leisure Traveler Behavior

Given the focus of this research on a specific group of travelers, this subchapter is dedicated to defining the type of travel carried out by solo travelers. Since this research focuses on those solo male travelers who travel for leisure purposes, not for business or a blended experience, recent leisure travel behaviors and trends are also explored in this subsection.

According to Hamilton-Smith (1990), leisure itself can be defined as the time spent out of work on recreation, culture, sports, and social-related activities, which are pursued with a relative sense of freedom from obligations and are considered personally pleasurable (Ettema & Schwanen, 2012; Leiper, 2004). While Venkatesh (2010), suggests that travel as an expression of what leisure means to people is a popular choice among different societies, and it is also human nature to want to explore the unknown, understand different cultures, and indulge in pure adventures. Travel nowadays has grown to become a very important factor that shapes the quality of life. Tourist activities are also a major part of how individuals spend their free time, as it is associated with rest and help the recharging process (Kinczel & Müller, 2023). The companion of the traveler, whether they pursue an independent or group trip, the personality of the traveler, and the destination all contribute to the overall leisure travel behavior (Mehmetoglu, 2001).

As also referred to in the introduction chapter, COVID-19 greatly impacted how tourists perceive travel and tourists' behavior in general. Research that studied the impacts of the pandemic on individual leisure travel concluded that travel risks, attitudes, behavior, and intentions have all been affected. The results showed that family road trips would become more popular in the upcoming years and that the most significant impact COVID-19 had was on people aged under 26 or between 41-50. The effect can be explained by the relatively unstable job statuses and low incomes. These people perceive lower travel utility, greater obstacles, and lower travel intentions (Shi & Long, 2022). Another study highlights the importance of considering the needs of the different types of travel groups and the other city attractions. Offering customized services to various travel groups, such as setting up varying tour routes and corresponding catering and accommodation services, can all contribute to establishing a tailor-made experience and serving the individual needs of the leisure traveler (Shi, Long & Xin, 2022). When it comes to post-pandemic travel behavior, several travel groups were identified, but the main aspects that were expected to fuel traveling intentions were relaxation

and excitement, and some were expected to travel where older and wealthier subgroups of people are more likely to travel to for relaxation (Wang & Xia, 2021). The above-mentioned studies reflect on leisure travel trends, predictions, and behavior. They relate to this research as similar methodologies and target populations are considered. For example, the age group under 26 and the individual types of travelers who are closely connected to solo tourists. How individual travelers differ from solo travelers is detailed in 2.3.1. *Defining Solo Travel* subsection.

2.2. Travel Experience

Before exploring the solo travel experience components, it is important to examine how travelers perceive travel experience in general and how understanding this concept can help tourism industry professionals create memories that stay with tourists long after returning from their travels.

Travel experience is a complex holistic concept that, according to Noy (2004), is a set of memories, expressions, and emotions related to a place that a tourist seeks. From another perspective, Larsen (2007) argues that it can be defined as a past-travel-related event that is stored in our long-term memory because it was significant enough. Tourist forms their travel experience impression based on a series of interrelated stages. These impressions start from the decision-making process to take on the journey until the tourist has returned home (Kong & Chang, 2016). According to Cohen's research findings (1979), different types of travelers may desire different kinds of tourism experiences as a result of having different motivations for traveling (Bianchi, 2016). Another study supports this argument by suggesting that depending on certain psychographic variables such as travel philosophy, travel motives, and personal values, tourist experiences vary based on individualistic or collectivistic orientation (Mehmetoglu, 2004). In both cases, however, individual subjectivity played a key role in determining tourism experiences or how they are perceived. Examining the supply side, according to Xu and Chan (2010), creating a travel experience for tourists is essential for a destination's marketing and promotional plans. To enhance the differentiation strategy applied by a growing number of firms in the tourism sector, many organizations have expanded their service offerings by starting to focus on creating and managing *experiences*. Providing excellent experiences that stay long after the guests' purchase can create the future basis of loyal customers, customer satisfaction, and positive word-of-mouth (Chen & Chen, 2010). The importance of this concept can also be explained by the shift that could be witnessed in the

progression of economic value over the years. An essential part of the phenomenon is that in the experience economy, customer experience drives economic growth (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Laesser et al. (2008) highlight the importance of the proper design of the travel experience to explore the different travel motivations, which will ultimately result in a higher level of satisfaction for travelers, solo travelers included.

2.3. Solo Travel Experience

Before narrowing down the travel experiences to solo travel, the definition of the concept should be introduced. Describing solo travel is challenging as it includes a very heterogeneous type of tourists, and the published literature review has not yet reached a consensus on one official definition (Yang, 2020). Due to the relative novelty of the phenomenon within an academic research context, existing studies have developed different definitions as far as solo travel is concerned. In addition, there has also been research that did not specifically define solo travel at all (Seow & Brown, 2018).

Both Foo (1999) and McNamara & Prideaux (2010) defined a solo traveler as someone who arrives in the destination country alone, thus considering the concept from one's arrival status. There have been different interpretations of solo travel based on the individual's accompanied travelers throughout their stay. Some studies consider solo travelers those tourists who arrive in the destination alone and remain alone (Terziyska, 2021; Yang, 2020), while others defined them as tourists who join a group of people or an organized group after arrival (Heimtun, 2015; Yang, Nimri & Lai, 2022). Chung, Baik & Lee (2016) looked at solo travel from a relationship status point of view, thus considering solo travelers as those who travel single to their destination. Another perspective justified by the societal structural and lifestyle changes defined the concept as a single-person household traveling alone (Mill & Morrison, 2009). Wilson's (2004) definition of solo travel suggested that it prefers freedom and flexibility rather than an organized tour package. This concept is also supported by the conclusions of experimental studies on solo travelers (Gibson & Jordan, 1998; Mehmetoglu, Dann & Larsen, 2001), observing that solo travelers typically prefer independence in their travel experiences. However, this does not mean some would not enjoy a structured package tour arrangement (Umur & Ertan, 2023). Wilson (2004) also highlights some similarities between solo and independent travel, but it is important to differentiate them. Independent travelers have been defined as those individuals who make their own transportation and accommodation arrangements and those who choose not to buy prearranged packages or tours, thus having

flexibility in their itinerary and freedom in where they choose to travel (Laesser et al., 2008; Tsaur, Yen & Chen, 2010).

When it comes to the categorization of solo travelers, Laesser et al. (2008) built a conceptual framework based on prior segmentation of the solo travel market and defined four types of travelers within. The (1) single-solo category includes travelers coming from single households traveling alone, and the (2) single-group category includes travelers coming from one-person households traveling with a group of other people. This is followed by the (3) collective-solo type, which considers people who do not live alone but travel solo, and the last one, (4) collective-group category of people who come from collective households but take off by themselves to travel as part of a group (2008). The classification of solo travelers later on further developed into two main categories, which are now widely accepted and mentioned within academic contexts: solo travelers are traveling alone “by default,” and the ones who do it “by choice.” The “by default” category refers to solo travelers who might lack accompanied individuals to travel with, while the “by choice” travelers choose to travel alone, thus, it is a choice of their own (Otegui-Carles, Araújo-Vila & Fraiz-Brea, 2022). The varying definitions have resulted in establishing a diverse context of solo travel literature covering travel experiences, including visiting friends and relatives, city escape, volunteer tourism, resort holidays, and backpacking frontier expeditions (Yang, 2020).

While the growing interest in research on solo travel has created an extensive and holistic definition of the concept, it is important to note that this study defines the solo traveler based on one of the earlier formulated perspectives: the traveler’s arrival status (Foo, 1999; McNamara & Prideaux, 2010). In this research, the solo traveler is someone who arrives at the destination country alone but does not categorize whether the decision was made due to the lack of travel partners or because the solo male traveler wanted to go alone.

2.4. Overview of Travel Motivation Theories

Since this research aims to understand the main motivations of the solo male traveler, this subsection introduces different travel motivation approaches and the main conclusions of existing studies where these concepts were applied.

2.4.1. Travel Motivation: Maslow's Theory

One of the most widely accepted motivation theories, which functions as the source of numerous theoretical frameworks when it comes to studying consumer behavior, is *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*. In the early stages of motivation research, Maslow's theory was among the most frequently applied conceptual frameworks (Woodside & Martin, 2007). Maslow's theory consists of five needs: psychological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization, with ascending importance in order (Maslow & Stephens, 2000). However, the research findings of Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) suggested that Maslow's theory might be ideal for studying grounded motivation but may not be the most fitting theoretical scheme when applied in the tourism context (Huang, 2015).

2.4.2. Travel Motivation: Dann's Theory of Push and Pull Motivations

The importance of motivation in leisure travel has already been studied from different perspectives, and another frequently implemented scheme specifically for travel motivation research is *Dann's theory of Push and Pull Motivations* (Bianchi, 2016). Dann's framework was initially drawn to assess travel motivations for individuals attending a culinary event. According to him, travel motivation can be divided into two parts: customers are encouraged to travel because of *push and pull factors* (Dann, 1977). In the theory, he explains that push motivations are the socio-psychological needs of a tourist that drive them away from home, while pull motivations are the ones that drive a tourist towards a practical destination (Irsha, 2018). In other words, push factors are the factors that influence a person to any destination, and pull factors include those that attract a tourist to a particular destination. Dann (1977) further proposed that push factors are formulated chronologically, preceding pull factors, thus, a need appears first to take a vacation, which is followed by the decision-making process of which destination to go to (Smith, Costello, & Muenchen, 2010).

Looking at push factors separately, Dann (1977) highlighted two concepts that play a role when determining those factors: anomie and ego-enhancement. Anomie describes how a tourist wishes to run away from the everyday routine and tasks and desires to leave behind the feeling of isolation associated with that. Meanwhile, according to Fodness (1994), ego enhancement comes from the need for recognition that can be gained through travel (Kassean & Gassita, 2013). Crompton (1979) further developed Dann's theory and proposed his model by investigating what motivates people to leave their homes and travel to another place. He concluded that there are 7 influencing factors of motivation and named them push factors:

escape, relaxation, prestige, cultural interaction, adventure, social interaction, exploration, and evaluation of self (Kassean & Gassita, 2013). These results further refined Dann's theory, providing a detailed clarification of the previously defined dimensions through the grouping of pull factors. Yuan and McDonald (1990) identified 5 additional dimensions to push factors in the course of research examining overseas travel in four different countries. Results indicated that individuals from each country travel to satisfy the same unmet needs – the identified push factors include escape, novelty, prestige, enhancement of kinship relationships, and relaxation/hobbies. Through the developing interpretations over time, it can be concluded that push factors serve as driving forces that compel tourists to satisfy a certain need, which may vary and be classified in different orders due to individuals having specific needs that they are looking to satisfy while traveling (Kassean & Gassita, 2013). Dann (1977) also claimed that the push factor explains why people travel and lays the foundation for traveling. However, this suggestion was later argued by researchers such as Crompton (1979).

Nevertheless, pull factors still play a key role in shaping travel motivations, as it is important not only to know why a person is motivated to take a vacation but also to know what kind of vacation and which specific destination he or she chooses. These factors determine the whys of a particular destination selection and require significant consideration by tourism industry professionals, too, when aiming to attract new and repeated tourists (Yiamjanya & Wongleedee, 2014). Pull factors can be further classified into tangible, and intangible characteristics of a specific destination attracting tourists to satisfy their needs of a particular travel experience (Plangmarn, Mujtaba & Pirani, 2012). Besides identifying 5 push factors, Yuan and McDonald (1990) also explored 7 pull motivation dimensions: budget, culture and history, ease of travel, wilderness, cosmopolitan environment, facilities, and hunting. These pull factors are the driving forces that can also be described as positive motivators that encourage an individual to travel to that specific destination or negative ones that demotivate travelers to visit the destination, such as fears and aversions (Gilbert & Terrata, 2001).

Based on Dann's motivational approach (1977), tourists are pushed by internal desires, such as personal escape, psychological or physical health, thrill and adventure, and social interactions (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996). Thus, the main solo travel motivations might be more connected to push factors such as learning about new cultures or exploring and feeling more self-confident than in the case of family travelers (Chiang & Jongaratnam, 2006). These factors are fundamental in understanding travel behavior and discovering why people want to travel (Jang, Bai, Hu & Wu, 2009). Eventually, push and pull factors together have formulated the basis of numerous studies contributing to understanding what motivates travelers to make up

their minds and take a vacation. Whether that is in the field of leisure tourism (Dlomo & Ezeuduji, 2020; Khuong, & Ha, 2014; Nikjoo & Ketabi, 2015), sports tourism (Mohammadi & Jazei, 2016; Wang, Song & Wan, 2020) or food tourism (Smith, Costello, & Muenchen, 2010; Su, Johnson & O'Mahony, 2018). It also explored solo travel motives detailed in the next subsection.

Table 2.1 below summarizes solo travel motivations. Both studies extended the solo travel knowledge to the female gender specifically, using the push and pull theory as a conceptual framework for executing their qualitative research. These studies are also detailed further in the next subchapter.

Table 2.1. *Existing Solo Travel Push and Pull Motivation Overview*

REFERENCE:	RESEARCH AIM:	RESEARCH CONTEXT:	RESEARCH DESIGN:	PUSH FACTORS:	PULL FACTORS:
Mani & Jose (2020)	Discovering the transformative experiences of solo travel by women in Kerala	Five women from Thiruvananthapuram between the age of 25 and 40 years, traveling solo for pleasure, recreation or leisure purposes	Qualitative research with a semi-structured interview guide	Passion to travel, dissatisfaction and disillusionment with group travel, unavailability of compatible travel partner	Experiences of self-discovery, transformative experiences during previous solo travel
Tukenmez (2023)	Discovering the travel motivations and constraints of solo female travelers in Turkey	Twenty-five solo women travelers residing in Istanbul were interviewed	Qualitative research method with semi-structured interviews, where purposeful and snowball sampling was used and a content analysis was applied	Response to environment, Getting away from daily routine, Being alone, Curiosity, Staying away from work, Feeling free, Suggestion, New experiences, Self-confidence	Shopping, Education, Features of destinations, Activities, Visiting friends

Source: Data Were Compiled from Mani & Jose (2020) and Tukenmez (2023).

2.4.3. Overview of Existing Solo Travel Motivation Research Findings

Many existing studies focused on collecting information about solo travel motivations by applying a gender-mixed qualitative, exploratory research methodology (Bianchi, 2016; Osman, Brown & Phung, 2019; Yang, 2020). The majority of the research techniques included semi-structured interviews, which were conducted using the CIT analytical method or adding a quantitative research tool such as surveys (Yang, 2020; Yang et al., 2022). The findings suggested that oftentimes most participants believed not having someone to travel with is not among the main reasons for their choice of traveling alone. However, other participants looked at solo travel as a chance to indulge themselves fully, and they did not want to have to consider

someone else's opinions or compromise with them. Major life transitions, previous negative experiences traveling with others, or not having to give up on pursuing one's own individual interests during vacation have all influenced tourists to travel solo. The feeling of independence, self-discovery, and reflection, alongside being more in control of the travel experience, were additional motivators for this type of travel. As well as self-development factors such as gaining confidence or relying less on others. Motivation factors that can significantly predict overall attitude towards solo travel are novelty, relaxation, and self-actualization. Female respondents highlighted the transformative experience effect solo travel could have on someone, while male participants associated previous solo travels with freedom and flexibility (Bianchi, 2016; Laesser et al., 2008; Yang, 2020; Yang et al., 2022).

A qualitative methodology-based study specifically focused on how solo travel is a transformative experience for women has applied the push and pull theory with a semi-structured interview guide to understand women's motivations better. It has been concluded that dissatisfaction throughout group travels and unavailability of travel partners were among the main reasons women chose the solo status for traveling. Due to the patriarchal social constructs, many of these women were not allowed to travel alone for a long time. Travel destination features like rurality, adventure, and weather have also motivated them, while academic and professional pressure pushed them to travel (Mani & Jose, 2020). Another study with the same research methodology examined the constraints and motivations of solo women travelers in Turkey. Findings show that participants mostly decided to travel solo due to push factors. They wanted to avoid work stress, the daily routine, and everyday tasks. Many of the motivations were related to personal aspects, such as wanting to feel free, being open to new experiences, and being alone for a while. Pull factors were also present, however, among the findings of the study related to shopping, education, destination features, activities, and visiting friends (Tukenmez, 2023).

2.5. Overview of Travel Constraint Theories

Similarly to the previous subchapter, this subsection explores existing travel constraint theories and related literature reviews, as the secondary aim of this research is to explore the travel constraints that solo male travelers encounter most often before and during their solo trips.

2.5.1. Travel Constraints: Leisure Constraint Theory

Travel constraints include factors that influence participation in travel and change preferences for travel activities. Thus, according to Crawford & Godbey (1987), these constraints do not necessarily make someone avoid traveling as a whole but may influence them to travel differently than they would if those constraints were not present (Karl, Bauer, Ritchie & Passauer, 2020).

The assumption that constraints influence the relationship between preferences in leisure activities and actual participation also dates to Crawford and Godbey's study (1987), which showcases an attempt to reconceptualize barriers to family leisure.

According to this study, three types of leisure constraints can be categorized, which formulate the basis of the *Leisure Constraints Model*. *Intrapersonal constraints* refer to the individual psychological characteristics of a person, influencing preferences and indirect participation. These intrapersonal constraints include lack of interest, stress, depression, and anxiety, which can lead to non-participation in the individual. *Interpersonal constraints* focus on the social environment's effect on the individual, influencing attitudes, preferences, and direct participation. These constraints are considered relatively unstable, and they may change over a short period of time as they occur due to the unavailability of other individuals, such as travel companions, friends, and family members. This prevents the person from participating in leisure activities where another partner or co-participant is required. Depending on marital status and family size, these constraints may vary throughout the different life stages. The third group of constraints are the *structural constraints*, which include the collection of external circumstances such as time, bad weather, or financial aspects directly influencing participation in leisure activities (1987).

The Leisure Constraints Model has made a significant contribution to exploring more about the constraints of leisure activities that are inhibited by the above-mentioned three dimensions and formulated the basis for numerous studies in the research area of travel constraints. (Crawford & Godbey, 1987 based on Popp, Schmude, Passauer, Karl & Bauer, 2021; Nyaupane & Andereck, 2007). According to Carroll and Konstantinos (1977), on the one hand, high constraints result in lower participation levels, but high motivation levels increase participation. Thus, a relationship between travel constraints and motivations is assumed to be inversely related.

Table 2.2 below summarizes solo travel constraints. Both studies extended the solo travel constraints knowledge by exploring how the social environment influences participation and what type of female-specific constraints can occur when partaking in solo travel (Yang & Tung, 2017; Sim et al., 2022).

Table 2.2. *Existing Solo Travel Constraints Overview*

REFERENCE:	RESEARCH AIM:	RESEARCH CONTEXT:	RESEARCH DESIGN:	INTRAPERSONAL CONSTRAINT:	INTERPERSONAL CONSTRAINT:	STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINT:
Yang & Tung (2017)	Identifying the types of family pressures influencing the travel constraints of solo travelers	Mixed-gender approach with 10 Chinese solo travelers who have traveled alone already	Qualitative research design with semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions	Doubting personal skills of children to travel alone, and negative perception of solo travel as it is considered 'dangerous'	Family would rather find a travel partner for their children to avoid travelling alone	Family not wanting their children to travel alone, or support solo travel at all, they can also withhold financial support
Sim, Ting, Shamsul, Kho, Leong, Lee & Qee (2022)	Exploring female solo travel participation using leisure constraints	212 female respondents who have traveled with friends and family and yet have solo domestic travel experience	Quantitative research with purposive sampling and power analytic technique	Internal or psychological factor was not a constraint affecting attitude towards solo travel	Family or friends minimizing disagreement and criticism, resulting in positive attitude towards solo travel	Attitude-related, as a person who can overcome constraints will have a positive attitude toward solo travel

Source: Data Were Compiled from Yang & Tung (2017), and Sim et al. (2022).

2.5.2. Overview of Existing Solo Travel Constraints Research Findings

Travel motivation and constraints are oftentimes studied together as they jointly influence an individual's travel behavior. Understanding those barriers that were considered constraints by travelers can help create a holistic view of the trade-offs and motivations that eventually led the individual to take the trip or not (Yang & Tung, 2017). Existing solo travel constraint research applies qualitative and quantitative research methodologies when studying intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints. The results share the recurring concern of missing a travel companion with whom they could have more fun. These interpersonal constraints are also present from the travel risk point of view, for example, when someone gets lost or needs help. Regarding these concerns, gender plays a key role. A study that examines family influence on solo travel constraints concludes that a family's gendered perception is present when the solo traveling of a child is considered. Connected to intrapersonal risks, females are regarded as more vulnerable to potential danger, and they tend to worry more about safety issues that would eventually influence their decision-making on whether to engage in solo travel. When it comes to structural constraints, lack of money has a significant influence, especially when choosing the type of accommodation (Yang, 2020; Yang et al., 2022; Yang & Tung, 2017). As

travel constraints are closely connected to travel motivation, the push and pull theory also helped identify numerous solo female travel constraints. Among these constraints, the attitude of people, financial instability, prejudice, verbal and physical harassment, lack of knowledge, loneliness, and uneasiness have been identified that restrict the traveler in some way before, during, or after their solo trip (Mani & Jose, 2020; Tukenmez, 2023). *Table 2.3* summarizes the above-mentioned and additional studies on solo travel motivation and constraints with a mixed-gender approach.

Table 2.3. *Existing Solo Travel Motivation & Constraints Literature Review*

REFERENCE:	RESEARCH AIM:	RESEARCH CONTEXT:	RESEARCH DESIGN:	RESEARCH FINDINGS:
Jeong (2014)	Explores the relationship between push and pull factors regarding marine tourist motivations	Mixed-gender approach who took trips to marine tourism sites within the past two years. 166 women, 179 men	Quantitative research with survey with two hypothesis statements using CFA	Push motivations closely related to statics; novelty push motivations strongly related to active pull motivation
Bianchi (2016)	Explores the main motivators and drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction for solo holiday travelers	Mixed-gender approach, the sample included 11 men and 13 women, aged between 24 and 67 years, located in Queensland, Australia who had travelled solo for holidays within the past 3 years	Qualitative research, interviews conducted using the CIT analytical method	Drivers of satisfaction related to personal feelings of freedom, relaxation, discovery
Yang (2020)	Explores the definitions, motivations, constraints of solo travel considering both existing and potential solo travelers	Gender-balanced approach, with 14 solo and 14 non-solo travelers based in Australia. Recruited via social media with snowball effect	Qualitative research, semi-structured in-depth interview	Motivations categories 'by circumstances' and 'by choice'. Key motivators are transformative experience, freedom, flexibility
Yang et al. (2021)	Uncovering motivations and constraints affecting solo travel	Gender-balanced approach for both methods, with 14 solo and 14 non-solo travelers based in Australia. Survey with 1071 respondents	Mixed-method approach with semi-structured qualitative interviews (TPB), and quantitative survey distributed online using Qualtrics	Self-actualization significant, attitude negatively associated with intrapersonal constraints

Source: Data Were Compiled from Jeong (2014), Bianchi (2016), Yang (2020), Yang et al. (2021).

2.6. Gen-Z Traveler Profile

Since the research aims to examine the travel motivations and constraints that make travelers move solo with a specific focus on Generation Z, the last section of the literature review identifies this target population and their traveling characteristics. The PEW Research Center (2019) is the base for defining the generations.

Generation Z includes individuals born between 1997 and 2012 (PEW Research Center, 2019). The importance of understanding this generation lies in the fact that it represents the future traveler's market. They are open-minded and bucket-list-oriented while avoiding mass tourism destinations. Instead, they look for less well-discovered places and are expected to engage in travel activities. They are more travel-conscious than other generations, have short attention spans, and often start traveling without a goal destination (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019; Vukic, Kuzmanovic & Stankovic, 2014). Generation Z grew up as a digital native generation, and that digital environment is familiar to them from the moment they were born, unlike previous generations, also called digital immigrants, who got introduced to and acquired knowledge on digital technologies later in life (Nemec Rudež, 2023). Travel-related benefits can serve as incentives and initially motivate people to travel. As these benefits vary from generation to generation, Generation Z has its own unique expectations they search for. Cavagnaro, Staffieri and Postma (2018), have identified four travel-related benefits Generation Z prioritizes: 'personal inner development,' 'development through the interpersonal exchange,' 'socializing and entertainment,' and 'escapism and relaxation'.

A study that investigates the impacts of Gen-Z's perception of online consumer-generated content on their travel intention with travel motivation push and pull factors concluded that knowledge-seeking intentions are the highest factor when it comes to Gen-Z's travel information collection. This generation uses social media (SM) to gain knowledge, which motivates them to visit a tourist attraction for a real experience. They also use SM to find accessibility to destinations that have clear access (Nguyen, Truong, Pham, Tran & Nguyen, 2021).

Chapter 3. Research Proposition

Based on the detailed overview of currently existing solo travel studies introduced in the literature review chapter, it can be concluded that most of the research applied conceptual theories with a qualitative research methodology instead of conceptual models. Due to the novelty of this rising tourism segment, conceptual theories such as the Theory of Push and Pull Motivations, and Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) have been applied, and these studies have all contributed to an in-depth understanding of solo female travel motives, constraints, and behaviors (Jeong, 2014; Mani & Jose, 2020; Sujood & Bano, 2023; Tukenmez, 2023). Since this research also applies the Theory of Push and Pull Motivations and the Leisure Constraint Theory to understand solo male travel motives and constraints, three research propositions have been formulated. These concepts are not only ideal to help understand the hidden motives and reasonings behind why men want to travel solo, but they also help put them into a research context and compare it with female motives.

3.1. Travel Motivation (Push Factors):

Self-discovery and self-understanding have been identified as two of the main push factors for solo travelers to travel alone, and they inspire them to understand themselves better and try themselves out in new, out-of-comfort zone experiences (Yang, 2020). According to Merriman and Valerio (2016), Generation Z is already characterized as a self-aware, self-learner, and self-reliant generation. Therefore, a part of the research aims to discover a linkage between how traveling solo could have contributed to the self-discovery and personal growth of the solo male traveler. It also aims to explore whether solo and non-solo travelers approach this proposition differently and if it plays a role in considering how solo travel can broaden overall life perspectives.

(P1) Traveling alone is viewed as a way to enhance the self-discovery and personal growth of the individual.

3.2. Travel Motivation (Pull Factors):

Gen-Z also referred to as Gen-C, where 'C' stands for 'connected,' strongly implies this generation's connectivity through the means of the Internet. A strong online presence and the ability to form online connections are among the main characteristics of this generation's

relationship-building approach (Dolot, 2018; Nguyen, Truong, Pham, Tran & Nguyen, 2021). We are in the age where forming connections has never been easier, and OTAs are also supporting these objectives by helping solo travelers connect via solo travel forums, online communities, and applications to share their experiences with one another (Hostelworld, 2023; Tripadvisor, 2023). In this study, it has been highlighted that existing solo travel motivations indicated men's and women's intention to travel for different reasons, with men specifically motivated by wanting to meet new individuals during their solo trips (Buther, 2024). Therefore, the second research proposition aims to discover the relationship between the desire to form new social connections and the solo male traveler's destination.

(P2) The desire to form new social connections influences the Gen-Z solo male traveler's destination.

3.3. Travel Constraints:

Solo female travel constraints findings suggested that travel safety plays a key concern when deciding to travel alone. As women are more vulnerable to potential danger, they also consider where and how to travel to tourist destinations (Yang & Tung, 2017). According to Kaba and Emeki (2018), the most important factor in the process of destination selection is safety-related concerns for women. Therefore, a part of the research looks at whether men's considerations differ in terms of travel safety and assumes that these do not significantly influence their choice of destination, accommodation, and overall behavior while traveling.

(P3) Travel safety-related concerns are not considered an important travel constraint by solo male travelers.

Chapter 4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The objectives of this research focus on understanding the main drivers and motivations of solo male travelers and the constraints that occur before and during their trip. Hence, an exploratory research approach is applied to introduce new insights and depths of understanding of this traveler segment. Numerous researchers have also adopted this approach in solo travel studies (Yang, Lai & Nimri, 2021; Yang, 2020; Bianchi, 2016; Jeong, 2014). Due to the limited amount of secondary data available in the gender-focused segment of male solo travel motivations, the data collected and analyzed in this research is primary. The primary data collection method applied in the research is a series of focus group discussions. By exploring how solo travelers make decisions, we can understand their needs and expectations and effectively target and satisfy this market segment. Applying a direct, non-disguised qualitative research methodology is an adequate technique when the aim is to understand the reasons, motives, and attitudes behind specific issues. It is also ideal for interpreting reactions and behaviors concerning new products and ideas (Gyulavári & Mitev, 2017). In previous solo travel studies, qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews, have been implemented to learn more about motives and constraints (Yang, 2020; Bianchi, 2016).

From the wide range of qualitative research instruments available, focus group discussions were chosen to explore the research questions. According to Powell and Single (1996), a focus group is a ‘group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the research’s subject’ (p.499). An essential factor distinguishing focus groups from other types of group interviews is the insight and data produced by the interaction between the participants (Gibbs, 1997). In the case of this research, focus groups are an adequate choice, as these discussions can generate rich qualitative data through open-ended questions – something that this travel group with the male perspective is lacking. In research focusing on such transformative experiences as traveling solo, personal perceptions might vary, which can also help identify patterns based on how the group dynamics change. Compared with in-depth interviews, focus groups can contribute to idea generation, as participants can build upon each other’s opinions or assumptions and offer in this case new solo travel perspectives that might not immediately be detected in a one-on-one interview environment (Guest, Namey, Taylor, Eley & McKenna, 2017). Additionally, focus groups allow a deeper exploration of the solo traveler concept compared to a quantitative research method,

like an online survey. Instead of being limited by pre-defined answer options within a less interactive and dynamic framework, the participants can freely share their experiences, motivations, and constraints (Boyer, Olson & Jackson, 2001).

An online focus group (OFG), also known as an Internet-based focus group, is being executed. Some studies argue that OFGs are suitable for smaller groups of participants, such as 4-6, while others found that groups of up to 10-13 participants can be just as effective (Zwaanswijk & Van Dulmen, 2014; Hatten, 2014). This research included 7 participants per session to ensure that all participants feel engaged and committed. The reason for conducting OFGs is to access a diverse and international pool of geographically dispersed individuals who would need help attending a traditional focus group set-up. OFGs can also establish a more private and convenient environment where participants can join from the comfort of their homes, encouraging them to share sensitive and personal experiences more freely. It is also important to mention the cost and time-effectiveness of this method. At the same time, from the data collection and analysis perspective, online focus group discussions can function as tools for real-time data collection. Compared with face-to-face focus groups, they can fasten the transcription and analysis process (Zwaanswijk & Dulmen, 2014). Four separate focus group discussions are conducted in this research. The first and third rounds of online focus groups are conducted among those participants who have already traveled solo in the past 12 months. The second and fourth discussion is carried out among individuals who have not traveled solo yet but aspire to do so.

The conceptual frameworks introduced in the literature review played vital roles when creating the focus group questions of this research. The structure of the discussions can be separated into three main parts. It starts with an introduction, including warm-up questions to break the ice among participants and establish a trusting and comfortable environment. They were followed by the travel constraints to understand more about what kind of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and structural barriers the potential and actual solo travelers are considering. The last part focuses on gathering information about the push and pull motivations that make travelers want to do these adventures alone. The session is closed with final questions reflecting on the solo travel experience and potential future travels.

Table 4.1 below summarizes how the conceptual frameworks were used to design the focus groups for solo and non-solo travelers. The overall design with the questions for both groups can be found in Annexes as Annex A and Annex B.

Table 4.1. *Focus Group Design Based on the Conceptual Frameworks*

		SOLO TRAVELERS	NON-SOLO TRAVELERS
DANN' S THEORY OF PUSH AND PULL	PUSH FACTORS	What personal factors or life events pushed you to take a solo trip? Did your desire to escape from the everyday burdens played a role in your decision? Can you share any specific experiences where you valued the independence aspect of traveling alone? Did you see solo travel as an opportunity for self-discovery or personal growth?	If you were to take a solo trip, what do you imagine would be the main reasons motivating you? Are there particular experiences or personal goals you hope to achieve through solo travel? What elements would make a solo trip particularly appealing to you? How might solo travel contribute to your broader life objectives?
	PULL FACTORS	What aspects of the destination(s) attracted you to travel solo? To what extent were social interactions and meeting new people a motivator? Were there learning opportunities or personal interests that drew you to your destination?	How does the opportunity for cultural exploration influence your interest in solo travel? What specific destinations or types of places do you find most alluring for solo travel? Would you look for building social connections and meeting new people during your solo travels? In what ways?
THE LEISURE CONSTRAINTS MODEL	INTRA-PERSONAL	What factors hindered your decision to travel solo? Did your mental state play a role when considering traveling solo?	What factors or concerns do you expect might be barriers to taking a solo trip? Does your current mental state influence your decision when considering solo travel?
	INTER-PERSONAL	Were safety considerations played a part in the planning phase of the trip?	Do you have concerns about how your social environment would react when hearing about your plans wanting to travel alone?
	STRUCTURAL	Were there any budgetary constraints that you had to consider? How did those affect your planning? How did you plan for your trip, and what resources did you use?	How does budget play a role in your decision to travel solo? How do you currently gather information about travel destinations? Are there any specific challenges or barriers you face when seeking information about solo travel?

Source: Author (2024).

4.2. Target Population & Sampling

This study targets Gen-Z male individuals who have traveled solo for leisure purposes in the past 12 months, specifically between March 2023 and March 2024, and those who have already considered taking a trip alone. The participants were selected using *purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling* techniques (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). They were recruited via social media (Instagram and Facebook), where posts were created in the author's social network feed and in different Solo Travel Community broadcast channels. The posts specifically looked for male individuals aged between 12-26 who have traveled solo in the past 12 months or aspire to do so. This way, the selection was purposeful and deliberate. Since this research defines solo travelers as those who arrive at the destination country alone, the first and third rounds' participants were selected per this established guideline. At the end of the first and second rounds, participants were asked to refer additional interviewees who they believed would meet the selection criteria for that discussion. They were all born between 1997 and 2012 and thus considered Gen-Z individuals. There were altogether 28 participants with 14 solo and 14 non-solo travelers.

4.3. Data Collection

Participants were contacted individually for all rounds and were invited to an online focus group discussion via a Zoom meeting link. They were informed about the goals and objectives of both the research and the discussion in advance. All participants spoke English, as the discussions were conducted in English. They came from different nationalities to capture a diverse spectrum of potential and actual solo travelers. Further sample profile details are presented in *Table 4.2* at the end of this subsection. All focus groups took place between March and April 2024, with 7-7 participants for each discussion. The online discussions lasted around 75 minutes on average, with all participants agreeing to the recording of the session, as they were informed their names would remain anonymous. These recordings were then transcribed, and the names were changed for confidentiality purposes. The transcribed documents in total were 49 pages, 28479 words, and 121294 characters with no spaces. To protect the identity of the participants, a code was assigned to each of them, such as: 'P01, ST, 26' – participant number one who traveled solo and is 26 years old, or 'P10, NST, 25' – participant number ten who has not traveled solo and is 25 years old. The numbering did not restart after the first focus group participants, as the discussions were jointly analyzed. The shared solo travel experiences and solo travel aspirations were considered appropriate for moving further with the data treatment.

Table 4.2. *Detailed Sample Profile of Focus Group Participants*

FOCUS GROUP	CODE	AGE	NATIONALITY	TRAVELLED SOLO	DESTINATION
1	P01	26	Hungarian	Yes	Lisbon, Portugal
1	P02	25	British	Yes	Valencia, Spain
1	P03	27	Hungarian	Yes	London, UK
1	P04	26	Hungarian	Yes	Peniche, Portugal
1	P05	25	Hungarian	Yes	Europe Trip
1	P06	24	Hungarian	Yes	Sheffield, UK
1	P07	26	Hungarian	Yes	Southeast Asia
2	P08	25	Portuguese	No	
2	P09	26	British	No	
2	P10	25	Hungarian	No	
2	P11	22	Hungarian	No	
2	P12	21	Hungarian	No	
2	P13	24	Italian	No	
2	P14	21	Hungarian	No	
3	P15	26	Hungarian	Yes	London, UK
3	P16	23	Portuguese	Yes	Opatija, Croatia
3	P17	22	Hungarian	Yes	Southeast Asia
3	P18	25	Cameroonian	Yes	Paris, France
3	P19	26	Hungarian	Yes	Bali, Indonesia
3	P20	24	Hungarian	Yes	Berlin, Germany
3	P21	23	British	Yes	Geneva, Switzerland
4	P22	25	Hungarian	No	
4	P23	26	Hungarian	No	
4	P24	21	Hungarian	No	
4	P25	25	Nigerian	No	
4	P26	26	Hungarian	No	
4	P27	24	Hungarian	No	
4	P28	24	British	No	

Source: Author (2024).

4.4. Data Treatment

This study applies a *mixed-method content analysis*, namely *descriptive* and *narrative* to process the data provided throughout the focus group discussions. Descriptive content analysis refers to the type of data analysis where the approach is conducted using descriptive statistics, mainly frequencies and percentages (Dincer, 2018). Both qualitative and quantitative data can be used for such analysis, and the main aim here is to determine tendencies (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison 2007). In this case, an Excel database was created based on the transcripts containing filters and a thematic segmentation to explore similar patterns and differences between the participants' experiences. This large data set created word clouds after filtering the data according to the research questions and objectives. These word clouds give a visual representation of the most frequently appearing words, where their size indicates the importance of the words, therefore foreshadowing the biggest concepts and themes. WordArt 2024 version was used, which is an artistic tool that allows users to apply shapes to these word clouds, too (Shirin, 2022). As the research centers on motivations and constraints, two clouds were created summarizing the solo male push and pull factors and one cloud that concludes the travel constraints. These visuals helped give a comprehensive overview of the results and a comparative summary to help differentiate the key components in the different topics. Once the main solo male traveler concepts were highlighted, the descriptive analysis was continued using a text analytics tool, Leximancer. Leximancer Software (LexiPortal Version 5.0) automatically analyses natural language text and extracts the data into electronic format (Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele, & Critchley, 2015). Once the set of concepts is finalized, the software attaches concept codes to this electronic format, which by then consists of separate pieces of text. Leximancer presents those concepts that are coded together in the form of a visual Concept Map. In the Concept Map, the clustering is done based on the relationship between the concepts (Tkaczynski et.al., 2015). Leximancer has already been applied to other tourism-related studies with similar approaches to pairing each concept cluster with a collection of narratives drawn from focus group transcripts to highlight the core ideas of the themes (Dionísio, Brochado, Leal, & Bouchet, 2022). In this case, push and pull motivations are included in one Concept Map, as there are certain factors that are closely connected to both categories, and Leximancer can better visualize these relationships. The second half of the data analysis applies the narrative content analysis approach, which goes beyond the analysis of texts as it can lead to the in-depth understanding of how certain topics are understood, in this case, how solo travel is perceived by Gen-Z male individuals (Humble & Mozellius, 2022).

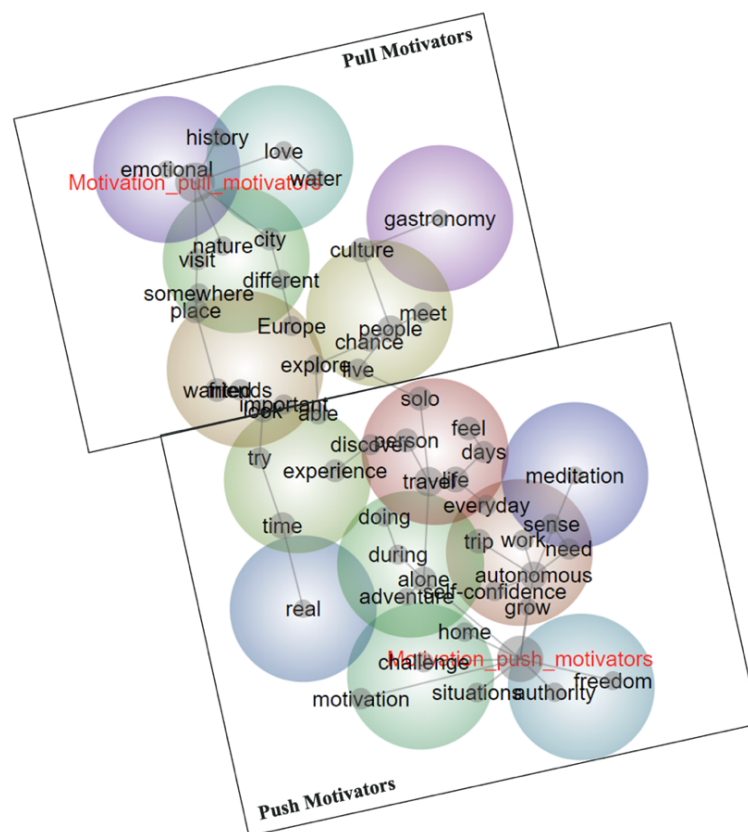
Chapter 5. Results

5.1. Solo Male Traveler: Push and Pull Motivators

During the focus group discussions, participants were asked about their sources of motivation to travel solo. With Leximancer, the data analysis verified how the solo travel motivators are a mix of push and pull factors. The first concept map is Figure 5.1. below, identifying 14 themes, 8 of which represent push motivations, and 6 of which are associated with pull motivations. These themes can further be classified into five-five main topics, each in alignment with the results of the narrative analysis. Regarding push factors, *self-confidence* represents “travel” (hits = 97; relevance = 28%), while *freedom, independence & adventure* include themes such as “autonomous” (hits = 55; relevance = 23%), “alone” (hits = 38; relevance = 20%), and “authority” (hits = 13; relevance = 6%). *Escaping routine & coping with life changes* represent “time” (hits = 57; relevance = 28%), while *self-reflection & personal growth* include “meditation” (hits = 4; relevance = 2%), and *new experiences* signify “motivation” (hits = 35; relevance = 13%) and “real” (hits = 3; relevance = 2%). When it comes to pull factors that motivate solo travelers, the topic of *authentic experiences* includes themes such as “place” (hits = 71; relevance = 18%) and “people” (hits = 63; relevance = 22%). *Coastal lifestyle* represents a well-favoured destination attribute with the theme “water” (hits = 21; relevance = 8%). Solo travelers look for a *spiritual journey & personal significance* of a destination, which include “emotional” (hits = 3; relevance = 2%). *Urban lifestyle & social connectivity* includes “city” (hits = 45; relevance = 28%), and *gastronomy & culinary experiences* signify “gastronomy” (hits = 4; relevance = 4%). Starting with push factors, the strongest theme is “travel” (hits = 97; relevance = 28%). This theme centered around concepts revealing that travelers use these days of solo trips to discover more about themselves as a person and get more aligned with how they feel internally. Some drew a parallel between the act of traveling alone and the practice of meditation. For example, “...it can serve as a long form of meditation. You feel like your mind is cleared and you deal with most of the negative thoughts.” P09, NST, 26. These aspirations represent a strong desire for travelers wanting to *grow personally* and use the time spent traveling alone for *self-reflection*. The second strongest theme revealed that solo travelers favor the “autonomous” (hits = 55; relevance = 23%) decision-making aspects throughout their trip. Strongly linked to this idea are the following and most relevant concepts: authority, freedom, and self-confidence. Travelers are not only motivated by the feeling of accomplishment and *confidence* that comes with completing a trip alone, but also the enjoyment that comes with *not*

having to adapt to a travel companion. Another significant push factor theme identified in the concept map is the “alone” (hits = 38; relevance = 20%) time the solo travelers look forward to during their trip. This not only allows them to *escape their everyday lives*, including work, but also allows them to grow individually and look for adventures and new experiences. Moving on to pull factors, a theme with the most relevance, “place” (hits = 71; relevance = 18%), revealed how important it is for solo travelers to explore new destinations, look for new experiences, and how different parts of Europe can be an ideal choice for that. The third most relevant theme is “people” (hits = 63; relevance = 22%). This concept strengthens the importance of solo male travelers meeting new cultures rich in history and collecting authentic experiences. When certain memories or emotional significance are attached to a destination, that also serves as a pull factor for many travelers. When considering the destination attributes, strong concepts such as the love for water, being near city centers, or quite the opposite, looking for nature-based adventures. Solo travelers are also keen on collecting gastronomical experiences; therefore, the food culture of a destination also serves as an attractive pull motivator.

Figure 5.1. *Concept Map of Solo Male Traveler Motivations*



Source: Focus Groups (n=28) Retrieved from Leximancer (2024).

can motivate yourself just by remembering that you have done this alone.” (P26, NST, 26). Another non-solo traveler added that “*...solo travel seems challenging, (...) you have to take care of yourself, find accommodation, eat proper food, and that’s why it could be so satisfying because at the end of the trip, I’m like, ‘I did it, I could do this’ you know.”* (P08, NST, 25).

5.2.2. Freedom, Independence & Adventure

Eight out of 28 solo and non-solo travelers highlighted the importance of *spending time alone*, whether that is to spend time apart from family or significant others or simply get more aligned with oneself. Solo travel is a favored way to recharge and focus on oneself, and alone time is associated with many advantages. Without having to adapt to others’ schedules or preferences, the participants are motivated by being able to make spontaneous decisions while they can experience that *true sense of independence and freedom*. Four participants mentioned the enjoyment associated with autonomy, saying, “*I have more freedom and authority (...) so I can’t be influenced by others, unlike when I’m travelling with others and you need to accommodate all your needs and ideas to that other person (...). It’s a great chance to disconnect from everyone else’s expectations.”* (P23, NST, 26) or “*It was a relief not to have to listen to someone’s tantrums about not climbing the mountain, but I could just decide, okay, I’m going scuba diving today. I didn’t have to adapt, and it was comfortable.”* (P07, ST, 26).

5.2.3. Escaping Routine & Coping with Life Changes

The desire to *escape the everyday routine* and stressful or simply regular environments is a strong motivator for Gen-Z male individuals. “*At home I do everything out of habit, I know how I behave in a restaurant, how I ask for food, how I behave on first dates, I know all the dating venues by heart, but I went out there it was all new, so I had to perform in new situations, learn new ways of expressing myself.”* (P07, ST, 26). When wanting to take a break from their daily activities, there were, in many cases, some life-altering happenings going on in the lives of the participants, changes such as break-ups, family drama, job transitions, burnout, or other personal crises. They sought to *cope with these life events* by going on a solo trip. 10 participants reported that a big motivation for them is wanting to take a break from everyday burdens, and more than half of these cases were connected to transformative life events pushing the individual to ‘escape reality’ and travel solo. “*I went on this trip not long after a long-term relationship breakup (...). There was a big reason for the trip also to get away from all of the drama with my family (...). It (solo travel) kind of withdraws you from the mundane repetitiveness of normal life and helps you reset and appreciate a lot of things that you do have*

in your day-to-day life.” (P02, ST, 25). Another participant highlighted that these events do not necessarily have to be negative “Before marriage and kids, this would be the last actual ‘solo’ thing I could do (...). So it's not just after a breakup, but before these big events in your life happen.” (P09, NST, 26).

5.2.4. Self-Reflection & Personal Growth

Table 5.1. *Participants’ Citations on Self-Reflection, Self-Discovery & Personal Growth*

RESEARCH PROPOSITION 1.	SELF-REFLECTION, SELF-DISCOVERY AND PERSONAL GROWTH	
	CODE	CITATION
	P01, ST, 26	“Self-reflection was my motivator, mostly. There are a lot of things happening in your daily life, and getting away for a little bit helps you reflect.” “I use these single trips as alone time and for reflection, and to get away from the environment that I’m usually in. So, none of the regular thoughts that go through my head during a normal day are there and I don’t get triggered.”
	P02, ST, 25	“It was more about the reflection and just to find some kind of inner peace and return to your true self.”
	P03, ST, 26	“It’s a great revelation for personal discovery.”
	P07, ST, 26	“It was a whole new discovery about my personality and myself.”
	P09, NST, 26	“I think (solo travel) could serve as a long form of meditation. You feel like your mind is cleared and you dealt with most of the negative thoughts or maybe even the positive that is happening throughout your life. These trips, you were talking about purpose, I think it can function (...) as a mindful journey. I think that’s the best word, like you’re ready to take on the new, I don’t know, challenges or the new tasks.”
	P11, NST, 22	“Last year was a harsh period in my life. And I want to try out if I go to the mountains and just have some hiking time, trying to get more aligned with my inner self. “
	P12, NST, 21	“I believe that traveling alone in your twenties must be one of the best tools to gain confidence and get to know yourself better. Because it’s a vital part for your personality and personal growth.” “If you ride as a man, it can give you so much in your self-development and in your self-awareness. It’s such a big bonus point for you as a person.”
	P13, NST, 24	“I never traveled alone and lately it has been on my mind because I just got out of a mentally exhausting relationship, and I feel like it would be something that would bring me closer to myself.”
	P16, ST, 23	“You just search for every opportunity, and discovery about the destination and about yourself.” “A big motivation was mostly like finding myself, being comfortable with myself and with my thoughts.”
	P23, NST, 26	“The thrill and joy of personal discovery that would give you would be on another level too, also I could do some personal healing I feel like.”
	P24, NST, 21	“I think being in the moment and not worrying would allow me to recognize myself, and my patterns my habits why I do what I do, and besides self-recognition I would look for new challenges and just discovering as much as possible during that period of time while I’m there.”
	P28, NST, 24	“I would be hoping to gain calmness, looking within so self-reflection and being more open to everything that is happening around me (...) I really could grow as a person” “It is a chance to get to know yourself better, and discover how you would react in unexpected situations (...).”

Source: Focus Groups (n=28).

Twelve participants, more than 42% of the overall study sample, mentioned and emphasized the chance for *self-reflection* and *self-discovery* during their trip. Oftentimes, the new environment allows them to introspect, think about their lives, recognize patterns, and draw conclusions. Closely connected to these objectives is how solo travel is also seen as a chance to *grow personally* and discover more about oneself by both solo and non-solo travelers. They find that going on these trips helps them clear their minds, and it serves as a form of meditation. They can focus on their mental well-being while being in the present moment.

5.2.5. New Experiences

Longing for *new experiences*, *connections*, and *cultural encounters* is a common motivator for 9 out of 28 participants. Gen-Z solo male travelers highlighted the importance of immersing themselves in different cultures and new life perceptions, which broadens their perspective and stays with them long after the trip. “*I would definitely say new relations and experiences. These are factors in a solo man traveling, gaining new relationships with locals.*” (P12, NST, 21) or “*One of the biggest motivations for me is to try something new to try myself in a new situation.*” (P15, ST, 26).

The biggest motivators that resonated with many participants are detailed above. It is worth mentioning, however, a couple of other motivators that a few people connected with. For example, hobbies such as *volunteering or learning languages* could encourage non-solo travelers to travel alone. Also, *sexual orientation* was brought up by a few participants as a motivator, which creates a desire to *explore LGBTQ+ communities* outside of their home countries to see where they could or could not fit in. In some cases, *not having someone to travel with* or *getting tired of waiting for others* motivated solo travelers to book their trip.

5.3. Pull Motivators

Similarly, to push factors, *Figure 5.3* visually shows the key expressions mentioned most frequently during the focus group discussions of pull motivations. The terms mentioned by the participants most often were ‘culture’ (n=36), ‘city’(n=30), ‘people’ (n=28) and ‘beach’(n=22).

[illegible]

5.3.1. Authentic Experiences: Cultural & Historical Heritage

33

5.3.2. Coastal Lifestyle

Holiday activities in their most traditional sense are still very much present in the case of Gen-Z solo travelers. Sometimes, the simplest things are the ones that motivate certain traveler groups, which is the case for solo travelers, too. *Sunshine, beach, and relaxation* were mentioned multiple times throughout the discussions by almost 30% of overall participants. There is a deep fascination with water-related destinations, and the pull motivations centered around leisure activities near the water, exploring the water connections and marine life of the beaches and participating in water sports. *“I’m more interested in the waterfront and the water connections on the island, the marine life of the place, ocean vibes. I’m a water person and I love swimming, being near water, going to the beach, (...). How many jellyfish are there how transparent is the water.”* (P07, ST, 26). Therefore, mentions of Bali, Portugal, and Mediterranean countries were a big part of these discussions. *“I would love to jump on that Mediterranean vibe, I feel like I come alive by the water so like a whole new personality of mine gets unlocked so if I could go anywhere now, it would definitely be some Mediterranean country like Italy or Spain.”* (P24, NST, 21).

5.3.3. Spiritual Journey & Personal Significance

The motivations for *self-reflection, self-discovery, or pursuing personal growth* do not only serve as push factors but are present in the case of solo male travelers pull factors, too. More than 28% of the total dissertation sample is drawn to destinations with introspection opportunities and certain travel locations offering spiritual and mindful experiences. India, Tibet, and certain parts of Asia were popular bucket-list destinations. Meditation, yoga, and cold plunging were only some of the activities the solo and non-solo travelers wished to try out during their spiritual journeys. *“I already see myself going to India and solo, as I am into meditation lately. This is purely for a spiritual and cultural experience.”* (P01, ST, 26), and *“I think I would like to visit at least once in my lifetime Tibet (...) to get aligned with myself and meet with spiritual people who are like stuck in history. I wish there's a possibility to be able to watch when they are creating mandalas, it would be a magnificent experience, I believe.”* (P11, NST, 22). *Memories and personal relations* also serve as powerful motivators too, as participants specifically want to visit certain destinations due to the emotional significance these places hold for them. *“(...) my family members suggested to visit Norway and the Norwegian fjords because my grandparents had kind of a breakthrough moment there and this is in the family now. So emotional attachments like family history to certain places (...)*

encourage me to visit that particular place.” (P14, NST, 21) and “I used to study in the UK. So, it was more of a chance to reconnect with something of my past, a place where I was younger and a student and exploring life and enjoying life (...) memories trigger some motivation or some interest for me to want also to visit the area (...) so, that's a point of interest for me when choosing locations to visit.” (P15, ST, 26), also “I was traumatized by the German school in my hometown. So, I think I wanted to reconnect with the German culture in perhaps a more positive way.” (P20, ST, 24).

5.3.4. Gastronomy & Culinary Experiences

Seven out of 28 participants mentioned that food and culinary experiences are vital pull factors when choosing a destination. They emphasized the importance of trying out local cuisine and culinary traditions in Mexico, Thailand, Vietnam, and London. These motives were either fueled by personal interests such as hobbies, their love for cooking, or simply the nature of men. *“Since men love to eat, I think we can all agree that food is a vital factor when it comes to traveling alone and climate as well. Because it’s important to us. The gastronomy of a certain culture.” (P12, NST, 21) and “I’m a big foodie. So, I guess gastronomy that played a big role as well, like really to go to Thailand or Vietnam and to taste those spices and foods and dishes that they have.” (P17, ST, 22).*

5.3.5. Urban Lifestyle & Social Connectivity

The appeal of *vibrant urban areas* also influences the travel choices of Gen-Z solo male travelers, oftentimes driven by the aim to form new social connections. 36% of solo travelers mentioned that their choice of destination was a motivator, specifically due to the dynamic social life, authentic cultural experiences, and the potential to meet new people. After careful consideration, they chose locations where they could easily engage with locals and other solo travelers; for example, several participants mentioned that hostels in the city center were popular due to the communal atmosphere they offer.

Table 5.2. *Participants' Citations on Urban Lifestyle & Social Connectivity*

RESEARCH PROPOSITION 2.	URBAN LIFESTYLE & SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY	
	CODE	CITATION
	P01, ST, 26	"A place where not only old people live, but you can also go to parties it being Lisbon obviously like the beaches and ocean in general, so just pure leisure time"
	P02, ST, 25	"I wanted to look for a hostel because there's a possibility of making friends and finding people there to do activities with" "I wanted to find a place somewhere quite central to all the activities and people (...) and then during the evening, I could just go out and drink and make friends there."
	P07, ST, 26	"It's been suggested that I should stay in a hostel because of the socializing, but I felt like I was too old for hostels, so you have to go somewhere that's a hostel, but you have your own room and there are a few of those that I found through an app. I looked up the best hostels in the area and if they had private rooms, it was cheaper than a hotel room and I met a lot of people too."
	P17, ST, 22	"In my case, the main motivation was, I would say, like, you know, discover new cultures, also meet new people when I stayed in hostels. And yeah, I was just in discovery mode since it was a limited time for me."
	P20, ST, 24	"I felt that there was something in the city that I really wanted to discover (...) if you're just looking at the city as buildings or as a collection of people and meeting those people."

Source: Focus Groups (n=28).

Quality of life considerations were also a shared motivator during some discussions, where solo travelers commented that they explored the destinations from a potential future residency and quality of life offered point of view. The destination's expat-friendliness, affordability, and visa options were considered here. A couple of participants looked for a break from the buzz of the city and chose *nature-based adventures*. *Value experience* was also considered; participants were motivated by finding the best bang for their buck by choosing budget-conscious destinations and partaking in cost-effective activities during their trip.

5.4. Solo Male Traveler: Travel Constraints

The concept map for the traveler constraints identified 13 themes, including traveling (hits = 61; relevance = 38%); limitation (hits = 49; relevance = 26%); feel (hits = 26; relevance = 16%); constraint (hits = 25; relevance = 19%); friends (hits = 23; relevance = 28%); money (hits = 20; relevance = 26%); doubt (hits = 20; relevance = 22%); experience (hits = 15; relevance = 26%); safety (hits = 7; relevance = 10%); visiting (hits = 4; relevance = 7%); health (hits = 3; relevance = 5%); gym (hits = 3; relevance = 3%); anxieties (hits = 2; relevance = 2%). These themes were further classified into three types of constraints: interpersonal (traveling, doubt, friends, feel), intrapersonal (health, gym, anxieties), and structural (limitation, money, constraint, experience, safety, visiting) constraints. Starting with interpersonal constraints, the strongest theme here included "traveling" (hits = 61; relevance = 38%). There is a *negative label the social*

Figure 5.5 below represents all intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraint-related expressions mentioned most frequently by the participants. The words that were most often used in these discussions were ‘money’ (n=31), ‘people’, ‘friend’ (n=27), ‘alone’ (n=25), and ‘family’ (n=25), indicating that these are the most relevant concepts in the focus group discussions of Generation Z solo male travelers.

Figure 5.5. *Word Cloud for Solo Male Travel Constraints*

Source: Data source elaborated in WordArt (2024).

5.4.1. Intrapersonal Constraints

While in hopes of gaining confidence throughout their trip, the most frequently mentioned intrapersonal constraint by solo travelers was centered around *self-doubt* and *anxiety*. Almost 20% of overall participants brought up difficulties when making the first step to organize a trip alone. Solo travelers also recalled negative thoughts pre-trip, doubting their abilities to do such activities. While some are still struggling with self-doubt, which directly affects their participation *“I have been thinking about rewarding myself for a solo trip that I never really had the courage to do so before.”* (P14, NST, 21), others agreed that there are certain mental breakthroughs needed to fully enjoy the solo travel experience *“I know people who find it hard to, for example, sit in a restaurant alone. So there's a lot of psychological pushback you have to push through or push up against to be able to enjoy yourself. And sometimes it's not that easy to leave those anxieties or fears or uncertainties behind.”* (P15, ST, 26). While non-solo travelers not only doubt their ability to go on a solo trip, but also how they would be able to switch their minds off of work *“Now, I can't imagine honestly how I could turn my mind off of work even when I'm wandering around a museum”* (P27, NST, 24), *“I feel like I can relate to that being the true workaholic I am, the most challenging for me would be just switching my brain off, but would I be able to do that?”* (P28, NST, 24).

Physical health considerations were closely connected to mental well-being, which were mentioned by 5 of the overall participants. Pre-trip health considerations were present to satisfy the psychological need for mental preparation *“I was afraid for my health, however, because I do get sick sometimes at home, and I really knew that the food and the hygiene were completely different there and I needed vaccinations, and I needed medication.”* (P07, ST, 26) and *“(…) not only what kind of diseases are common there, but especially as I am someone who likes to prepare for all scenarios, I would like to know in advance what can I do to avoid these. Like checking online what's the admission process to a hospital in case of emergency if you receive like a social card”* (P14, NST, 21) also *“If I go somewhere tropical, I would definitely double check whether I need some vaccination or some medicine to take with me.”* (P26, NST, 26). It is important to add here that these considerations are considered intrapersonal from a *mental preparation* point of view, but if the travelers actually went and purchased the medications, got vaccinated, and took time to understand the local healthcare systems, those would be listed as *structural constraints*, as they already involve external factors that impact the travelers' participation.

Fitness commitment and the integration of a gym routine also caused mental constraints for non-solo travelers. Six out of 28 participants agreed that they love their current routine, and it is something that would be taken into consideration when planning the activities. *“Missing the gym and your diet. I go to the gym a lot and it would really be something I’d have to incorporate into the planning and the trip as well.”* (P13, NST, 24) and *“We do have kind of our own team now and we go to play basketball like 2-3 times a week even more when the weather gets real good so I would miss that too. It’s like part of my daily exercise.”* (P09, NST, 26). A solo traveler also agreed to mention these concerns and actually planned their trip in accordance with his fitness routine, which would be considered a structural constraint this way. *“An extra sort of consideration for me when it came to the travels was, I’m a bit of a gym addict and I struggle to take a single rest day off. So I looked for outdoor sort of free entry gyms on the beaches. Yeah, that was a really kind of big and helpful part for me. It’s a little bit crazy if I don’t work out sometimes. So it’s good to be still deep into some of my day-to-day routines whilst on the trip.”* (P02, ST, 25).

Lastly, the *Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)* on social activities while the participant is traveling has also been mentioned a few times. 10% of the participants reported worrying about missing out on meaningful experiences with their friends. *“I think a bit of FOMO comes in there and then you think of times like where you’ll traveling while your group of friends will be going out all having a laugh.”* (P02, ST, 25), and *“...while I’m away, maybe a lot of cool things would happen in my ordinary social environment of course also with me I know, but just cause I’m traveling life doesn’t stop so a little bit of FOMO would play a role.”*

5.4.2. Interpersonal Constraints

Many participants agreed that there is a negative connotation and social perception around traveling alone these days. 25% of the overall dissertation sample brought examples from their encounters with friends or family members where they received a *lack of support or understanding*. According to the participants, these concerns voiced by the social environment were either due to generational differences, jealousy, or financial aspects. *“My biggest hindrance wasn’t really the judgment itself, but mostly the lack of understanding from family members not understanding (...). And they had a bunch of questions about it, am I not going to feel alone? Is it not going to be lonely? Is it not gonna be difficult, you know, socially? And is it not gonna be dangerous not having a social net around you? But I think a lot of that stems from just the inexperience of those people and just not having experienced solo travel. (...) And*

*that's why maybe they're not able to relate on that level.” (P15, ST, 26), “...a lot of friends around you are going to second-guess your decision to which I guess some jealousy plays a role because maybe they doubt themselves that they wouldn't be able to do it.” (P21, ST, 23). Meanwhile, 18% of the overall participants mentioned other social constraints related to family, friends, or significant others. The *desire for shared experiences* and *jealousy* from a partner were common elements of these concerns from non-solo travelers. “If you have a significant other, there are also some constraints and maybe even jealousy or envy or something, but from my part, it's more that I want her to experience the same sites or the same experiences.” (P09, NST, 26), and “I don't know how let down I would feel that my family cannot experience those same moments with me. I'm really close with them and I think that would be a constraint in that sense.” (P14, NST, 21).*

Even though *language barriers* were part of the discussions, most participants agreed that as long as the destination country speaks English to a certain level, it should not be a factor that would directly affect their decision to visit. Some solo travelers encountered language barriers while traveling but did not consider them a significant constraint. “In Egypt, for sure, I had some language barriers because they don't really speak English there. But in Penish, where I went, not really.” (P04, ST, 26).

5.4.3. Structural Constraints

The most recurring structural constraint among Gen-Z solo male travelers is *budgetary limitations*, as 16 out of 28, so nearly 60% of the participants mentioned some kind of consideration regarding finances. Many travelers mentioned compromising on convenience to save money, which often influenced the time of the flights and accommodation quality. These concerns characterized the overall approach to the trip, “I tried to think of it as a budget trip from the first minute, I bought food like that, (...) I looked for places where I didn't have to pay as much as in a luxury hotel, so I was living in nomadic conditions (...) but I was compensated by where I was.” (P07, ST, 26), “The first step would obviously be the finance. Sorting out the financial part of your traveling and everything determines what comes next.” (P12, NST, 21), but also the duration of stay, the flight and accommodation choices. “I decided to save money by booking awkward timed, very cheap flights first thing in the morning or last thing at night for booking those flights I use Skyscanner.com, I didn't want to pay too much for these, rather certain experiences.” (P02, ST, 25) and “Regarding the accommodation for me, (...) finding what is the best value for my money. Sometimes, it was like an apartment renting on Airbnb

alone, and sometimes, Booking.com. So then I could get discounts on the accommodation.” (P05, ST, 25).

Timing constraints were also mentioned by 18% of the overall participants, where the limited vacation days available influenced the length of their trip, which also meant making the most out of their time there. It sometimes included avoiding long queues and wait times at popular attractions to save time, even if that meant missing out on certain experiences. *“The queue looked like I'd be stood in there for an hour or two (...). I'm just like, no, I'll quickly have a look from the outside. And my time is too precious to kind of be stood in a queue for hours.”* (P02, ST, 25).

Four out of 28 participants mentioned safety-related concerns due to external factors, summarized in Table 5.3 below. These conditions, which are beyond the solo traveler’s control, caused a few concerns as they were rethinking whether to visit certain areas; thus, they directly affected participation. Some discussions touched on the *limited industry offerings* they can see for solo travelers, as there are many experiences that are exclusively for groups and couples. 11% of overall participants expressed their concerns when looking for authentic experiences. *“...a lot of experiences that are kind of tailored to groups or partners, either because that's how you can book tickets, or that's maybe the social expectation of doing things.”* (P15, ST, 26), and *(...) on websites you hardly see any solo traveler offers, so people traveling alone is something that is not yet favored by these portals, I would say.* (P22, NST, 25).

Table 5.3. *Participants’ Citations on Safety-Related Constraints*

RESEARCH PROPOSITION 3.	SAFETY-RELATED CONCERNS	
	CODE	CITATION
	P02, ST, 25	“I'm quite aware of sort of like different body languages and signs of when some trouble could be kicking off. But to try and sort of reduce any chance of that, I would jump on Google beforehand, look at the sort of crime statistics for Valencia, the place I was visiting to which areas to avoid at nighttime. Because of safety reasons. “
	P04, ST, 26	“When you see bad news where you're traveling, it's hard not to think about whether you want to go at all or not out of safety reasons. For example, when I was going to Egypt, and there was a shark attack like half a year before I went, I was really rethinking the whole trip.”
	P05, ST, 25	“I was thinking whether it's safe to fly there and to be there. I was spending four days in Stockholm. And the safety aspect, I was thinking a lot about it because last August was this terrorist attack in Stockholm and they were still talking about it that there were some guys killed on the streets of Stockholm.”
	P08, NST, 25	“Also, another constraint is how dangerous the country is. So, if it's under political instability or if there is a war or something nearby, like Russia, Ukraine, for example.”

Source: Focus Groups (n=28).

5.5. Discussion of Results

This exploratory research was consistent with previous studies as the findings show that the main solo male traveler motivators are a mix of push and pull factors (Dann, 1977). The strongest socio-psychological factors that drive solo male travelers away from home are self-confidence, self-reflection and personal growth, escaping routine as well as the need for freedom, autonomy, and new experiences (Dann, 1977; Irsha, 2018). The findings also validate the first research proposition (P1): *“Traveling alone is viewed as a way to enhance the self-discovery and personal growth of the individual.”*. The new environment allows solo travelers to introspect, recognize patterns, and discover new parts of themselves. The results validated previous gender-mixed solo travel studies where key motivators were transformative experiences, freedom, and flexibility (Bianchi, 2016; Yang, 2020) but extended those with a specific male-focused collection of push motivators. This research indicates that self-confidence is not only a pre-travel motivating factor but a key outcome of the overall travel experience, as participants reported how the confidence, they gained during their travels motivated them to travel solo further (P19, ST, 27; P20, ST, 24). This implies that tourism industry professionals should also promote the confidence-building aspect of travel to attract more solo travelers. Compared to existing solo female travel push motivations, certain factors push both men and women to travel alone, such as self-confidence, escaping routine, alone time, freedom, adventure, and new experiences (Mani & Jose 2020; Tukenmez 2023). While there can be shared motivators for both men and women to travel solo, certain elements motivate each gender differently. This implies that considering gender differences when understanding solo travel motivations can add to creating more tailored experiences by travel industry professionals. For example, for solo male travelers, extending offerings by adding volunteering programs or activities that help them cope with their current life events, such as break-ups or transitioning jobs (P08, NST, 25; P09, NST, 26). This also enhances the importance of currently existing findings on how tailor-made services can improve the overall travel experience (Shi, Long & Xin, 2022). Pull factors were also key motivating elements of solo and non-solo travelers in this research, in alignment with the definition of those factors that drive tourists towards destinations (Dann, 1977; Irsha, 2018). This generation of solo male travelers is driven by the search for authentic experiences, cultural and historical heritage, coastal lifestyle, mindfulness, and urban areas where they can make new connections. The second research proposition was also validated (P2): *“The desire to form new social connections influences what destination the Gen-Z solo male traveler chooses.”*. While travelers are indeed

attracted to urban areas, it is also the choice of accommodation that is particularly influenced by the desire to meet new people. Participants highlighted that hostels are an ideal choice for connecting with new individuals. Based on the results, personal growth and self-reflection have a dual role in solo male travel motivations, serving both as a push and a pull factor, as almost one-third of the dissertation sample is drawn to destinations that present opportunities for introspection and mindful experiences. Solo female and male travelers share motivators that pull them to certain destinations, such as self-discovery, personal significance to the place, and features of destinations (Mani & Jose 2020; Tukenmez 2023). However, the results also extend them with new, male-specific pull motivator discoveries. These motivations include a shared passion for history, mindfulness, and gastronomy. The results imply that tourism industry professionals of destinations known for their spiritual significance, such as India, Tibet, and Asia, which the participants have mentioned, should promote their cultural immersion activities as well, for example, incorporating meditation center visits or yoga retreats into their offerings.

Lastly, based on the Leisure Constraints Model, the strongest intrapersonal constraint for solo male travelers were those psychological characteristics that were centered around self-doubt and the ability to carry out a trip alone (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). This suggests an interesting relationship between solo and non-solo male traveler's motivations and constraints. On the one hand, travelers start by questioning their ability to manage and enjoy a solo experience but also recognize that successfully navigating the challenges during their trip can lead to increased self-confidence. Non-solo travelers added that, in some cases, they had not traveled solo yet because of these doubts, thus directly affecting their participation (P14, NST, 21). This suggests a psychological barrier that only seems to be present in the pre-trip phase, as once the solo travelers overcame these anxieties, that profound sense of achievement they gained became a push motivator for further adventures. Another controversy when comparing with motivators is how some travelers seek complete detachment from their everyday routine but feel the need to integrate certain aspects of their everyday life, such as fitness routine, to maintain mental and physical well-being. The interpersonal constraints of Gen-Z solo male travelers were consistent with previous studies, as 25% of participants experienced negative social perceptions towards solo travel (Sim et.al., 2022; Yang & Tung, 2017). However, the study added a new understanding of why these perceptions are present, whether those are from jealousy, generational differences, or financial disagreements. The biggest structural constraint mentioned by 60% of the overall participants was budgetary limitations, which affect multiple aspects of a trip, such as the timing of flights, accommodation type, duration of stay, and overall travel experience. These results also align with current research on structural solo travel

constraints but extended those with new perspectives on timing, safety, and limited industry offering perspectives (Yang, 2020; Yang et al., 2022; Yang & Tung, 2017). The third research proposition, (P3): “*Travel safety-related concerns are not considered an important travel constraint by solo male travelers.*” was also validated, as only 14% of participants consider safety-related issues before and during their travels, which is an important difference in the approach to safety compared to female structural travel constraints (Yang, 2020; Yang et. al., 2022; Yang & Tung, 2017). Even though a few participants considered safety concerns, there were several other constraints that played a more important role before or during their trips.

Chapter 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

This study's contributions lie in the in-depth understanding of the male perspective, which has been underrepresented in previous solo travel research. The first research question asked (1) what are the main drivers and motivations of the Gen-Z solo male travelers? The dissertation provided a detailed exploration of these Gen-Z solo male traveler motivations, which are a combination of push and pull factors, while understanding this traveler segment's distinct characteristics and preferences. Today's solo travelers hope to gain so much more than just a few days spent traveling. They are motivated by gaining self-confidence through successfully navigating new challenges, constantly looking for new ways to discover themselves, and using this time to reflect on their thoughts, feelings, and current life events. Additionally, the quest for freedom, independence, and adventure drives these travelers to take a break from the mundane repetitiveness of their everyday lives. These new experiences are not only motivating from personal growth perspectives but further enhance their desire to travel solo. Traveling alone allows solo travelers to discover parts of themselves because of their new environments and situations, thus validating (P1). What pulls Gen-Z solo male travelers to certain destinations is the authentic cultural and historical experiences, which are more than the general tourist attractions of the location. They are fascinated by the coastal lifestyle, including sunshine, beaches, relaxation, and leisure time. They want to experience vibrant urban areas and a dynamic social life that allows them to meet new individuals, thus validating (P2). Different versions of hostels seem to be a preferred choice for them to engage with other solo travelers and locals. Some travelers are motivated by more than just pure leisure time; they are looking for potential places of residency and consider the destination from a quality-of-life perspective.

The second research question asked (2) what kind of travel constraints does this age group of solo travelers encounter before and during their trip? The study further provided a comprehensive overview of Gen-Z solo travelers' intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints when it comes to traveling alone. Starting with intrapersonal barriers, this age group of solo travelers has self-conscious tendencies, which can make them doubt their ability to carry out a trip alone. They believe that there are certain mental challenges that they need to overcome throughout their trip, but once they do, that sense of accomplishment can turn into a great source of motivation for future solo travels. However, they are self-aware and thus pursue conscious actions regarding their mental and physical well-being. Therefore, integrating these routines

can cause some intrapersonal travel constraints from a mental preparation point of view, such as going to the gym, dietary preferences, taking medications, or getting vaccinations. Many intrapersonal hindrances to solo travelers' experiences are due to their social environment's lack of support or understanding. Meanwhile, non-solo travelers' desire for shared experiences with their family or jealousy of their partner discourages them from traveling alone. The strongest structural constraint is budgetary considerations, which influenced the overall travel experience, including compromising on convenience to save money or the quality of the accommodation. The results also highlight the importance of how certain travel elements can motivate each gender differently, as only a few participants considered safety as a constraint to their solo travels, hence the confirmation of (P3). The study provided an overall comprehensive exploration of what it means to travel alone these days as a Gen-Z male individual and added new ways to define the evolving concept of the *solo traveler*.

6.2. Theoretical Contributions

The findings introduced in the previous chapter provide empirical support for recent solo male traveler studies, which highlight how the male perspective is different from the female solo travel experience and how male travelers are motivated by the freedom and independence that comes with traveling alone (Heimtun, 2015; Tham, 2020). A mix of push and pull factors influence the motivations for solo travelers, where indeed the push elements were centered around escape, adventure, and evaluation of self, and pull factors around culture and history, as well as urban environments (Crompton 1979, Dann, 1977, Yuan & McDonald, 1990). Furthermore, they validated previous gender-mixed solo travel papers, where transformative experiences, freedom, and flexibility were the key sources of motivation, and extended them with further male-focused motivators such as coping with life changes (Bianchi, 2016; Yang, 2020). The findings of this study further suggest that pull factors play just as significant a factor as push factors do and extend the view on how pull motivations can be gender-specific (Yiamjanya & Wongleedee, 2014). While based on previous studies, women appreciated the educational and shopping aspects a destination could offer, this study added male-specific pull factors such as spiritual journey or value experience (Mani & Jose 2020; Tukenmez 2023). Regarding travel constraints, the findings supported previous studies in terms of how money has a significant influence on the traveler and their plan but added new insights into how the social environment of the traveler can play a role when solo traveling is considered (Yang, 2020; Yang et. al., 2022; Yang & Tung, 2017).

6.3. Social & Managerial Implications

Numerous implications can be deducted based on the study's results to address the research's additional objectives. These findings provide new insights into exploring a growing tourism subset with a special male-focused perspective. They can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals determined by the UNWTO's program. For example, solo male travelers' pursuit of authentic experiences aligns with Goal 11, aiming to preserve and appreciate cultural heritage. These can be further enhanced by the previously mentioned tailored destination activities with a special focus on spiritual significance, fostering cultural exchange and understanding. Tourism industry professionals, including destination marketing specialists, hotel managers, and travel agencies, can better understand these types of travelers' distinct characteristics and unique preferences. Tailored travel experiences of specific solo male traveler motivations can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Solo male travelers are looking for transformative experiences and self-discovery. Promoting confidence-building activities and highlighting the offered programs' personal growth and reflection aspects can also attract this group of travelers. Knowing that some solo travelers are motivated by significant life changes such as breakups or job transitions, destination marketing specialists can tailor messages and offer services that highlight the need for a trip alone during these periods. As solo male travelers are drawn to authentic experiences, travel agencies can promote destinations beyond traditional tourist attractions and spots. They should also create opportunities to engage with local people, traditions, and cuisines. Even though OTAs have been updating their websites and extending their solo travel services, some participants still mentioned limited industry offerings as their travel constraints. Therefore, OTAs should prioritize expanding and promoting their range of offerings, considering how solo travelers are budget-conscious and looking for cost-effective ways to explore new destinations.

6.4. Limitations

While the research findings provided numerous useful insights into understanding the solo male traveler, they have a few limitations. Despite its contributions, this study is limited by the sample size, as well as diversity in terms of nationality. Although the sample size is adequate for qualitative research, a more diverse sample would have provided richer data on solo traveler trends, cultural differences, or patterns contrasting solo and non-solo participants. Even though 43% of the participants were of other nationalities, with 16 out of 28 participants being Hungarian, the results could be more reflective of Hungarian solo travelers' experiences rather

than a broader perspective, including a variety of cultural viewpoints. Lastly, while applying a qualitative research methodology is an adequate technique due to the limited information available on solo male traveler motivations and constraints in an academic context, completing it with a quantitative research instrument and including a wider sample of solo male travelers would have provided more generalizable findings to the solo travel market and the male perspective.

6.5. Avenues For Future Research

Extending the sample size with a more diverse scale of participants could further develop the study by looking at how the different socio-cultural backgrounds influence motivations and constraints among the nationalities. In addition, further research could be enhanced by incorporating a mixed-method approach and completing the qualitative insights with quantitative data to measure the significance of the listed travel motivators and constraints. Lastly, the current data collected is cross-sectional at one point in time. Therefore, longitudinal case studies could help explore the development of self-confidence among solo male travelers at different points in time over multiple trips. These research avenues could help deepen the understanding of solo male traveler motivations and constraints.

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Annexes

Annex A

ROUND 1: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW DRAFT FOR SOLO TRAVELERS

Stating: age, nationality

I. DESTINATION (Warm-up):

- Introduction: Where did you travel to and for how long?
- What was the reason for traveling / why did you decide to travel?
- How would you describe the characteristics of the trip (open-ended, buzzwords)?

II. CONSTRAINTS

- What factors hindered your decision to travel solo?
- How did you plan for your trip, and what resources did you use?
- Were there any challenges in finding information when preparing for the trip?
- Were safety considerations played a part in the planning phase of the trip?
- Were there any budgetary constraints that you had to consider?
- Did your mental state play a role when considering traveling solo?

III. MOTIVATIONS

PUSH FACTORS:

- What personal factors or life events pushed you to take a solo trip?
- Did your desire to take a break or escape from the everyday burdens play a role in your decision?
- Would you say solo travel helped you relax and relieve stress, or did you have to stay focused as you were alone?
- Can you share any specific experiences where you valued the independence aspect of traveling alone?
- Do you see solo travel as an opportunity for personal growth or self-discovery?
- Do you value the freedom that comes with discovering places at your own pace?
- Were you going through a period of personal healing or seeking self-renewal that motivated you to have a therapeutic experience?

PULL FACTORS:

- What aspects of the destination(s) attracted you to travel solo?
- To what extent were social interactions and meeting new people motivators?
- Were there learning opportunities or personal interests that drew you to your destination?

IV. CLOSING

- Do you have plans for future solo trips, and how might your motivations evolve?

Annex B

ROUND 2: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW DRAFT FOR NON-SOLO TRAVELERS

Stating: age, nationality

I. DESTINATION (Warm-up):

- Can you share what sparked your initial interest in traveling alone?
- Have you ever considered taking a solo trip? If so, what destinations have you thought about and for how long?
- What do you hope to gain or experience by going on a solo trip? (buzzwords)

II. CONSTRAINTS:

- How do you currently gather information about travel destinations? Are there any specific challenges or barriers you face when seeking information about solo travel?
- What factors or concerns do you expect might be barriers to taking a solo trip?
- How does budget play a role in your decision to travel solo?
- Does your current mental state influence your decision when considering solo travel?
- Do you have concerns about how your social environment would react when hearing about your plans to travel alone?

III. MOTIVATIONS

PUSH FACTORS:

- If you were to take a solo trip, what do you imagine would be the main reasons motivating you?
- Are there particular experiences or personal goals you hope to achieve through solo travel?
- What elements would make a solo trip particularly appealing to you?
- How do you see the balance between your current dissatisfaction (push) and the attractions of solo travel (pull)?
- What personal goals do you hope to achieve through solo travel?
- How might solo travel contribute to your broader life objectives?
- How do you envision building social connections and meeting new people during your solo travels?
-

PULL FACTORS:

- How does the opportunity for cultural exploration influence your interest in solo travel?
- What specific destinations or types of places do you find most alluring for solo travel?
- Would you look to build social connections and meet new people during your solo travels? In what ways?

IV. CLOSING:

- What are the key takeaways or insights you gained about your own motivations and potential constraints related to solo travel?