

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340508104>

# Negotiation Strategies and Constraints For Solo Female Travelers in Africa

Article in *Tourism Culture & Communication* · March 2020

DOI: 10.3727/109830420X15859302993081

CITATIONS

5

READS

395

3 authors:



**Cecilia Ngwira**

Mzuzu University

3 PUBLICATIONS 10 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



**Serene Tse**

Ningbo University

9 PUBLICATIONS 80 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



**Thanakarn Bella Vongvisitsin**

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

3 PUBLICATIONS 12 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Do attractions 'attract' tourists? [View project](#)

## NEGOTIATION STRATEGIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR SOLO FEMALE TRAVELERS IN AFRICA

CECILIA NGWIRA, SERENE TSE, AND THANAKARN VONGVISITSIN

School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

---

This article presents constraints of solo female travelers to Africa based on their blogs reflecting their pretravel and during-travel constraints and the negotiations they adopted to energize their desire to travel to and within African countries. The study employs netnographic research methodology to understand complex social phenomena and assist researchers in developing themes from female travel bloggers' experiences of solo travels to Africa. Using content analysis, the findings show that the constraints were mainly interpersonal, external, as well as intrapersonal. Family, friends, and the media presented solo women travelers with these constraints about Africa, which is perceived as a socially constructed "men's space." The study finds that despite these constraints, the bloggers felt adventurous and were satisfied with their African experience.

**Key words: Solo female travelers; Constraints; Negotiation strategies; Blogs; Africa**

---

### Introduction

Independent leisure traveling has for a long time been a privileged activity for just men; thus, traveling by independent women was regarded as inappropriate by many societies and, controversially, this cognition is still presented in some parts of the current world where gender stereotype still remains (Wilson & Little, 2005). Since the mid-20th century, the social status of women has undergone a series of transformation, including increased accessibility to education, employment, and financial ability, so the social and structural situation for

women has improved. Independent female travel has been expanding steadily across the world since the 1970s (Frohlick, 2013). A similar trend is noted in Asia where independent female travelers were noted in Japan in the 1980s (Cai & Combrink, 2000), then China in the 1990s (Li, Wen, & Leung, 2011), and eventually the Asia region as a whole in the 21st century (E. C. L. Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, & Arcodia, 2017a). According to The Art of Travel Blog (2016), the rate of female solo travelers increased by 11% between 2014 and 2015. Furthermore, it is predicted that the Asia Pacific region will be a major contributor of female solo travelers by

Address correspondence to Thanakarn Bella Vongvisitsin, Research Student, School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 17 Science Museum Road, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon, Hong Kong.  
E-mail: [bella.vongvisitsin@connect.polyu.hk](mailto:bella.vongvisitsin@connect.polyu.hk)

2030 with an estimated increment of 400% (ETB Travel News, 2014). Globally, 24% of all travelers have ever traveled solo and most of them are from China and India (M. Brown, 2015) and are educated young females who have a higher propensity to travel alone based on the study conducted by Laesser, Beritelli, and Bieger (2009).

Despite the popularity of solo female tourism, unaccompanied female travelers have been subjected to the risks of unwanted attentions and sexual harassment when they travel in the tourism space, especially areas that are still enforced with gender inequality. While the figures of sexual harassment for female solo travelers are unavailable, statistics indicate that 47% of solo female travelers responded that “dangerous situations” is their number one concern when they travel (The Art of Travel Blog, 2016). Similarly, E. C. L. Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, and Arcodia (2018) revealed that female business travelers are 5.6 times higher in falling prey to sexual harassment than men. Despite the awareness of this risk, many women travel independently to many destinations including those that are male-privileged societies to search for the sense of freedom, empowerment, and autonomy (Jordan & Gibson, 2005; Wilson & Harris, 2006). The risk associated with independent female travel to Africa and their risk-taking behavior provide the context of this study, which aims to understand the risk management process of these solo female travelers when they travel in gendered public space. While few studies on solo female travelers have recognized the concerns on women’s insecurity, little research has been conducted from a gendered perspective, mainly for those traveling to Africa.

Furthermore, previous studies have focused more on solo travelers’ motivations (Bianchi, 2016; Chiang & Jogaratham, 2005), and profile of solo travelers (Laesser et al., 2009) while others have looked at the family constraints on solo travelers (R. Yang & Tung, 2018). Therefore, this article seeks to contribute to the existing tourism literature on solo female travelers by examining their constraints and associated negotiation strategies. Due to the perceived hierarchical difference between males and females in public spaces, Africa is chosen in this study. To achieve these objectives, social constructivism will be employed to understand the perceived risk of solo female travelers based on gender inequalities.

## Literature Review

### *Gender Stereotype in Society*

Gender is an important demographic variable in understanding the binary biological composition of the tourist market. The study of gender provides essential information to the tourism industry like motivations, activity participation, satisfactions, attitudes, and behaviors. According to the Social Structural Theory, gender differences should not only be understood from just the biological distinction between female and male, but also the social structure that focuses on the contrasting social position of the two sexes, which offers a broader understanding of the changes of behavior in accordance to the surrounding environments (Eagly & Wood, 1999; Khan, 2013). In addition, gender is built on the ideologies of femininity and masculinity. de Beauvoir (1972) concluded that, throughout social history, men have occupied a higher social status than women who are always constructed as the “other.” This suggests that men have always enjoyed better rights and benefits where women are authorized with less powers, given a lower social ranking as well as smaller locus of control compared to men. In modern societies, despite the reinforcement of equity status, women are concentrated in certain occupations, receiving lower wages than men, and few representations at the highest level of an organization (Acker, 1990; Bielby & Baron, 1986; Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Turner, Cross, & Murphy, 2017). It is noted that unequal gender status is particularly more visible in developing countries (Khan, 2013), mostly based on the differentiation of gender roles between males and females.

Tourism is gender sensitive such that independent traveling is associated with masculinity where women should not be traveling alone (Shaw, 1985). Related to this concept, the tourism spaces—physical spaces that are constructed with social meanings—are gendered where men are privileged over women (E. C. L. Yang et al., 2018). This gender inequality setting has made women to have restrictions in their freedom to use the public space, particularly because of their fear and vulnerability to potential violence and sexual attacks from unfamiliar males, thus reducing women’s choice of tourism destinations and corresponding

activities (Pain, 1997; Scraton & Watson, 1998; Skeggs, 1999; Wilson & Little, 2008). The studies by Deem (1996) and Whyte and Shaw (1994) on the gendered aspect of leisure space found that women had fears of using public transport while alone, as well as participation and enjoyment in leisure activities.

In light of changing trends across societies, single women traveling is no longer considered improper and immodest. Also, a growing percentage of female solo travelers in all tourist-generating destinations indicate a changing status of women in society that has gradually empowered them with confidence and independence to travel alone. In summary, the presence of women in tourism spaces is still governed by the deep-rooted patriarchy system and judgment on appropriate female travel behaviors (Deem, 1996; Skeggs, 1999; Whyte & Shaw, 1994; Wilson & Little, 2008).

#### *Solo Female Travelers*

Solo travel is one of the fastest growing international tourism segments (Seow & Brown, 2018), most of them being professionals/executives from China and India (M. Brown, 2015), triggering several studies to be conducted to understand this segment. Laesser et al. (2009) attributed this growth to a growing number of single households, aging population, and delayed marriages and childbearing. As a result, solo travel by women has received considerable attention with some authors trying to understand the motivation behind this decision (Seow & Brown, 2018) while the others have focused on the satisfaction with such trips (Wilson & Harris, 2006). In either stream, solo traveling has been approached differently. For example, Laesser et al. (2009), using a conceptual model from transportation research, looked at solo traveling from both the departure and arrival status and not the composition state on the trip, a sentiment shared by Foo (1999) and McNamara and Prideaux (2010). On the other hand, R. Yang and Tung (2018) looked at solo travelers as those who arrived at a destination alone without the company of friends or family. R. Yang and Tung (2018) defined solo travelers as individuals' arrival status at the destination and not necessarily their traveling status, and independent travelers refer to those

people who do not buy any touristic package nor travel in a group.

Laesser et al. (2009) in their study of solo traveling in the Swiss market proposed a four categorization of solo traveler. They identified single solo as people who come from single homes and travel alone. Next, single group was defined as people who come from one-person households but travel with a group during their trip. A third category was collective solo, comprising individuals who have families or partners but travel solo, and lastly collective group as travel by people who come from collective households but start off a trip by themselves to travel as part of the group. This article defines solo women travelers as those who started off alone irrespective of their household composition and arrived at the destination alone regardless of travel groups in which they may find themselves in the destination.

#### *Motivation of Solo Female Travelers*

Female travelers have been investigated in tourism studies by focusing on gender dynamics between males and females. According to Durko and Stone (2017), women in relationships show distinctive motives when traveling without their significant others or partners, such as their partners' personal constraints, escape from daily routine, need for individuality, and even female bonding when traveling with girlfriends. Women feel more "safe" when traveling with significant others. A desire for self-discovery, enlightenment, and education are key motives for women to travel independently (Cockburn-Wootten, Friend & McIntosh, 2006). L. Brown and Osman (2017) posited that liberation of sexual behavior from the home environment is considered as one of the motivating factors for travel.

According to Bianchi (2016), solo travelers are less constrained with group decision making, which may affect the satisfaction of the trip; hence, traveling on their own without waiting for a group consensus is highly preferred. Similarly, Bianchi (2016) and Wilson and Little (2005) posited that women, regardless of their marital status, opt to travel solo to enjoy their freedom, relaxation, and discovery whereas Bond (1997) discovered that solo women travelers are motivated by adventure, education, and self-understanding.

### *Constraints and Negotiation Strategies of Female Travelers*

In leisure studies, constraints have been extensively studied to identify what hinders people in their ability to engage or remain in leisure activities and their level of satisfaction. This area of study has emerged with the concept of how constraints can influence people's behavior in activity participation (Fendt & Wilson, 2012). For example, female travelers who choose to travel independently often negotiate their movements through unfamiliar spaces and public places, which involves a number of critical sociocultural and geographical issues (Wilson & Little, 2008). Solo female travelers are frequently reported by media on sexual assaults and murders cases (E. C. L. Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, & Arcodia, 2017b).

The study on negotiation of travel constraints has been derived from the Hierarchical Constraints Model (HCM), which considers constraints as a barrier to participation in tourism (Gao & Kerstetter, 2016). Negotiation process of solo female travelers can be broadly divided into two procedures: pre-travel and during-travel. In the pretravel situation, decision making process is crucial to analyze how women can be motivated for independent travel (Wilson & Little, 2008). Women are often in the position of negotiation between participation and nonparticipation, which involves a number of constraining factors surrounding them (L. Brown & Osman, 2017; Wilson & Little, 2008; E. C. L. Yang et al., 2018). According to Crawford and Godbey (1987) and Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991), constraints are generally classified into three distinct categories: structural, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. In addition, Gao and Kerstetter (2016) contended that destination-specific constraints should also be reviewed as they have an impact on travelers' participation in tourism activities.

Negotiation is the way towards the removal of these barriers, leading to participation in tourism (Gao & Kerstetter, 2016). Being aware of risks, a number of mitigation strategies are developed by solo female travelers to assist in their decisions to travel. For example, adjusted spatial practices and body representations, and safeguarding of artefacts, are incorporated into how to prevent the risks (E. C. L. Yang et al., 2018). Women's desire for

challenge and getting out of their comfort zone is identified as a motivation to participate in perceived risky activities. For example, female surfers attempt to maintain positive attitude towards surf tourism by thorough planning and preparation with a strong passion for surfing (Fendt & Wilson, 2012).

### *Why Study Solo Female Travelers to Africa?*

The mention of the name Africa arouses different but similar perceptions in many people's minds: undeveloped, wild jungles (zoos) and full of wild animals, traditional, and of course a continent full of diseases, poverty, and war (Dunn, 2004; Kaplan, 1994). With such attributes, tourism in Africa is often perceived as a predominantly male-dominated adventure activity, such as wildlife tourism (Rogerson, 2007). Going by contents found on the internet on solo women traveling to Africa, little room and choice is left for those women who need to travel solo to Africa. As echoed by Carter (1998), Africa is perceived to have one negative attribute or the other; hence, it is marginalized by travelers. In a recent study by Seow and Brown (2018) that sought to understand motivations and experiences of solo Asian female tourists, only one of the 10 women they interviewed had been to Egypt (Africa).

As summarized by Reisinger and Mavondo (2006), there are five types of risks that are associated with tourism: cultural and language difficulties, terrorism, health, crime, and war and political instability. These risks are inevitable in any other destination as they have to do with chance rather than danger, but most writers tend to focus on the negative aspect of Africa to discourage others from visiting. These risks, according to Richter (2003), are a threat to both tourists and the host communities. According to NomadicMatt (2017), a solo female traveler stated:

Africa gets the reputation of being a "scary" place even though it's vast and incredibly varied as far as culture and safety is concerned. Let's be honest, grand generalizations are almost never correct and that the case with Africa as well.

Being a least traveled "destination" by both men and women who often blog reviews after traveling to Africa, it is unsurprising that they capitalize on the negative sides of Africa and they oftentimes

treat it as one country. For example, Lonely Planet (2017) had this on their website:

It's no use pretending otherwise-women travelling in Africa (alone or with other women) will occasionally encounter specific problems, most often harassment from men. North Africa can be particularly tiresome from this perspective . . . women are seen as easy targets.

However, despite these foregoing observations, a report by United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2015) contended that Africa is an upcoming destination with its tourism developing at a promising rate as evidenced by the 56 million international tourists received in 2014, which raked in US\$36 billion representing 7% of the continent's exports. With this promising news, it is imperative that we study why women are discouraged to go solo in the perceived men's travel space and what could be done to improve the situation.

### Research Methodology

This study investigated 10 female travel bloggers who made solo trips to Africa. Blogs provide commentary and personalized thoughts about a product or a destination and their interactive nature allows readers to comment on the posts and influence their travel decisions during the planning phase. The use of blogs in research is not new since the advent of Web 2.0 in the 1990s. Due to its versatility, naturalistic presentation of information, exclusion of researcher bias, and provision of personal lived experiences, opinions, and attitudes (Schmallegger & Carson, 2008), its application has spanned various sectors like health (Clarke & van Ameron, 2008; McCosker, 2008), sociology (Hookway, 2008), ICT (Jones & Akony, 2008), and tourism (Pan, MacLaurin & Crotts, 2007; Volo, 2010) among others. Blogs present convenient, honest, genuine, and more self-representative data at a lower cost than the traditional diary writing or other qualitative data collection methods (Hookway, 2008; Schmallegger & Carson, 2008). Hence this study opted for blogs as data sources for researchers to gather data on the topic as the bloggers are from all over the world (Enoch & Grossman, 2010). This study employs netnographic research methodology since it is considered effective to understand

complex social phenomena and assists researchers in developing themes from the respondents' points of view (Kozinets, 2002). Furthermore, interpretivism is considered as a philosophical stance as Neuman (2003) and Rageh, Melewar, and Woodside (2013) suggested the goal of social research is to develop an understanding of social life and discover how people construct meaning in natural settings.

The first stage of the study was to search for blogs using Google search engines by using keywords "solo female traveler" and "Africa." Since the travel bloggers are independent, personal blogs were used. However, only well-established blogs, with registered website hosts, providing reliable contacts, containing continuous posts about travel experiences and in English, were selected in this study. The researchers read through the bloggers catalogue to determine their suitability for the study. These bloggers were conveniently sampled based on their content on their African travel. Currently, there is no agreement on what is ethical when using blogs or any other publicly available online information (Hookway, 2008). However, to be on a conservative side, we have used pseudo names in this study to disguise the bloggers (Bruckman, 2002). The data focus is on motives, constraints, and the consequent negotiation strategies the solo female travelers adopted. The second stage was data analysis where content analysis was preferred to analyze the bloggers' experiences, which were later categorized into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Neuman, 2003). This is also consistent with Kozinets' (2002) suggestion for netnographic study to thematize the respondents' experiences and opinions. In this case, the data were thematized into different types of constraints by analyzing the meanings of the reviewed content by the bloggers as well as categorized into pretravel and during-travel based on timeline of mentioned experiences.

### Findings and Discussion

The study established that the majority of the female travel bloggers were predominantly from Western countries such as Australia, UK, and US. Of these bloggers, Blogger 6, who is a travel agent as well as a travel writer, has claimed to have been traveling extensively throughout Africa. Bloggers

Table 1  
Demographic and Travel-Related Characteristics of 10 Bloggers

Blogger	Place of Origin	Gender	Past Occupation	Current Occupation	First Trip to Africa	Year Blog Created	African Destination
1	N/A	Female	Worked in UK; Event Manager; tour guide in Africa	Full-time travel blog	2009; at the end of twenties	2013	Botswana, Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Namibia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia
2	American	Female	Nurse	Full-time travel blog	N/A	2012	Kenya, Malta, Morocco, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda
3	American	Female	Investor	Full-time travel blog	N/A	N/A	Jamaica, Malta, Morocco, Seychelles, South Africa
4	Australian	Female	N/A	Full-time travel blog	N/A	2015	Egypt, South Africa
5	N/A	A community of female travelers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Congo, Egypt, Malawi, Morocco, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia
6	N/A	N/A	N/A	Travel experts	N/A	N/A	Botswana, Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda
7	American	Female	N/A	Full-time travel blog	2014	N/A	Morocco
8	Australian	Female	N/A	Environmental educator	2014	N/A	Ethiopia, Madagascar, Uganda
9	UK	Female	Intermittent freelance journalism and business-woman	World traveler, manage own Guest House and Riding school, freelance secretary	N/A	N/A	All over Africa, mainly in Kenya
10	American	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Burundi, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

1, 6, and 10 have traveled to at least 10 countries in Africa while Blogger 7 has only been to one African country (Morocco). Travel constraints of making a trip to Africa for solo female travelers has been categorized into two periods: pretravel and during-travel. The demographic information of the 10 bloggers are presented in Table 1.

### *Pretravel Constraints*

Since Africa is perceived as a risky destination, data from the blogs present multidimensional constraints, particularly before making a decision to travel to Africa. Based on our findings, pretravel constraints can be conceptualized into three different dimensions: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and external (see Fig. 1). Supported by the hierarchical model of leisure constraints suggested by Crawford et al. (1991), pretravel constraints are encountered hierarchically toward participation and nonparticipation in leisure activities. At the initial stage, solo female travelers face intrapersonal constraints while considering Africa as a destination. Observed experience by Blog 10 is a perception challenge of fear and doubt. Blogger 10 presented that individuals are deterred to travel alone due to the challenge of missing a companion, which induces loneliness during their trips. Furthermore, it mentions

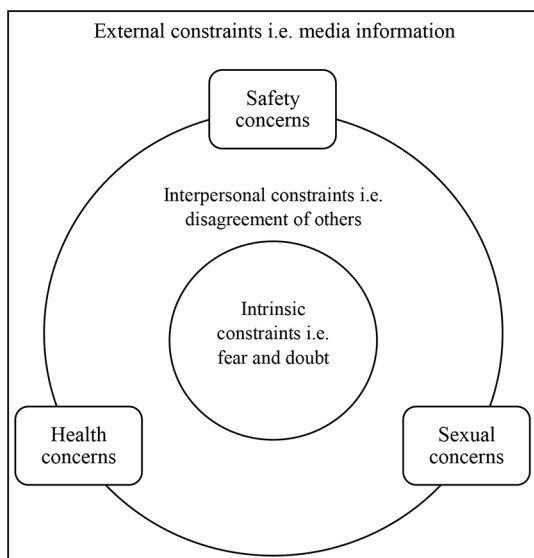


Figure 1. Solo female travelers pretravel constraints.

the chance of facing danger when traveling alone. This concurs with Wilson and Little (2008), whose study stated that women's fear emanates from other people's concerns about vulnerability in unknown places, the feeling of being prone to male gaze as well as a sense of restricted access.

The bloggers revealed that solo female travelers usually face interpersonal constraints particularly from spouses, relatives, and close friends where concerns, disagreements, and objections are commonly brought in when they want to travel solo to Africa. At this stage, women are challenged to provide sufficient rationale of their decision in order to receive an approval or an agreement. This implies that the perception of risks is not only generated by women themselves alone, but also by those close people surrounding them. Being a woman is generally considered as an obstacle to travel decisions to Africa. For example, Blogger 1 recalled the overwhelming comments, concerns, and objections from family and friends when she declared that she would be traveling to Africa alone. Bloggers 3 and 4 emphasized the negative feedback from friends when they shared their wish to backpack solo in Africa. Their decisions were regarded as crazy and the topic of safety had been discussed by everyone around them.

Mostly, the interpersonal constraints can be grouped into several common patterns; health, safety, and sexual concerns are the most prevalent. The concerns on health involving epidemic diseases, such as Ebola, malaria, and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and hygiene products particularly women-related products, such as sanitary pads and napkins, seem to be common. For instance, without directly implying tourists would be infected by merely traveling to Africa, Blogger 8 mentioned that HIV infection is highly prevalent in Uganda and shows a number of cases passing from parents to their children.

Blogger 1 wrote that she was asked to get all the vaccinations (malaria and other health precautions) before going to Africa. In addition, safety is regarded as one of the most mentioned concerns, including danger in public spaces and life-threatening incidents. The perceived risk to travel to Africa often portrays crimes, wars, and wild animals that can be encountered. Some bloggers indicated that they were reminded of all the genocides that happened in Africa to deem the place not safe to



travel. Other concerns dwelt on dangers from wild animals, as Blogger 3 wrote that she was shocked when she was warned that she would be attacked or even eaten by a lion in Africa.

Furthermore, female travelers are generally perceived to be prone to be victimized through sexual harassment and violence in Africa, including male gaze and rape. For example, Blogger 4 and Blogger 6 agreed that they were warned about possible rape incidents in Africa. Blogger 6 recalled that her friends despised her decision to travel to Africa and warned her that she was pushing herself to physical dangers of rape and murder.

It is interesting to see the concerns that were put across to these female travelers by their immediate families and friends, who have no first-hand information about Africa, were generalized in spite of where they intended to go. Indeed, as Irvine and Anderson (2006) wrote, perceived risk rather than actual risk circumstances influence tourists to reconsider their travel plans to certain destinations. For example, Blogger 3 concedes that the cognition image of Africa is often perceived with conflict and danger where there is not a single safe area within the continent. She was also warned against using local transport, saying transporters do not prioritize safety of the travelers.

Data show that most of the constraints mentioned in the travel blogs are also influenced by external factors, particularly from the media and some sources of information. Fears and concerns are likely to be brought by travelers or people who have never had experiences in traveling to Africa. Concurring with Voorhees, Vick, and Perkins (2007), who argued that the media focuses on bad rather than positive experiences, Blogger 7 observed that media coverage is often broadcasting the negative side of the incidents, yet it should not be a barrier to women who wish to solo travel in Africa. This is further supported by Blogger 3, who continued her decision to travel solo to Mozambique even though positive information about Africa was scanty.

#### *During-Travel Constraints*

During travel in Africa, public spaces are perceived by and are somewhat risky to solo female travelers because women are culturally regarded as a weaker sex. Local norms followed by women in

Africa play an important role in generating actual or potential risks to solo female travelers due to cultural difference between Western countries and Africans. By not conforming to the local cultures, solo female travelers are often seen as offending the prevailing norms of the host destinations and the local people. Thus, gender-induced constraints tend to be commonly mentioned, especially by Western or first-time solo female travelers. Although this conception was first perceived prior to traveling to Africa, it has been confirmed by some bloggers having toured Africa. According to Blogger 9, women in Africa are culturally viewed to be “preserved” within the cultural confines. For example, young girls are closely protected whereas mature women are respected. She further notes that, generally, if a woman travels on her own, it is perceived that she is looking for sex. These sentiments are in line with Greer (1999), who observed that fear is culturally taught to women to the benefit of the patriarchal order and they have unfortunately been supported by some government agencies like the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), who on their website carry a document titled *Tips for women travelers* (Chiang & Jugaratnam, 2005).

Regarding the gender-induced concerns, bloggers also mentioned sexual harassment. For example, Blogger 1 observed that despite the dominant male gaze, she did not find this to be as problematic as earlier imagined before embarking on her solo trip. On the other hand, Blogger 6 confirmed that unwanted sexual attention is one of the biggest fears for solo female travelers in Africa and the chance of encountering such harassment is high during their trips.

However, the study reveals that some safety concerns are valid—for example, theft as encountered by Blogger 5 whose phone was stolen upon arrival in South Africa, to which Blogger 4 advised solo travelers not to carry valuable items with them. A similar case of fear of getting robbed was also shared by Blogger 5, who noted that she was followed occasionally, which made her feel uncomfortable but her safety was not threatened. The study confirms that the perception of risks is elevated by temporal factors specifically in some public spaces during night time.

Terrorism was also mentioned by Blogger 2, who hinted that she needed to change her travel

plan when she received the news of two bombings on in-coming buses from Kenya to Kampala. Due to safety concerns, she had to extend her stay in Kampala even though she had been backpacking there for a week.

### *Negotiation Strategies*

To overcome their intrapersonal constraints, passion and special interest for African travel are usually mentioned in order to push themselves out of their comfort zones. The desire to challenge oneself with an expectation of novel experiences encourages women to travel alone. Interestingly, a combination of solo travel flexibility and special interests encourages women to perceive a sense of freedom while traveling in Africa. For example, Blogger 7 expressed her strong desire to experience more places in the world before she reaches a certain age. Blogger 8 shared that her affection towards great apes led her to travel to Uganda where wild chimpanzees, gorillas, and other wild animals are available. Besides that, she mentioned that traveling alone gave her a sense of having more control without compromising travel plans of others.

Travel insurance and vaccinations in home countries are the common negotiation strategy to deal with health concerns. Since traveling in Africa usually requires lengthy times due to the geographical distances and the size of the continent, and since encounters with local people are expected to happen during travel, travelers are encouraged to protect themselves beforehand. Blogger 1 recommended to have all required vaccinations before heading to Africa. Also, she was on constant medication to prevent possible malaria infection and drank only purified water during her travel in Botswana.

Other strategies are derived from the bloggers' temporal factors, self-consciousness and concealment of fear, and formally organized services. For example, Blogger 3 and Blogger 1 recalled that they were warned not to stay outside or out of town after sunset as tourist safety was not guaranteed at night. Similarly, Blogger 5 said that she was warned by the locals not to walk alone at night and to only use cabs or taxis that had lettering on the sides whereas Blogger 1 advise women to walk with confidence to make themselves less vulnerable and to scare away perpetrators. Similarly, Blogger 3 also

suggested that women stay alert of their surroundings while walking alone to reduce the chance of being exploited.

Blogger 9 pointed out that courage to refuse appreciation from strangers when solo female travelers feel uncomfortable is a polite strategy to overcome the perceived risks. The findings also show that being self-consciousness also positively influences the behavior of solo female travelers by, among other things, avoiding being intoxicated by alcoholic drinks as mentioned by many bloggers. One actual incident encountered by Blogger 9 when she was enjoying the beach in Kenya was being stalked by one young local male. Instead of expressing irritation, she signaled the stalker with a fearless reaction, which then made him walk away.

An acknowledgement of service reliability is shared by the bloggers who view formally organized services and reputable establishments as the best consideration to avoid the concerned risks and help solo female travelers to reduce the perception of travel constraints. Use of services such as taxis or hotels is perceived to be under the control or restriction of the service providers in which travel constraints are reduced. Specifically, Blogger 6 recommended that solo female travelers select the accommodation in a reputable area with sufficient safety facilities, such as door locks. Blogger 1 also advised fellow solo travelers to hire licensed taxis with the assistance of hotels while traveling in Africa. Moreover, Blogger 4 added that, if the solo female travelers are traveling outside, they should take taxis at the official taxi stand. In addition, Blogger 5 gave some tips, such as taking taxi with lettering on the sides or making use of mobile application when the ride is needed.

The study found that gender-induced travel constraints are usually negotiated by gender-induced strategies. Faced with an encounter with local men, direct eye contact or approaching them is often avoided. Bloggers 1 and 6 agreed that seeking assistance or inquiring from women or families instead of single men may reduce possible risks, Blog 6 further added that all-female hotels or dormitories may be suitable for solo female backpackers.

As hinted by L. Brown and Osman (2017) that female travelers to Egypt cope with male-dominant tourist places and unwanted male attention by conforming to local cultural norms as a way of being

culturally responsible tourists, this study also found that these bloggers overcame unwanted attention by adhering to the local dress codes. Adaptation to local culture is considered as the most effective negotiation strategy adopted by solo female travelers. The cultural adaptation often means respect of a conservative role of women in Africa. This may affect travel behavior of solo female travelers in Africa. Observing norms accepted by local people helps solo female travelers avoid a number of during-travel constraints, especially gender-induced and sexual constraints. Blogger 6 suggested several strategies, such as ignoring catcalls and whistles, avoiding direct eye contact, and dressing conservatively, to reduce unwanted attention within the destination. In addition, Blogger 1 and Blogger 7 confirmed that dressing modestly is the best way to show respect to local dress code norms and religion. Finding a travel companion within the destination plays an important role in negotiating travel constraints and encouragement to participate in tourist activities. As discussed in the literature, some solo women found solace in the fact that traveling solo does not mean being alone on the whole trip (R. Yang & Tung, 2018). Bloggers 3, 6, and 7 found that despite traveling solo they met other solo travelers on their trips. Blogger 6 advised solo women travelers to make plans with a group from their hotel while Blogger 7 emphasized the need to make friend with other solo travelers in the destination.

#### *Solo Travelers and Local People*

Tourism is about meeting new people and learning from each other. Proponents of tourism say that tourism enhances understanding and world peace. Similarly, this study found that these bloggers, despite setting off alone, met and made friends in their destinations. Some bloggers also recalled that locals welcomed them into their homes. For instance, Blogger 9 recommended making friends with the locals and appreciating African hospitality whenever you are invited to be the guest in their homes where food and advice are offered.

Blogger 9 further wrote that when she was interacting more with the locals, she felt more comfortable to arrange her own exploration of Africa. However, a careful attention to unwanted approaches should not be disregarded at all times.

Going through the comments from these bloggers, it seems that some women are relieved, enlightened, and encouraged to travel to Africa.

#### Conclusions and Implications

This study found that women opt to go solo to Africa with the aim of discovering it on their own, besides experience, escape, and relaxation as found by Chiang and Jogaratnam (2005) in their study on why women travel solo, a concept also shared by Christie and Crompton (2001), who noted that, "Africa has a lot to offer . . . and is a place for adventurers" (p. 1). The study has confirmed that family, friends, and the media have strong influence on women who plan their tourism trip and indeed they are the major stumbling blocks they have to overcome before setting off for Africa.

This study has noted great differences between reports by popular media and those written by female bloggers on the image of Africa. These females generally have a fair image of Africa after visiting it, despite the warnings they received both before and during their vacation in Africa. As alluded to by Lew (1987), image is a very important aspect of any destination's tourist attraction. It is worrisome, however, that most African destinations are associated with negative coverage, which in most cases has been tolerated by the countries in question. For example, the 2004 Olympics Games were held in Athens instead of South Africa, partly because of the crime situation in the country (Ferreira & Harmse, 2000). Due to such information being available to the masses from the media, which Vasterman, Yzermans, and Dirkzwager (2005) termed agenda setting and framing role, it is not surprising that travelers to Africa, both male and female, are faced with safety and risk constraints that have an impact on tourists' demand patterns and behavior as they negotiate their destination options. Furthermore, in the face of negative publicity of some African countries, the brand image, brand identity, and brand associations of Africa (Cai, 2002) as a tourism destination will continue to be tarnished until individual countries address such concerns (Kuppuswamy, 2013; Lehto, Douglas, & Park, 2008).

The study has ascertained that blogging enables female travelers to assure themselves that they can overcome negative energy and tell other solo

travelers that “I did it, so can you?” These blogs also help others who have desires to travel to Africa to get familiar with the attractions and the intended destinations (Enoch & Grossman, 2010; Grossman & Enoch, 2004), hence virtual communities are created among people of similar tastes (Adkins & Grant, 2007).

### Limitations

Results of this study cannot be generalized beyond the study area owing to the sampling bias and the number of samples used in the study. Secondly, this study only analyzed English blogs that were documented by solo female travelers found using Google search engine, which can lead into bias on what bloggers say about Africa. It is possible that some solo females who have been to Africa hold different opinions but as their blogs are in other languages, which we could not understand, they were left out. Indeed, females and males who travel with parties could have their own perception of Africa, but they were not of interest in this study.

### References

- Acker, J. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society*, 4(2), 139–158.
- Adkins, B., & Grant, E. (2007). Backpackers as a community of strangers: The interaction order of an online backpacker notice board. *Qualitative Sociology Review*, 3, 188–201.
- Bianchi, C. (2016). Solo holiday travelers: Motivators and drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(2), 197–208.
- Bielby, W. T., & Baron, J. N. (1986). Men and women at work: Sex segregation and statistical discrimination. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(4), 759–799.
- Bond, M. (1997). Women travelers: A new growth market (Pacific Asia Travel Association Occasional paper 20).
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Brown, L., & Osman, H. (2017). A female tourists experience in Egypt as an Islamic destination. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 63, 12–22.
- Brown, M. (2015). *Visa global travel intentions study 2015*. Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA). Retrieved from [https://pata.org/store/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Visa-GTI-2015-for\\_PATA.pdf](https://pata.org/store/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Visa-GTI-2015-for_PATA.pdf)
- Bruckman, A. (2002). Studying the amateur artist: A perspective on disguising data collected in human subjects research on the Internet. *Ethics and Information Technology*, 4(3), 217–231.
- Cai, A. (2002). Cooperative branding for rural destinations. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29(3), 720–742.
- Cai, L. A., & Combrink, T. E. (2000). Japanese female travelers—a unique outbound market. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 5(1), 16–24.
- Carter, S. (1998). Tourists’ and travelers’ social construction of Africa and Asia as risky locations. *Tourism Management*, 19(4), 349–358.
- Chiang, C., & Jogaratnam, G. (2005). Why do women travel solo? *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 12(1), 59–68.
- Christie, I. T., & Crompton, D. E. (2001). *Tourism in Africa* (Africa Region working paper series No. 12). Washington, DC: World Bank
- Clarke, J., & van Amerom, G. (2008). A comparison of blogs by depressed men and women. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 29(3), 243–264.
- Cockburn-Wooten, C., Friend, L., & McIntosh, A. (2006). A discourse analysis of representational spaces: Writings of women independent traveler. *Turizam: Znanstvenostručni časopis*, 54(1), 7–16.
- Crawford, D. W., & Godbey, G. (1987). Reconceptualizing barriers to family leisure. *Leisure Sciences*, 9(2), 119–127.
- Crawford, D. W., Jackson, E. L., & Godbey, G. (1991). A hierarchical model of leisure constraints. *Leisure Sciences*, 13(4), 309–320.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1972). *The second sex*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Deem, R. (1996). Women, the city and holidays. *Leisure Studies*, 15(2), 105–119.
- Dunn, K. C. (2004). Fear of a black planet: Anarchy anxieties and postcolonial travel to Africa. *Third World Quarterly*, 25(3), 483–499.
- Durko, A. M., & Stone, M. J. (2017). Even lovers need a holiday: Women’s reflections of travel without their partners. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 21, 18–23.
- Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (1999). The origins of sex differences in human behavior: Evolved dispositions versus social roles. *American Psychologist*, 54(6), 408–423.
- Enoch, Y., & Grossman, R. (2010). Blogs of Israel and Danish backpackers to India. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(2), 520–536.
- ETB Travel News. (2014, May 1). *Luxperience 2014 and the rising importance of the female travel market in Asia Pacific*. Retrieved from <https://asia.etbtravelnews.global/203632/luxperience-2014-rising-importance-female-travel-market-asia-pacific/>
- Fendt, L. S., & Wilson, E. (2012). ‘I just push through the barriers because I live for surfing’: How women negotiate their constraints to surf tourism. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 15(1), 4–18.
- Ferreira, S. L. A., & Harmse, A. (2000). Crime and tourism in South Africa: International tourists perception and risk. *South African Geographical Journal*, 82(2), 80–85.
- Foo, L. M. (1999). International solo travelers to Australia. *Bureau of Tourism Research Report*, 1(2), 1–5.
- Frohlick, S. (2013). *Sexuality, women, and tourism: Cross-border desires through contemporary travel* (Routledge

- studies in contemporary geographies of leisure, tourism, and mobility; 35). London, UK: Routledge.
- Gao, J., & Kerstetter, D. L. (2016). Using an intersectionality perspective to uncover older Chinese female's perceived travel constraints and negotiation strategies. *Tourism Management, 57*, 128–138.
- Greer, G. (1999). *The whole woman*. London, UK: Doubleday.
- Grossman, R., & Enoch, Y. (2004). My trip to India and the West in online journey dairies. Conference on Tourism & Literature: Travel, Imagination & Myth, Harrowgate, UK.
- Hookway, N. (2008). Entering the blogosphere: Some strategies for using blogs in social research. *Qualitative Research, 8*(1), 91–113.
- Irvine, W., & Anderson, A. R. (2006). The effect of disaster on peripheral tourism places and the disaffection of prospective visitors. In Y. Mansfeld & A. Pizam (Eds.), *Tourism, security and safety: From theory to practice* (pp. 169–186). Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Jones, M., & Alony, I. (2008). Blogs—The new source of data analysis. *Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology, 5*, 433–446.
- Jordan, F., & Gibson, H. (2005). “We’re not stupid . . . but we’ll not stay home either”: Experiences of solo women travelers. *Tourism Review International, 9*(2), 195–211.
- Kaplan, R. D. (1994, February). The coming anarchy: How scarcity, crime, overpopulation, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet. *Atlantic Monthly*, 44–76.
- Khan, S. (2013). Travel behavior: The hidden en-gendered dynamics. *International Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Systems, 6*(1), 37–44.
- Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities. *Journal of Marketing Research, 39*, 61–72.
- Kuppuswamy, S. (2013). Usage of media in disaster preparedness: With reference to coastal disasters in Chennai Tamil Nadul, India. *Asian Journal of Environmental and Disaster Management, 4*(3).
- Laesser, C., Beritelli, L. C., & Bieger, T. (2009). Solo travel: Explorative insights from a mature market (Switzerland). *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 15*(3), 217–227.
- Lehto, X., Douglas, A. C., & Park, J. (2008). Mediating the effects of natural disasters on travel intention. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, 23*(2), 29–43.
- Lew, A. A. (1987). A framework of tourist attraction research. *Annals of Tourism Research, 14*(4), 553–575.
- Li, M., Wen, T., & Leung, A. (2011). An exploratory study of the travel motivation of Chinese female outbound tourists: 中国女性游客出境旅游动机研究. *Journal of China Tourism Research, 7*(4), 411–424.
- Lonely Planet. (2017). *Africa: Women travelers*. Retrieved from <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/africa/women-travellers>
- Lyness, K. S., & Heilman, M. E. (2006). When fit is fundamental: Performance evaluations and promotions of upper-level female and male managers. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 91*(4), 777–785.
- McCosker, A. (2008). Blogging illness: Recovering in public. *M/C Journal, 11*(6). Retrieved from <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/104>
- McNamara, K. E., & Prideaux, B. (2010). A typology of solo independent women travelers. *International Journal of Tourism Research, 12*(3), 253–264.
- Neuman, W. L. (2003). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- NomadicMatt. (2017). *7 Common myths about travelling Africa-why they are wrong*. Retrieved from <https://www.nomadicmatt.com/travel-blogs/africa-travel-myths/>
- Pain, R. H. (1997). Social geographies of women's fear of crime. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 22*(2), 231–244.
- Pan, B., MacLaurin, T., & Crofts, J. C. (2007). Travel blogs and the implications for destination marketing. *Journal of Travel Research, 46*(1), 35–45.
- Rageh, A., Melewar, T. C., & Woodside, A. (2013). Using netnography research method to reveal the underlying dimensions of the customer/tourist experience. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal, 16*(2), 126–149.
- Reisinger, Y., & Mavondo, F. (2006). Cultural differences in travel risk perception. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 20*(1), 13–29.
- Richter, L. K. (2003). International tourism and its global public health consequences. *Journal of Travel Research, 41*(4), 340–347.
- Rogerson, C. M. (2007). The challenges of developing backpacker tourism in South Africa: An enterprise perspective. *Development Southern Africa, 24*(3), 425–444.
- Schmallegger, D., & Carson, D. (2008). Blogs in tourism: Changing approaches to information exchange. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 14*(2), 99–110.
- Scraton, S., & Watson, B. (1998). Gendered cities: Women and public leisure space in the ‘postmodern city’. *Leisure Studies, 17*(2), 123–137.
- Seow, D., & Brown, L. (2018). The solo female Asian tourist. *Current Issues in Tourism, 21*(10), 1187–1206.
- Shaw, S. M. (1985). Gender and leisure: Inequality in the distribution of leisure time. *Journal of Leisure Research, 17*(4), 266–282.
- Skeggs, B. (1999). Matter out of place: Visibility and sexualities in leisure spaces. *Leisure Studies, 18*(3), 213–232.
- The Art of Travel Blog. (2016). *Solo female travel on rise: A report*. Retrieved from <https://artoftravel.tips/solo-female-travel/#.WgkIW1uCy71>
- Turner, T., Cross, C., & Murphy, C. (2017). Occupations, age and gender: Men and women's earnings in the Irish labour market. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X17704910>
- United Nations World Tourism Organization. (2015). *Tourism in Africa: A tool for development. Affiliate members regional report* (Vol. 4). Madrid, Spain: Author.
- Vasterman, P., Yzermans, C. J., & Dirkzwager, A. J. E. (2005). The role of media and media hype in aftermath of disasters. *Epidemiologic Review, 27*(1), 107–114.

- Volo, S. (2010). Bloggers' reported tourist experiences: Their utility as a tourism data source and their effect on prospective tourists. *Journal of Vacation Marketing, 16*(4), 297–311.
- Voorhees, C. C. W., Vick, J., & Perkins, D. D. (2007). 'Came hell and high water': The intersection of Hurricane Katrina, the news media, race and poverty. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 17*(6), 415–429.
- Whyte, L. B., & Shaw, S. M. (1994). Women's leisure: An exploratory study of fear of violence as a leisure constraint. *Journal of Applied Recreation Research, 19*(1), 5–21.
- Wilson, E., & Harris, C. (2006). Meaningful travel: Women, independent travel and the search for self and meaning. *Turizam: Znanstveno-stručni časopis, 54*(2), 161–172.
- Wilson, E., & Little, D. E. (2005). A "relative escape"? The impact of constraints on women who travel solo. *Tourism Review International, 9*(2), 155–175.
- Wilson, E., & Little, D. E. (2008). The solo female travel experience: Exploring the 'geography of women's fear'. *Current Issues in Tourism, 11*(2), 167–186.
- Yang, E. C. L., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Arcodia, C. (2017a). A narrative review of Asian female travelers: Looking into the future through the past. *Current Issues in Tourism, 20*(10), 1008–1027.
- Yang, E. C. L., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Arcodia, C. (2017b). A systematic literature review of risk and gender research in tourism. *Tourism Management, 58*, 89–100.
- Yang, E. C. L., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Arcodia, C. (2018). Constructing space and self through risk taking: A case of Asian solo female travelers. *Journal of Travel Research, 57*(2), 260–272.
- Yang, R., & Tung, V. W. S. (2018). How does family influence the travel constraints of solo travelers? Construct specification and scale development. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing, 35*(4), 507–516.

Copyright of Tourism Culture & Communication is the property of Cognizant, LLC and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.