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A comprehensive assessment of travel motivations and constraints faced by solo female travelers visiting tourist destinations of Kashmir and Ladakh Region

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Abstract

Purpose - This research explores the motivations and constraints of solo female travelers in Kashmir and Ladakh, focusing on their pursuit of independence and personal freedom while addressing social and cultural challenges. It also examines how these factors influence their destination choices.

Methodology/Design/Approach - A quantitative approach was used, with surveys distributed to 275 solo female tourists in popular Kashmir and Ladakh destinations. Data was analyzed using SPSS version 25.0.

Findings - Solo female travelers are primarily motivated by independence, self-improvement, and unique experiences. Psychological factors such as escaping daily routines and boosting confidence were key, while sociocultural constraints like gender norms and family disapproval hinder independent travel.

Originality/Value - This study fills a gap in existing literature by focusing on solo female travelers in Kashmir and Ladakh. It offers valuable insights for tourism stakeholders to enhance the experiences of this emerging group and suggests strategies to boost female solo travelers' confidence and engagement.

Keywords: solo female travelers, travel motivations, travel constraints, tourism destinations

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to explore the motivations and constraints of solo female travelers, focusing on their travel behaviors, safety concerns, and the impact of societal and gendered roles on their travel experiences. It delves into the growing trend of solo female travel, examining the motivations behind it, the constraints faced, and strategies to promote and support this form of travel. Furthermore, the article highlights the need for gender equality in travel opportunities and the evolving nature of women's solo travel experiences.

Recent literature reveals that the number of women traveling alone has been increasing rapidly and now constitutes a significant segment of the tourism market (Ejupi & Medaric, 2022; McNamara & Prideaux, 2010). Otegui-Carles et al. (2022) emphasize that promoting solo female travel is crucial not only due to its influence on the tourism sector but also because achieving effective gender equality requires that women have the same travel opportunities as men. Ranjitha and Mathew (2023) outline various risks that unaccompanied female travelers face and propose strategies to mitigate these risks to encourage more women to travel.

Solo female travelers are typically described as single, educated, and independent, often traveling to Europe for freedom, self-discovery, and risk-taking, thereby challenging gender norms and reshaping identities (Emekli et al., 2022; Ontiveros et al., 2023). Several studies highlight personal characteristics that drive solo travel, including flexibility, independence, self-empowerment, and exploration

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(Hosseini et al., 2022; Hamid et al., 2021; Osman et al., 2020). Key motivations include overcoming stress and sadness, improving one's situation, seeking escape, happiness, empowerment, self-growth, and self-realization.

Traveling alone presents particular challenges for women due to gendered and racialized hazards in the travel industry (Yang et al., 2018). While solo travel fosters self-discovery, it also requires women—especially from Asian cultures—to challenge societal expectations (Yang et al., 2018). Solo travel is also found to empower women by increasing confidence, freedom, and social skills (Silva et al., 2020). Resistance is a notable factor in enabling women to travel solo despite societal pressures (Seow & Brown, 2020). According to Yozukmaz (2024), understanding the demographic and motivational profiles of solo female travelers is essential, and destinations should promote themselves as contemporary and safe spaces that uphold individual freedom while ensuring safety.

Solo travel is an evolving concept shaped by individual experiences and contexts. Yang (2021) categorizes it into “solo by circumstances” and “solo by choice,” with freedom, flexibility, and self-discovery being primary motivators. Abbasian (2019) found that the decision to travel solo is primarily personal, sometimes due to a lack of suitable companions. Common activities include sightseeing, shopping, dining, and language learning. Gender differences in solo travel also exist: men tend to engage in sport- and party-related holidays, while women often experience more fear associated with traveling alone (Heimtun & Abelsen, 2013; Karagöz et al., 2021). To improve the solo travel experience for women, tourism and hospitality providers should create female-friendly environments that minimize unwanted intrusions (Somasiri et al., 2022). Meeting solo female travelers' needs for solitude and freedom contributes to positive post-travel behaviors. However, women often face social and gendered constraints that impact their ability to access fulfilling travel experiences (Wilson & Little, 2005). These include sociocultural, personal, practical, and spatial limitations.

Attitude, subjective norms, and motivation positively influence solo travel intentions among Indian women, while perceived risk negatively impacts them (Sujood et al., 2023). Umur (2024) stresses that solo travel is complex and necessitates a gendered perspective due to added risks for women. Su and Wu (2022) found that when faced with harassment, many women tend to ignore or endure it rather than resist, with such experiences significantly impacting their sense of safety. Kaba (2021) reports that foreign solo female travelers often encounter gender-specific risks, such as unwanted attention or harassment, and typically cope by dressing modestly, avoiding late-night outings, ignoring male strangers, and even wearing fake wedding rings.

Hassan and Damir (2022) argue that since women cannot travel under the same conditions as men, true gender equality in travel does not yet exist, making continued solo travel a form of resistance and empowerment. Sebova et al. (2021) observe that as women become more emancipated, they increasingly seek leisure, adventure, and personal discovery through solo travel. Similarly, senior women often perceive travel risks more in terms of gender than age, which affects their travel decisions and limits participation in cultural or leisure activities (Maiurro & Brandão, 2024). While solo travel allows for freedom, adventure, and a break from routine, it is often accompanied by challenges such as loneliness, harassment, and fear of theft or nighttime danger (Breda et al., 2020; Galzacorta & Garmendia, 2024). Although women have traveled independently for centuries, solo female tourism has recently surged in popularity worldwide (Yang et al., 2017; Wilson, 2004). Modern travel blogs illustrate a shift in women's travel narratives, emphasizing emotion, empowerment, and self-expression.

In conclusion, this article aims to shed light on the growing trend of solo female travel, exploring the motivations behind it and the constraints women face. It addresses how gender roles, cultural norms, and societal expectations influence women's solo travel experiences. Furthermore, it seeks to highlight how solo travel can serve as a means of empowerment and self-discovery for women. By acknowledging the complexities of solo travel, especially for women, the article contributes to a better understanding of this increasingly significant tourism segment.

Literature Review

Solo female travelers face distinct and tangible constraints that can arise from both their home environments and the socio-cultural frameworks of their travel destinations (Wilson, 2004). Many solo female travelers report that their journeys feel more authentic when undertaken alone, allowing deeper engagement with local culture, traditions, and communities, without the buffer of group travel (Ghadban et al., 2023). This sense of independence enables a more meaningful connection with destinations and their inhabitants, aligning with findings by Kristensen et al. (2021) and Tukenmez (2022), who emphasize that escaping daily routines is a primary motivation for women to travel solo. However, intrapersonal constraints remain among the most significant restrictive factors.

A number of studies have identified a range of challenges encountered by solo female travelers, including safety, socio-cultural, personal, practical, and geographical barriers (Malik, 2018; Tavakoli & Mura, 2021; Awang & Toh, 2018). Kour and Manhas (2018) suggest that many of these risks can be mitigated through thorough pre-trip preparation, which includes acquiring local knowledge, learning basic language skills, understanding weather patterns, considering dietary restrictions, avoiding high-risk areas, purchasing travel insurance, and securing necessary vaccinations.

Solo female travelers also frequently confront gender-related challenges. For instance, they are often expected to dress modestly or pretend to be married to avoid unwanted attention, and they tend to continuously assess their safety and adapt their behaviors in public spaces accordingly (Ruoho, 2023; Burdisso, 2024). Despite these constraints, some women use solo travel as a way to resist and challenge gender and cultural stereotypes (Smith, 2022).

An increasing number of women are choosing to embrace the challenges of solo travel, despite potential risks (Shrestha et al., 2021). However, Gurung (2018) highlights that persistent male attention—particularly of a sexualized nature—is a major constraint. Fear of assault or harassment often restricts women's engagement in leisure activities. This finding is supported by Singh and Aier (2024), Seow and Brown (2020), Kour and Manhas (2018), Xess et al. (2021), and Mani and Jose (2020).

To address such barriers, Nematpour et al. (2024) propose several strategies, including the development of female-friendly travel zones, leveraging technology, fostering online support communities, encouraging self-empowerment, and helping women manage travel-related anxiety. Bernard et al. (2022) argue that solo travel can serve as a powerful mechanism for promoting gender equality and mobility rights, especially in destinations with a high proportion of female travelers.

Razavizadeh and Baradaran Kashani (2018) identify both emotional and functional challenges faced by solo female travelers, noting that their coping mechanisms range from passive avoidance to active and creative problem-solving. Many women are drawn to solo travel by the desire for self-discovery, personal growth, and identity formation (Nguyen, 2018).

According to Uatay et al. (2019), structural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal constraints are key factors that hinder solo female travel. Teng et al. (2023) found that motivations for solo female travel include the desire for escape, relaxation, meeting new people, and personal development—with escape and relaxation being the most influential. Similarly, Chiang and Jogaratnam (2006) identify five core motivational factors: experience, escape, relaxation, social interaction, and self-esteem.

Pereira and Silva (2018a) propose a multidimensional model that includes eight motivational dimensions: escape, self-identity and development, challenge, social connection, learning, adventure, novel life perspectives, and autonomy. These findings are further supported by Neluhena et al. (2023), Wilson and Harris (2006), Junek et al. (2006), and Myers (2010), who all emphasize the complexity and richness of motivations that drive solo female travelers.

Motivations of Solo Female Travellers

Based on the literature review, the motivations of solo female travelers can be categorized into three key dimensions: psychological, cultural, and personal motivations (Wilson, 2004; Malik, 2018; Tavakoli & Mura, 2021; Awang & Toh, 2018; Razavizadeh & Baradaran Kashani, 2018; Chiang & Jogaratnam, 2006; Pereira & Silva, 2018a; Yang, 2021; Ejupi & Medaric, 2022; McNamara & Prideaux, 2010).

Psychological Motivations

Psychological motivations include the desire for adventure, escape from routine, change of environment, gaining independence, and building self-confidence. Independent travel is often centered around the values of autonomy and freedom, as it allows individuals to construct self-sufficient identities (Phillips, 2019). Women experience empowerment through solo travel by exercising control over their decisions, exploring new places, and overcoming challenges, all of which enhance self-confidence (Wilson & Harris, 2006; Harris & Wilson, 2007). Following major life transitions—such as divorce, graduation, or job loss—many women travel alone to regain agency over their lives and seek emotional, spiritual, and physical fulfillment (Wilson & Little, 2005; Wilson et al., 2008).

Cultural Motivations

Cultural motivations involve engaging with the destination's heritage, including sightseeing, attending cultural events, visiting museums, sampling local cuisine, and learning about diverse customs. Cultural immersion plays a critical role in shaping solo travel experiences, often serving as a catalyst for personal identity exploration (Chiang & Jogaratnam, 2006). Bond and Falk (2013) emphasize that such experiences help female travelers form their self-perception and understand different worldviews. Pereira and Silva (2018a) similarly argue that solo female travelers seek out unfamiliar cultural environments to escape routine and foster self-growth.

Personal Motivations

Personal motivations encompass meeting new people, reconnecting with friends and relatives, learning new skills, and pursuing personal growth or self-discovery. According to Phillips (2019), Wilson and Harris (2006), and Harris and Wilson (2007), solo female travelers often look for meaningful interactions and experiences that contribute to their personal development. The ability to engage freely with locals and other travelers improves their social competence, which benefits not only their travel experiences but also their professional and personal lives post-travel.

Constraints of Solo Female Travelers

Solo female travel is influenced by multiple constraints. Researchers have generally classified these into sociocultural, personal, and practical constraints (Wilson & Little, 2005; Sujood et al., 2023; Umur, 2024; Burdisso, 2024; Uatay et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2018; Galzacorta & Garmendia, n.d.; Yang et al., 2018; Malik, 2018). These limitations affect women's willingness to travel and the way they engage with their environment while traveling.

Sociocultural Constraints

These include societal expectations, harassment, restrictions on women's behavior, dress codes, social isolation, and limited safe accommodations. Sociocultural norms, gender-based expectations, and public perceptions often hinder women from freely navigating public spaces (Zahedi Amiri, 2023). Studies also reveal experiences of gender-based superiority and restrictive behavioral norms (Osman & Brown, 2024; Nazir et al., 2021; Monterrubio et al., 2020). Women travelers are more likely than men to face safety-related fears such as theft, verbal harassment, or assault (Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Chiang & Jogaratnam, 2006; Bianchi, 2016). Sexual harassment and the threat of violence remain significant concerns (Su & Wu, 2022; Bastomski & Smith, 2017).

Personal Constraints

Personal constraints relate to individual beliefs, attitudes, motivation levels, and confidence. For example, societal discouragement and perceived risks often result in anxiety or a lack of self-efficacy when considering solo travel (Sujood et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2018; Uatay et al., 2019). These intrapersonal factors can reduce women's willingness to travel independently, especially in culturally restrictive environments.

Practical Constraints

Practical constraints encompass issues such as unfamiliarity with destinations, language barriers, limited financial resources, and inadequate access to reliable infrastructure. Moreover, gender-specific safety risks—such as unwanted male attention and sexual harassment—shape how women plan, experience, and evaluate their solo travel (Lohmann & Netto, 2017; Galzacorta & Garmendia, n.d.). As a result, many prioritize health, safety, and security when choosing destinations and activities.

While these constraints often intersect, this article will analyze them individually to better understand their specific impact on the solo female travel experience.

Research Gap

The existing body of literature offers substantial insights into the motivations and constraints faced by solo female travelers. These studies have identified diverse drivers—including psychological growth, cultural immersion, and personal development (Wilson, 2004; Malik, 2018; Pereira & Silva, 2018a)—as well as key motivations such as empowerment, autonomy, and self-identity (Phillips, 2019; Chiang & Jogaratnam, 2006). Similarly, constraints are widely recognized as multidimensional, including sociocultural, personal, and practical challenges (Wilson & Little, 2005; Su & Wu, 2022).

However, notable research gaps remain. First, there is insufficient understanding of how motivations and constraints interact across different cultural and geopolitical contexts, especially in destinations with varying levels of gender inclusivity and safety standards. Second, although socio-cultural and personal constraints have been explored, few studies have examined how women's perceptions of safety and risk differ across regions. Third, despite the growing commercial importance of the solo female travel segment, there is limited research on how tourism and hospitality providers can design tailored, female-friendly experiences that meet their unique needs for safety, privacy, and autonomy. Addressing these gaps is crucial for enhancing both the theoretical understanding of solo female travel and its practical application within the global tourism industry.

The objectives of the study (1) To examine the travel motivations among solo female travelers, and (2) to examine the travel constraints among solo female travelers traveling towards various destinations of Kashmir and Ladakh.

Methodology

This study aims to gather comprehensive data on the motivations and constraints experienced by solo female travelers. The sampling frame focused on females who travel alone or solo to popular destinations in the Himalayan regions, specifically the Kashmir region and the union territory of Ladakh. These regions were chosen due to their significant tourist influx, providing a rich context for the study. The survey was conducted from March 5th to July 7th, 2024, aligning with the peak tourist seasons in these areas.

Since the population for the research study was unknown, a sample size of 300 was targeted, as recommended by Schumacker and Lomax (2004), who suggest that a sample size between 250 and 500 respondents is appropriate to ensure sufficient data for analysis. Similarly, Roscoe (1975) and Sekaran and Bougie (2016) recommend that behavioral studies should have a sample size greater than 30 and less than 500. Using a sample size greater than 500 when the population is unknown could increase the risk of a Type II error. Consequently, 300 solo female travelers from various Indian cities and states traveling to Kashmir and Ladakh were selected as the sample size for this study.

The survey questionnaire was meticulously designed based on a thorough review of relevant literature. It included four demographic questions and three sets of statements regarding motivations and constraints related to solo travel. The motivations were categorized into three main dimensions: psychological, cultural, and personal motivations. Similarly, the constraints were categorized into three dimensions: socio-cultural, personal, and practical constraints. A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed via Google Forms. Prior to distribution, the questionnaire underwent pretesting and modifications to ensure its validity. Respondents rated their agreement or disagreement with the statements on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The collected data were then coded and analyzed using SPSS version 25.0. Out of the 300 distributed questionnaires, 275 valid responses were received from solo female travelers, resulting in an effective sample size of 275, which provided a robust dataset for analyzing motivations and constraints in solo female travel to the tourist regions of Kashmir and the union territory of Ladakh. In addition, kurtosis analysis was employed for data presentation. According to DeCarlo (1997), Blanca et al. (2013), and Celikoglu and Tirnakli (2018), in symmetric distributions, positive kurtosis suggests pronounced tails and a sharper peak compared to a normal distribution, while negative kurtosis indicates thinner tails and a flatter peak. Bernard et al. (2022) and Teng et al. (2023) highlight that kurtosis helps evaluate the structure of data distributions by identifying outliers or extreme values, thus enhancing the accuracy of results, understanding data features, and improving model assumptions.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

In this study, three dimensions of motivations were identified: psychological, cultural, and personal. Likewise, three dimensions of constraints were classified: socio-cultural, personal, and practical. These six dimensions were grouped into six clusters, forming six indexes. Each index was separately tested for internal validity using Cronbach's alpha, and an overall average reliability score was calculated for each index. To strengthen the measurement model, irrelevant variables were removed from the six clusters based on item-total statistics. The dependability of the remaining items was reassessed, resulting in reliability coefficients for the motivational dimensions as follows: psychological (0.933), cultural (0.832), and personal (0.778). Similarly, for the constraints dimensions, the reliability coefficients were 0.891 for socio-cultural, 0.902 for personal, and 0.866 for practical constraints.

Demographic Profile of respondents

Demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized as follows. The respondents' ages ranged from 20 to above 36 years, with the majority (44%) falling within the 26-31 years age group, followed by 29.7% in the 32-36 years range.

Table 1. Age of the respondents

	(A)	(B)	(C)
20-25	35	12.6	12.6
26-31	121	44.0	56.6
32-36	81	29.7	86.3
Above 36	38	13.7	100
Total	275	100.00	

Table 2. Marital Status of respondents

Married	60	21.7	21.7
Un-Married	215	78.3	100
Total	275	100	

Table 3. Occupation of respondents

Govt. / Pvt. Job	72	26.3	26.3
Businessmen	80	29.1	55.4
Agriculture	18	6.3	61.7
Student	105	38.3	100
Total	275	100.00	

Table 4. Average Duration of a Solo Trip

< 2 weeks	77	28.0	28.0
2 weeks	113	41.1	69.1
> 2 weeks to 1 month	42	15.4	84.5
> 1 month to 3 months	22	8.0	92.5
> 3 months to half a year	13	4.6	97.1
> half a year	8	2.9	100
Total	275	100	

Note: Column headings are as follows: (A) frequency, (B) percentage, (C) cumulative percentage.

About 13.7% were above 36 years, while only 12.6% were between 20-25 years old. Regarding marital status, approximately 21.7% of solo female travelers were married, while the majority (78.3%) were unmarried. Occupationally, 26.3% of respondents were employed in government or private jobs, 29.1% were business owners, and only 6.3% were agriculturalists. Notably, over 38.3% of solo female travelers were students, indicating a significant influence of solo traveling among this group. This finding aligns with Pereira and Silva (2018a), who observed that most solo travelers belong to the student demographic.

The average duration of solo trips was also assessed. The majority of respondents (41.1%) traveled solo for more than two weeks, followed by 28.0% who traveled less than two weeks. Additionally, 15.4% traveled between two weeks and one month, 8.0% traveled between one and three months, 4.6% traveled between three months and half a year, and only 2.9% traveled for more than half a year. Respondents who traveled for less than two weeks were excluded from further analysis, allowing the conclusion that most solo female travelers' trips lasted around two weeks. This is consistent with findings from Ejupi and Medaric (2022), Baruca et al. (2022), and Wilson (2004), who noted that most solo female travelers prefer trips lasting up to two weeks due to their responsibilities.

Table 5 demonstrates the respondents' agreement with statements regarding psychological motivations. In which 88.3% of respondents agreed with the statement that they choose solo travel to disconnect and escape from the routines of daily life. Slightly less, 85.2% agreed or fully agreed that Solo travel is a time for me to focus on fulfilling my own desires and needs. While 81.1% of respondents agreed or fully agreed that Traveling alone makes me feel more confident and independent. And Only 70.9% of them expressed that the change of environment is necessary to me during my solo journey.

Motivational of solo female travelers

According to a preliminary analysis based on the mean values in *Table 5, column (1)* shows "Solo travel is a time for me to focus on fulfilling my own desires and needs" scores the mean of (4.41), "Traveling alone makes me feel more confident and independent" and "choose solo travel to disconnect and escape from the routines of daily life" score the similar Mean value of (4.33), and "The change of environment is essential to me during my solo journey" (3.97). *Table 6* displays the agreement of respondents with claims about cultural motivations. The majority of respondents agreed with the claims made about the cultural drivers. A sum of 77.8%, agree or completely agree that they enjoy getting to know the culture and way of life of other people and nations. Slightly fewer, 74.3% of all respondents agree or completely agree with the statement that they enjoy exploring museums and galleries during my solo travel. While 72.6% of respondents agree or completely agree with the statement that they love to taste local food on the trip. Just over 69.7% of respondents agree/completely agree with the statement that they like to take part in cultural and entertainment events on my travels.

According to a preliminary analysis based on the mean values in *Table 6*, "I enjoy getting to know the culture and way of life of other people and nations." With Mean (4.12). "I enjoy exploring museums and galleries during my solo travel." (4.05). "I love to taste local food on the trip." (4.04) and "I like to take part in cultural and entertainment events on my travels." Scored the Mean of (3.95) respectively. *Table 7* shows the agreement of respondents with claims about Personal motivations. Respondents mainly agreed with the statements related to the personal motivations. A total of 86.3% of respondents agree or completely agree that they like to see the sights at the destination. Slightly fewer, 78.2%, agree or completely agree that on the journey, they want to broaden their horizons, explore and discover new things. 77.2% of all respondents agree or completely agree with the statement that they go on a journey in search of their identity and personal growth. While 75.4% of respondents agree or completely agree with the statement that on the journey, they like to meet new people.

According to a preliminary analysis based on the mean values in *Column (1) of Table 7* "I like to see the sights at the destination." (4.38), additionally, the statement "on the journey, I want to broaden my horizons, explore and discover new things." Scores (4.17), and "I go on a journey in search of my identity and personal growth." (4.11). While "on the journey, I like to meet new people." Scores only (4.09). Therefore, after

evaluating various statements regarding the motivations of female travelers, it was found that motivational

Table 5. Psychological Motivations

Statements		Responses					Total	(1)	(2)	(3)
		SD	DA	N	A	SA				
		1	2	3	4	5				
I choose solo travel to disconnect and escape from the routines of daily life.	<i>n</i>	14	11	22	50	178	275	4.33	1.12	4.20
	%	5.1	4.0	8.0	18.3	64.6	100			
The change of environment is essential to me during my solo journey.	<i>n</i>	30	9	41	52	143	275	3.97	1.34	2.11
	%	10.9	3.4	14.9	18.9	52.0	100			
Traveling alone makes me feel more confident and independent.	<i>n</i>	11	13	28	47	176	275	4.33	1.09	3.89
	%	4.0	4.6	10.3	17.1	64.0	100			
Solo travel is a time for me to focus on fulfilling my own desires and needs.	<i>n</i>	14	3	24	50	184	275	4.41	1.05	0.54
	%	5.1	1.1	8.6	18.3	66.9	100			

Note: Column headings are as follows: (1) Mean, (2) Standard deviation. (3) Kurtosis. Cronbach's alpha = 0.933, index average = 4.0

Table 6. Cultural Motivations

Statements	Responses						Total	(1)	(2)	(3)
	SD	DA	N	A	SA					
	1	2	3	4	5					
I enjoy exploring museums and galleries during my solo travel.	<i>n</i>	25	3	42	68	137	275	4.05	1.24	3.82
	%	9.1	1.1	15.4	24.6	49.7	100			
I love to taste local food on the trip.	<i>n</i>	27	3	45	55	145	275	4.04	1.27	2.60
	%	9.7	1.1	16.6	20.0	52.6	100			
I enjoy getting to know the culture and way of life of other people and nations.	<i>n</i>	20	5	36	74	140	275	4.12	1.17	3.33
	%	7.4	1.7	13.1	26.9	50.9	100			
I like to take part in cultural and entertainment events on my travels.	<i>n</i>	23	12	49	61	130	275	3.95	1.27	1.19
	%	8.1	4.5	17.7	22.3	47.4	100			

Note: Column headings are as follows: (1) Mean, (2) Standard deviation. (3) Kurtosis. Cronbach's alpha = 0.832, index average = 4.0

factors significantly influence their decision to travel independently or solo. It should be noted that the out of twelve (12) motivational variable items in *Table 1*, *Table 2* and *Table 7* demonstrated a kurtosis greater than 3 in *Column (3)* of each table. This indicates a leptokurtic distribution, characterized by a sharper and higher central peak compared to a normal distribution, along with longer and fatter tails. *Table 8* shows the agreement of respondents with claims about Socio- Cultural constraints. Respondents mainly agreed with the statements related to the Socio- Cultural constraints. A total of 82.2 % of respondents agree or completely agree that solo traveling is considered unsuitable for my gender in my social settings. Followed by 76%, agree or completely agree that the constraint behind there solo travelling is they are discouraged by

family and friends. 74.9% of all respondents agree or completely agree with the statement that the Social expectations pressure women to prioritize family and domestic responsibilities over solo travel. 74.7% of respondents agree or completely agree with the statement that Work and Family obligations remain their constraint. While only 61.2% of respondents agree or completely agree that cultural stigma and judgment towards women who travel alone, labeling them as unconventional or inappropriate.

Table 7. Personal Motivations

Statements		Responses					Total	(1)	(2)	(3)
		SD	DA	N	A	SA				
		1	2	3	4	5				
On the journey, I like to meet new people.	<i>n</i>	22	15	31	53	154	275	4.09	1.28	3.61
	%	8.0	5.2	11.4	19.4	56.0	100			
On the journey, I want to broaden my horizons, explore and discover new things.	<i>n</i>	19	11	30	59	156	275	4.17	1.22	4.21
	%	7.0	3.9	10.9	21.5	56.7	100			
I go on a journey in search of my identity & personal growth.	<i>n</i>	20	6	35	58	156	275	4.11	1.19	- 1.28
	%	7.4	2.3	12.6	21.1	56.6	100			
I like to see the sights at the destination.	<i>n</i>	9	6	22	68	170	275	4.38	.975	3.45
	%	3.4	2.3	8.0	24.6	61.7	100			

Note: Column headings are as follows: (1) Mean, (2) Standard deviation. (3) Kurtosis. Cronbach's alpha = 0.778, index average = 4.0

According to a preliminary analysis based on the mean values in *Column (1)* of *Table 8* "Solo traveling is considered unsuitable for my gender in my social settings" (4.18), additionally, the statement "discouragement by family and friends" Scores (4.09), "work and family obligations" (4.02). And "social expectations pressure women to prioritize family and domestic responsibilities over solo travel" (3.91). While "cultural stigma and judgment towards women who travel alone, labeling them as unconventional or inappropriate" Scores only (3.77). *Table 9* shows the agreement of respondents with claims about Personal constraints. Respondents mainly agreed with the statements related to the Personal constraints.. A total of 84 % of respondents agree or completely agree that they are highly conscious about safety and service issues. Followed by 83.1%, agree or completely agree that the lack of time constraint were behind there solo travelling. 74.3% of all respondents agree or completely agree with the statement that they remain concerned with health issues. And 70.3% of respondents agree or completely agree with the statement that Travelling involves too much risk. While 62.3% of respondents agree or completely agree that solo travelling is very stressful. Only 57.7% of respondents agree or completely agree that they don't enjoy traveling alone.

Constraints of solo female travelers

According to a preliminary analysis based on the mean values in *Column (1)* of *Table 9* "I am highly conscious about my safety and service issues (4.27), additionally, the statement "lack of time" Scores (4.21), "Traveling involves too much risk" (3.87). And "i don't enjoy traveling alone." (3.65). While "solo traveling is very stressful" Scores only (3.56). *Table 10* shows the agreement of respondents with claims about practical constraints. Respondents mainly agreed with the statements related to the practical constraints. A total of 85.8 % of respondents agree or completely agree that distance of the destination from my native place remain their constraint. Followed by 81.1%, agree or completely agree that the cost of services is a concern. 62.9% of all respondents agree or completely agree with that they lack of information about tourist

destinations. 58.3% of respondents agree or completely agree with the statement that Overcrowding remain their constraint. While only 56% of respondents agree or completely agree that convenience of reaching the destination is their constraint.

According to a preliminary analysis based on the mean values in *Column (1)* of *Table 10* “distance of the destination from my native place” (4.35), additionally, the statement “the cost of services is a concern.” Scores (4.22), “convenience of reaching the destination” scores the mean (3.61). “overcrowding” (3.49). And “convenience of reaching the destination” (3.61). While “lack of information about tourist destinations Scores only (3.34). Consequently, after investigating various statements on the constraints faced by female solo travelers, it became evident that these constraints have considerable impact on their decision to travel independently to various destinations. It's noteworthy that out of the sixteen dimensions of solo female constraint listed in *Table 8, 9 and 10*, of *Column (3)* of each table showed a kurtosis greater than 3. This suggests a leptokurtic distribution, which features a sharper and taller central peak than a normal distribution, accompanied by longer and thicker tails.

Table 8. Socio- Cultural constraints

Statements		Responses					Total	(1)	(2)	(3)
		SD	DA	N	A	SA				
		1	2	3	4	5				
Social expectations pressure women to prioritize family and domestic responsibilities over solo travel.	<i>n</i>	20	24	25	98	108	275	3.91	1.22	3.23
	%	7.4	8.6	9.1	35.5	39.4	100			
Cultural stigma & judgment towards women who travel alone, labeling them as unconventional or inappropriate.	<i>n</i>	33	32	42	25	143	275	3.77	1.47	2.96
	%	12.0	11.4	15.4	9.1	52.1	100			
Work and Family obligations	<i>n</i>	14	19	37	82	123	275	4.02	1.15	4.47
	%	5.1	6.9	13.7	29.7	44.6	100			
Discouragement by family and friends	<i>n</i>	12	11	42	82	128	275	4.09	1.08	3.99
	%	4.6	4.0	15.4	29.7	46.3	100			
Solo traveling is considered unsuitable for my gender in my social settings.	<i>n</i>	8	13	28	101	125	275	4.18	.987	1.72
	%	2.9	4.6	10.3	36.6	45.6	100			

Note: Column headings are as follows: (1) Mean, (2) Standard deviation. (3) Kurtosis. Cronbach's alpha = 0.891, index average = 4.0

Results and Discussions

Understanding travel motivations and constraints is a key priority in tourism today. This study focused specifically on solo or independent female travelers, categorizing their motivations into three primary areas: psychological, cultural, and personal. Additionally, the travel constraints that affect the destination choices of solo female travelers, particularly in Kashmir and Ladakh, were analyzed. These constraints were found to be influenced by three main factors: socio-cultural, personal, and practical constraints.

Independent travelers, as a significant segment in tourism, seek more than just leisure travel. They are driven by a need for independence, learning, challenges, social interaction, new experiences, personal growth, and identity exploration (Pereira & Silva, 2018). The results of the analysis demonstrated that all three chosen categories of motivation—cultural, personal, and psychological—are relevant to solo female travelers, consistent with previous studies. However, psychological motivations emerged as the highest priority, as these travelers view independent travel as a means of achieving their own objectives and needs, as well as building self-assurance and independence. It is also crucial for them to change their surroundings and to disconnect from or break out of their regular routines.

Table 9. Personal constraints

Statements		Responses					Total	(1)	(2)	(3)
		SD	DA	N	A	SA				
		1	2	3	4	5				
Travelling involves too much risk	<i>n</i>	17	14	50	50	143	275	4.05	1.22	3.25
	%	6.3	5.1	18.3	18.3	52.0	100			
Concerned with health issues	<i>n</i>	31	9	30	96	109	275	3.87	1.29	3.31
	%	11.4	3.4	10.9	34.9	39.4	100			
I don't enjoy traveling alone.	<i>n</i>	36	33	47	35	124	275	3.65	1.47	1.09
	%	13.1	12.0	17.1	12.6	45.1	100			
I am highly conscious about my safety and service issues	<i>n</i>	16	2	27	78	152	275	4.27	1.05	2.87
	%	5.7	0.6	9.7	28.6	55.4	100			
Solo travelling is very stressful	<i>n</i>	42	49	13	55	116	275	3.56	1.54	-1.31
	%	15.4	17.7	4.6	20.0	42.3	100			
Lack of time	<i>n</i>	9	3	29	113	121	275	4.21	.926	3.06
	%	3.4	1.1	10.3	41.1	44.0	100			

Note: Column headings are as follows: (1) Mean, (2) Standard deviation. (3) Kurtosis. Cronbach's alpha = 0.902, index average = 4.0

Table 10. Practical constraints

Statements		Responses					Total	(1)	(2)	(3)
		SD	DA	N	A	SA				
		1	2	3	4	5				
Lack of information about tourist destinations	<i>n</i>	47	39	16	118	55	275	3.34	0.39	3.88
	%	17.1	14.3	5.7	42.9	20.0	100			
The cost of services is a concern.	<i>n</i>	8	3	41	93	130	275	4.22	0.94	2.07
	%	2.9	1.1	14.9	33.7	47.4	100			
Convenience of reaching the destination	<i>n</i>	35	37	49	33	121	275	3.61	1.47	-1.16
	%	12.6	13.7	17.7	12.0	44.0	100			
Distance of the destination from my native place	<i>n</i>	5	6	28	85	151	275	4.35	0.88	3.58
	%	1.7	2.3	10.3	30.9	54.9	100			
Overcrowding	<i>n</i>	46	52	17	41	119	275	3.49	1.58	-1.46
	%	16.6	18.9	6.3	14.9	43.4	100			

Note: Column headings are as follows: (1) Mean, (2) Standard deviation. (3) Kurtosis. Cronbach's alpha = 0.866, index average = 4.0

Regarding cultural motivations, travelers enjoy visiting diverse places, experiencing local food, and learning about new customs and ways of life. Personal motivations such as broadening horizons, discovering and learning new things during travel, and meeting new people were also found to be highly significant.

By highlighting the experiences of solo female travelers, this study adds valuable insights to the existing literature on women's solo travel. These findings are particularly relevant for tourism suppliers aiming to target the independent women's travel market. Destination marketing teams can leverage this information to attract independent travelers by emphasizing psychological, cultural, and personal motivations. Promotional campaigns could focus on the desire to escape routine, the appeal of changing environments, the excitement of new experiences, the interest in cultural activities, and the opportunity to acquire new skills. According to Terziyska (2021), travel motivations play a significant role in inspiring females to travel independently.

On the other hand, the analysis also revealed that the three main categories of constraints significantly impact women's decisions to travel solo. Within socio-cultural constraints, statements such as "solo traveling is considered unsuitable for my gender in my social settings" scored a high mean of 4.18. Discouragement by family and friends (Mean = 4.09) and work and family obligations (Mean = 4.02) also emerged as major constraints. These findings align with earlier studies by Lor (2019), Williams (2001), Lee and Tideswell (2005), and Xess et al. (2021).

Moreover, personal constraints also discourage female travelers from traveling alone. Safety consciousness and the unavailability of time due to family responsibilities were highlighted as main issues. Similarly, practical constraints such as the distance to the destination, expenses during solo travel, and lack of information were significant reasons that discourage solo travel. These findings are supported by previous studies conducted by Nguyen (2018) and Kour and Manhas (2018).

There are, however, some limitations to the interpretation of this data. First, the sample comprised only solo travelers, so the findings cannot be generalized to all women who travel alone. Additionally, due to selective sampling, the results may not represent the entire population of solo female travelers. Most participants traveled for short durations, differing from those who travel for extended periods. For future research, it is suggested to expand the sample size to include solo female travelers visiting different countries. Overall, the results highlight the importance of considering these constraints when marketing and developing destinations for the solo female travel segment, as these factors strongly influence travel destination choices for this demographic.

Conclusion

The study investigates the travel motivations and constraints faced by solo female travelers in the Himalayan regions of Kashmir and Ladakh, highlighting the psychological, cultural, and personal dimensions of their travelling. It displays that solo female travelers are increasingly motivated by a desire for independence, personal growth, and new experiences. The findings show that psychological motivations, such as fulfilling personal needs and gaining confidence, are supreme for these travelers, as they seek to break away from daily routines and engage with new environments. Moreover, the study also identifies some important constraints that prevent solo female travel. These include socio-cultural factors like harassment and limited safe accommodations, personal factors such as attitudes and subjective norms, and practical constraints like financial considerations and un-available information. The analysis of such constraints discloses that they significantly influence destination choices and travel experiences for female solo travelers. The research purposes to inform destination authorities regarding the factors affecting solo female travellers' preferences, eventually enhancing their contribution and confidence in travel activities. Recommendations and suggestions comprise addressing the identified constraints through improved safety measures, targeted marketing strategies, and better support systems for solo female travelers. The study concludes that understanding these motivations and constraints is essential for promoting and supporting this emergent segment of the tourism market, so contributing to greater gender equality in travel opportunities. Generally, the research emphasizes the need for ongoing efforts to foster a more inclusive travel environment for women, identifying their unique challenges and aspirations in the realm of solo travel.

Suggestions and Recommendations

Some of the recommendations are made in the following points and can serve as the basis for strategic formulation:

1. Destination authorities should enhance safety for solo female travelers by increasing law enforcement in tourist areas, ensuring well-lit public spaces, and providing reliable transport options.
2. Establish dedicated support services such as helplines and emergency contacts specifically for solo female travelers to address any issues related to harassment or safety concerns promptly.
3. Support gender-equal travel policies, anti-harassment laws, and improved infrastructure by working with government and tourism boards to foster inclusivity.
4. Cities must prioritize the creation of gender-sensitive public transport service plans and policies that address the unique needs of women and girls. These initiatives should aim to enhance safety and security for women traveling alone (Kacharo et al., 2022; Araya et al., 2022; Wachs, 2010; Dunckel-Graglia, 2013).
5. Female travelers can feel safer by thoroughly preparing for their trips, including conducting background checks on destinations, learning about local languages and cultures, and interacting with other travelers and locals (Ahokas, 2017).
6. Solo female travelers should plan thoroughly, consider cultural and gender-related restrictions, and engage with locals and fellow travelers to enrich their experience (Yang, 2021).
7. Additional safety-related recommendations include implementing facial recognition systems for elevators, statistical identification systems to count the number of people entering a room, rescue word alarm systems, and intelligent door defense systems (Wang & Wu, 2020).
8. Offering more services to reduce physical, psychological, and financial risks can enhance tourists' purchase intentions (Valaja, 2018).
9. Travel industry stakeholders should address travel risks with strategies that consider gender and cultural factors, providing tailored communication to reduce anxiety and enhance safety, especially for female travelers (Reisinger & Crofts, 2009; Stark & Meschik, 2018; Swan & Laufer, 2004).

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

SA and RM conceptualization, methodology, validation, formal analysis. JI and RM investigation, data curation, writing - original draft preparation, writing. SA and JI review and editing, supervision. SA project administration. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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