

Radboud University



BRIDGING THE GAP

The latent messages of online solo travel advice videos
and gender inequality

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Bridging the Gap: The latent messages of online solo travel advice videos and gender inequality

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Abstract

The topic of solo-travel and the gender differences occurring within it have long been under researched. As the field has primarily focused on female motivations and constraints, this master thesis conducted a comparative gender analysis on solo-travel advice videos, in an attempt to discover how their latent messages perpetuate or contribute to gender inequalities. For this purpose, an inductive qualitative content analysis procedure based on the methodology by Philipp Mayring was utilized, researching fifteen videos created by both men and women on their audio, visual, and textual content. The findings revealed five latent messages, revealing on one hand differences in the meaning that solo-travel content creators ascribe to the motivations of personal growth, freedom, and socialisation. On the other hand, they revealed the perpetuation of an image of a world that is to an extent less safe for female solo-travellers, and which restricts their movements in limited cognitive maps. As this explorative study offered new insights into these differences, it encourages extended research into the comparison of male and female experiences, as well as improvements within the fields of tourism information and practice.

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Dear reader,

Before you lies the final product of my master thesis: “Bridging the Gap: The latent messages of online solo travel advice videos and gender inequality.” It fills me with pride, satisfaction, and joy to be able to present this thesis as the final piece to my master’s education in Human Geography. It has been a long but thorough, and above all rewarding experience, filled with curiosity, doubt, many tears, and countless inspiring moments. The process of completing this master thesis has tested my confidence and courage and inspired my personal interest for solo-travel and its presence in YouTube content. It has allowed me to find my strengths and interests for an unexpected topic that I have been grateful to research. All this would not have been possible without a great deal of guidance from many people, who helped bring this master thesis to a close.

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1. Introduction



It is 2018 and as I am nearing the end of my bachelor's degree, I start contemplating what is next in life. Like many others before me, I land on a gap year to explore my options and 'see something of the world.' Setting out on my own would be good for me; I could develop my independence, make my own plans, meet new friends. But where to go? How to approach this? Before long, I found myself scouring YouTube for inspiration and tips from those who came before me. Fellow travellers who could teach me from experience. In the following months I go through a rollercoaster of emotions as I am shown beautiful images of places I had never heard of and lifechanging experiences, alongside cautious warnings to never go out alone at night and always keep track of my environment. It struck me that I suddenly became more aware of my position as a woman travelling alone and perceived my safety to be mostly dependent on whether I would behave 'responsibly.' So many things could go wrong if I made an unconscious move. Or at least that is how I felt. The decisions I made in my travel plans were constantly negotiated by these aspirations and fears. And I kept wondering: Would I make the same decisions, had I been a man?

Although the concept of solo travel, or to travel alone, has been an under researched area in tourism studies to this day, within the field the main efforts have focussed on women (Otegui-Carles et al., 2022). Many studies have interviewed women to ask about their perceptions of and experiences with solo travel (Jordan & Gibson, 2005; Wilson & Little, 2011; Yang, et al., 2018; Osman et al., 2020). This gives us insight into how women view themselves as solo travellers and into their cognitive maps. However, few studies have compared these experiences to those of men (Otegui-Carles et al., 2022; Yang, 2020). Moreover, while there is some work available on the impact of travel media (Lim et al., 2012; Karagöz et al., 2020), the messages that aid in the construction of the pre-travel image that men and women have of solo travel have been noticeably little researched with only few exceptions (Glotfelty, 1996; Gilmartin, 1997; Barrett & Douglas, 2020). Research on one of the most recent trends in travel content, namely online travel videos, could not be found. This indicates a research gap in understanding the process of constructing the image of solo travel, the role of gender, and how this could contribute to spatial inequalities. In this proposal I therefore aim to make a case for studying the gender perspective in online solo travel advice videos, to better understand their mediating role in the construction of the image of a male or female solo traveller and their mobility.

1.1 Societal relevance

In the Netherlands, solo travel is a significant and growing segment, with 8.1% of Dutch people indicating to have taken at least one solo trip in 2017 (Centraal bureau voor de Statistiek, 2019). While in 2017 5.1% of all trips were undertaken solo (Centraal bureau voor de Statistiek, 2018), these numbers rose to 7.0% in 2019 (Centraal bureau voor de Statistiek,

2020). The steady increase of solo travel warrants more insights into the segment, as the knowledge gap is quite significant.

Aside from the rise in popularity of solo travel, there are more reasons to study this segment. Multiple studies and statistics have pointed towards existing gender inequalities within the solo travel segment and a need for increased research to solve these (Otegui-Carles et al, 2022). For instance, a survey conducted by Tourlane found that while 68% of women aspired to travel abroad on their own, 62% had never done so. By far the largest barrier to solo travel are safety concerns: 40% of women noted these as their main obstacle to solo travel. In comparison, only 27% of men noted safety concerns as their main obstacle to solo travel (Tourlane, 2020). This practical disparity calls for action to recognize where these safety concerns come from and how to effectively tackle them. This seems especially important as many women use solo travel to escape and resist traditional gender roles and social expectations, using it as a tool for emancipation and freedom (Yang et al., 2018; Hosseini et al., 2021).

While paper travel guides are certainly still used in preparation for solo travel, it is also becoming more common to make use of online tools. In the United States it was found that two out of three consumers watch travel videos in preparation for a trip (Crowel et al., 2014), indicating that this medium forms a large share information gathering. At the same time, solo travellers indicate a lack of information geared at solo travellers and call for more solo travel specific information and education (Yang, 2020). While travel agencies traditionally provide this type of advice, a more promising role is laid out for unofficial channels to fill the gap. Readers of travel reviews appear to perceive consumer generated content as more reliable than marketer generated content, in terms of reliability, enjoyability and being up to date (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). It is therefore important to understand user-generated content as a tool in trip planning, especially for solo travellers. By gaining more knowledge about the current messages that are prevalent in user-generated videos, improvements can be made to the way in which men and women are approached.

1.2 Scientific relevance

The field of solo travel is one that has been largely under researched, leading to calls from multiple researchers to study the topic more extensively (Laesser et al., 2009; Yang, 2020; Otegui-Carles et al, 2022) Otegui-Carles et al. stress that more elaborate research on solo travel in general is necessary in the face of a growing impact of the segment on the tourist sector and because of its implications for gender equality (2022). This thesis will therefore contribute to this body of knowledge on solo travel and, more specifically, provide a comparative gender perspective on the topic. Within the existing research, solo travel and gender are often studied from the perspective of the female experience, while research on men and comparative research between men and women is still scarce, with only 1 in 38 papers being written from a comparison perspective (Otegui-Carles et al, 2022).

Furthermore, the role of online media in solo travel could benefit from more extensive research. So far, this has mostly been restricted to analogue and textual data, such as travel guides (Gilmartin, 1997) or more recently, travel blogs (Douglas & Barrett, 2016; Ngwira et al, 2020). Mixed online media, such as YouTube videos, are mostly studied quantitatively, with

a focus on content type, consumer behaviour, and audience engagement (Crowel et al, 2014; Reino & Hay, 2016; Silaban et al, 2022). Qualitative studies on the content of these videos have not been found, providing a research gap to study the underlying messages of the videos themselves over the effects. This thesis therefore provides an addition of a qualitative body of research on YouTube travel videos, while at the same time updating the content research on travel media to include the recent rise of mixed online media.

Qualitative content analysis itself is herein a relevant topic to explore further, as the methodology is often viewed as a purely quantitative method (Berelson, 1952; Neuendorf, 2017). Neuendorf defines the technique in *The Content Analysis Guidebook* as a “systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics” (2017, p. 2). On the other hand, researchers argue that this way of defining content analysis restricts content to one universal interpretation of a body of text and ignores the context in which words are given meaning (Mayring, 2014; Krippendorf, 2019). They are more sympathetic to a qualitative form of content analysis and define it more broadly as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts or other meaningful matter to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorf, 2019, p. 2). Further exploring a qualitative approach to content analysis can therefore be a meaningful addition to this debate, as it provides a practical application to understand the reliability and validity of the method.

1.3 Objective and research questions

The research objective of this thesis is to analyse the underlying messages of YouTube solo travel advice videos in terms of motivations and barriers to solo travel from a comparative gender perspective. It also aims to explore the use of a qualitative content analysis for a multimedia source, in this case online videos on YouTube, in the context of solo travel advice.

Preliminary insights into the relevance of the topic show that solo travel in general is still an under researched area. Especially comparative research between men women is still largely ignored in favour of studies on the female experience (Otegui-Carles et al., 2022). The call for the expansion of research on the topic, however, is significant and has implications for understanding and improving gender inequalities within the solo travel sector (Laesser et al., 2009; Yang, 2020; Otegui-Carles et al., 2022). Moreover, as most content analysis research on messages of solo travel advice in the past has focused on traditional paper travel guides (Glotfelty, 1996; Gilmartin, 1997), or textual travel blogs, (Douglas & Barret, 2016; Ngwira et al., 2020), there is an opportunity to extend this research by looking at a multimedia source such as YouTube. Hereby, the research can move beyond only what lies in the text and incorporate multiple contextual aspects, such as body language or imagery. Since there is an ongoing discussion whether content analysis is only to be applied as a quantitative method (Neuendorf, 2017; Krippendorf; 2019), there is an imperative to research the usefulness, application, and effectiveness of a qualitative approach to content analysis. The main research question that follows from these research gaps is as follows:

- *How do latent messages in solo travel advice videos on YouTube contribute to or maintain gender inequalities in solo travel motivations and barriers?*

To answer this question, the following sub-questions are asked:

- *What topics are discussed in solo travel advice videos on YouTube?*
- *Which latent messages about solo travel motivations and barriers can be identified?*
- *How do these messages compare between advice geared at men or women?*
- *What are the advantages and disadvantages of a qualitative approach to content analysis in answering these questions?*

The following section will discuss the existing literature that can aid in answering these research questions and how they constitute the conceptual framework of the thesis.

1.4 Thesis structure

During the course of this first chapter the importance and relevance of researching solo travel and online solo travel advice videos in particular have been outlined, and the main research objectives have been set. The next chapter will provide relevant literature to support these research questions and create an image of what is already known about the topic. At the end of Chapter 2 this literature is used to compose a conceptual framework in which the analysis is conducted. Chapter 3 will then outline the research methodology. It will first and foremost explain the application of the frames of social constructivism and feminist geography within which the methodology is positioned. It will then explain the application of qualitative content analysis and the specific collection and analytical procedures. The results of the content analysis are then presented in Chapter 4, which describes the main and sub-categories of advice that were found in the videos, as well as the frequencies in which they occurred. These results are further interpreted in Chapter 5, describing the networks of categories and their meanings to arrive at the latent messages of the advice given. The significance of these messages is finally described in the conclusion in Chapter 6, which will also describe concrete recommendations for practice, as well as the limitations of this study and the directions for further research.

2. Literature & conceptual framework



There are a multitude of studies available that can aid in writing this thesis, which can be divided into several categories. Firstly, there is literature that helps in describing and specifying what is meant by solo travel, the definition of which can at times be vague. Second, there has been some research on the motivations and barriers that solo travellers experience. This can be used to contextualise the thesis research, as well as understand the anticipatory process and experiences of solo travellers. The chapter will furthermore detail the significance of User Generated Content within YouTube videos and describe the depiction of male and female gender in solo-travel advice. These literary sources are finally used to outline the conceptual model in which the research of the thesis is situated.

2.1 Defining solo travel

Since solo travel is an area that is still generally understudied, the definition of what solo travel contains is broadly and inconsistently defined (Yang, 2020; Otegui-Carles, 2022). To this day, many studies who discuss solo travel do not specifically define the term, or they generalise solo travel to being “alone” (Wilson & Little, 2011; Barrett & Douglas, 2020). These descriptions leave it unclear who and what exactly is being studied, although some progress is being made in the development of the concept. McNamara & Prideaux (2009), for example, use a narrow definition of solo travel in their research, to only contain travellers who travel completely independent and alone. They specifically exclude those who join organised groups. More recently however, there has been some acknowledgement of the possibility of solo travellers joining organised group travel, or meeting and undertaking activities with fellow travellers (Abbasian, 2019). Mehmetoglu (2008) recognises this possibility in his model, providing a scale for what he defines as the individualistic and the collectivistic tourist.

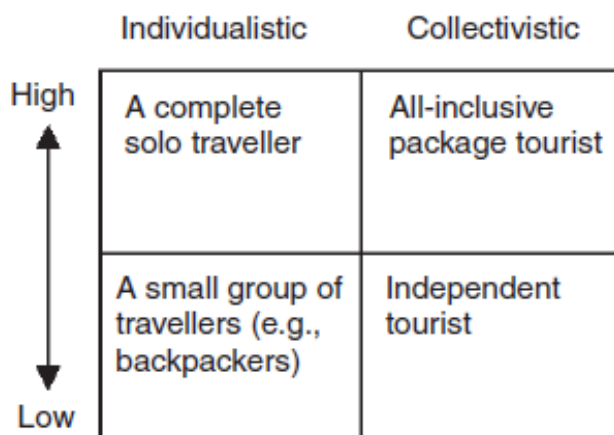


Figure 2.1. A model for the taxonomy of individualistic and collective travellers

The model, shown in Figure 2.1, allows for some leeway between the complete solo traveller and the complete collective traveller. They define high and low individualists, who can shift between their different degrees of individualism. They consequently define solo travellers who meet others along the way and continue to travel with these fellow travellers as mid-individualistic. However, the scale implies that the individualistic traveller is not restricted to a category, but shift constantly on this scale,

adhering to in-between phases. Laesser et al. (2009), in turn, propose a more comprehensive definition of solo travellers by defining four sub-categories of solo travellers: single-solo, single-group, collective-solo, or collective-group travellers. These categories account for the household composition of the traveller, as well as the composition of their companionship throughout their trip. Yang (2020) takes this categorisation one step further, by suggesting to look at the typology as a spectrum, with people travelling alone for the duration of the trip on one end and people joining a packaged group trip on the other, as opposed to rigid categorisation. Hereby, they acknowledge the fluidity of the concept and the changing individual and collective meanings given to solo travel over time. A traveller may depart alone, but join a group later, or leave that group and travel with a single newly made friend. What distinguishes the solo traveller from a non-solo traveller remains the fact that they travel without the companionship of friends, relatives, or acquaintances, although they may make friends along the way.

2.2 Solo travel's push and pull mechanisms

In their pursuit of solo travel, men and women face a varied set of motivations and barriers that may affect their travel intentions or the extent of their solo travel experience. Crompton (1979) found that for travellers in general, some motivations are based on culture and having fun, but that most motivations are of a socio-psychological nature. While cultural motivations are generally directed at a specific destination, this is not the case for these socio-psychological motivations, which are more often directed at the inner experience. There are several reasons for solo travellers in particular to feel motivated to go on a solo trip, that frequently connect to this notion of socio-psychological motivations. One motivation that is commonly mentioned is freedom, and in its extension flexibility (Bianchi, 2016; Poopale Ratthinan & Selamat, 2018; Abbasian, 2019; Osman et al., 2020; Yang, 2020; Ernst & Marton, 2021; Hosseini et al., 2022). In its broadest sense, freedom is interpreted as the liberty to undertake activities, without having to consider the preferences of a travel companion (Abbasian, 2019; Yang 2020). In this interpretation of freedom, solo travellers can decide on their itinerary by themselves and can adjust their schedule according to their own needs or preferences. Yang (2020) notes as one of few gender comparative studies that this aspect of freedom and flexibility is mentioned somewhat more often by male solo travellers. However, for some, and especially women, freedom takes on a more existential form. Escaping and reshaping gender norms and social expectation through solo travel is seen as an emancipating experience (Poopale Ratthinan & Selamat, 2018; Osman et al., 2020; Hosseini, 2022). Hosseini explains how societal expectations for women in Iran to take on household and caregiving responsibilities motivates women to find an escape of this daily routine. Solo travel allows women facing these constraints to take control over their time and decision-making, thereby having an opportunity to re-evaluate their purpose and meaning in life. Hosseini also notes a difference in the concept between women from what they call Western countries and the Iranian women in the extent that male dominated society impacts their interpretation of freedom. They found Western women to interpret freedom as an escape from daily routine, while the Iranian women were more strongly implying these societal pressures to influence them.

Additionally, many of the studies conducted on female travel experiences and motivations report that women are often looking for transformative experiences and self-empowerment

(Jordan and Gibson, 2005; Wilson & Harris, 2006; Bianchi, 2016; Osman et al., 2020; Yang, 2020; Ernszt & Marton, 2021; Hosseini, 2022). In comparative studies, this motivation is found to be more frequently mentioned by women than men overall (Yang, 2020; Ernszt & Marton, 2021). Women frequently report searching for self-reflection as well as self-discovery (Jordan & Gibson 2005, Wilson & Harris, 2006; Osman et al., 2020), but moreover, there is a sense of achievement noted in women's accounts. Women are found to feel proud of their accomplishment of solo-travel and to experience a sense of personal power (Bianchi, 2016; Osman, et al., 2020). These studies imply how women seemingly overcome a hurdle of self-doubt when choosing to travel solo and navigating their decision-making practices. Wilson & Harris (2006) also mention a sense of empowerment through respect gained from friends, family, and co-workers. The transformative nature of women's experience can be linked back to the interpretation that they hold of freedom, as the transformation that women aim to achieve is frequently aimed at their sense of independence and autonomy in the face of societal constraints (Osman et al., 2020; Hosseini, 2022).

While Freedom, flexibility, transformation, and empowerment are mentioned significantly more frequently, solo travellers further note that socialization (Laesser et al., 2009; Osman, 2020), as well as novelty or exploration motivate them to travel (Chiang & Jogaratnam, 2006; Laesser et al., 2009; McNamara & Prideaux, 2009; Bianchi, 2016; Poopale Ratthinan 2018; Osman et al., 2020). Solo travel is an opportunity to make new friends and to foster cultural exchange by connecting with locals (Osman et al., 2020). Solo travel therefore is found to foster exploration or novelty through socialization. However, solo travellers will also frequently harbour the motivation to see or experience new things as a unique motivation (Chiang & Jogaratnam, 2006; McNamara & Prideaux, 2009; Bianchi, 2016). Additionally, solo travellers may simply be looking for rest or relaxation, rather than accomplishment (McNamara & Prideaux 2009; Bianchi, 2016) Lastly, it should be noted that solo travellers do not always travel on their own intentionally. They may also experience a lack of a travel companion that has the time or financial means to accompany them on their trip (Abbasian, 2019).

The question remains how these motivations set solo travellers apart from other categories of travellers. Mehmetoglu (2008) alludes to this distinction by noting that solo travellers are more commonly concerned with self-development and a sense of accomplishment, while collective travellers emphasise a sense of belonging and taking a break from their routine. It is therefore the aforementioned motivations of existential freedom, transformative experiences, and self-empowerment that really seem to set the segment of solo travel apart.

On another note, potential solo travellers not only experience motivations in their pursuit of solo travel, but also face several barriers that might prevent them from taking off on their trip or that may restrict their mobility. Authors tend to distinguish barriers in safety, health, financial, or social areas. Within these areas, safety is often regarded with particular attention when studying female constraints. It is noticed by some, although limited resources, that women experience safety as a barrier to solo travel to a larger extent than men (Tourlane, 2020; Ernszt & Marton, 2021). However, gender comparative data on this sensation appears to be scarce in number. Ernszt & Marton do implicate that while women show more concerns over safety issues, both men and women perceive solo travel to be less safe than travelling with a companion. It is further implied that safety is experienced by male and female solo

travellers at a different level, as male solo travellers seem to be primarily concerned with petty crime and theft, while women show more concerns of a physical or sexualized nature (Jordan & Aitchison, 2008; Yang, 2020). This is an area that is frequently investigated within female solo travel. There is particular focus towards the effect of the male or sexualized gaze that women perceive (Jordan & Gibson, 2005; Jordan & Aitchison, 2008; Wilson & Little, 2011). Jordan and Aitchison argue that sexualized and embodied discourses serve to construct tourism spaces that are contested particularly for female solo travellers. They note how some women perceive to be unable to dwell in heterogeneous tourist spaces without being objectified by this male gaze, particularly by local men. However, this constraint is also viewed as one that does not prevent women from solo travel by definition, as they are found to view these gendered risks as part of the solo travel experience and as an opportunity to challenge or reconstruct social conditions and gain confidence (Jordan & Gibson, 2005; Yang, 2018). Yet, the sexualized gaze and perceived male violence does have a profound effect on the cognitive maps that women construct of their tourist spaces. Women perceive some physical or temporal spaces where risks prevail, avoiding certain destinations, places, or times, and often remaining within known tourism spheres (Wilson & Little, 2005; Yang, 2018). As Jordan and Gibson (2005) deduct, the sexualized gaze and their subsequent cognitive maps challenge the idea that tourism is a limonoid space where people are free from social regulations that they experience in their home environment. Thus, women experience relative freedom in their decision-making processes, and need to contest these ideas to reclaim tourist spaces. It can therefore be stated that a certain contestation exists between the motivations of freedom, transformation, and sexualized safety concerns. Additionally, there is a compelling opposition between objective and perceived safety concerns, as the literature discussed shows a focus towards the female perception of safety and the sexualized gaze. As Ngwira (2020) fittingly notes, safety concerns were frequently brought across to female solo travellers by concerned family or friends with no first-hand accounts of a destination, concluding that perceived risk, rather than objective risk influences these travellers to reconsider their destination plans.

Another dimension that is frequently reported to cause doubts for solo travellers about their plans, is the influence of social barriers. A commonly found downside of solo travel is noted to be the absence of a travel partner with whom to share experiences or to rely on (Bianchi, 2016; Yang, 2020). As solo travellers have for the most part no companion to travel with, there is no one present to watch their luggage while they use the bathroom, to care for them if they get sick, or help out when they have trouble navigating. Not sharing their experiences can also lead to a sensation of loneliness, although this is not necessarily viewed as a problem (Abbasian, 2019). Rather, loneliness is something that happens from time to time, and can serve as a facilitator for social interactions. It is therefore a concern that can be linked to social motivations as well, seeing that it is a concern that does not necessarily prevent travel but can encourage solo travellers to engage in the local social life. However, solo travellers do not only feel limited or concerned by loneliness at the host destination but perceive social pressure from their home environment as well. Especially women receive judgement or lack of support about the suitability of solo travel (Wilson & Little, 2005; Yang et al., 2018; Ernszt & Marton, 2021; Hosseini, 2021). Women were found to perceive that requirements to care for children, maintain their marriage, or to fulfil employment commitments reduce their capacity to undertake a solo travel trip, and struggle with conceptions of irresponsibility in the face of safety concerns from loved ones (Wilson & Little, 2005; Ngwira, 2020). Ngwira

also notes how local norms for women at a destination can generate concerns for potential risks, causing women to enact mediating behaviours, such as complying with modest dressing conventions. Moreover, gendered concerns are in part culture specific. Similar to their motivations, women from predominantly Muslim and Asian countries appear to be highly influenced by society's perception of female travel and solo travel. While travel makes them feel emancipated, the same values that these women feel a need to escape from can hinder them from travelling. Perceptions of chastity, women's role as a domestic body, and perceived discrimination or unfriendly treatment by the host country hinders these women more so than women from western societies (Yang et al., 2018; Hosseini, 2021).

Moving beyond safety and social concerns, solo travellers also face practical constraints in their endeavours. Health, for instance, can cause concerns over unfamiliar diseases and required vaccinations or preventative medications (Ngwira, 2020). However, solo travellers primarily see financial disadvantages as hindering. Solo travellers are found to frequently pay for mandatory single supplements or double rooms that they occupy by themselves, essentially increasing the cost of accommodation per person (Bianchi, 2016; Yang 2020). These types of costs can form objective barriers preventing solo travel as one may not have sufficient means to afford these costs.

Overall, the motivations and barriers of solo travellers portray a significant knowledge gap, illustrating an unconscious preference of studies of the female experience, while neglecting the precedent of comparative studies. As Otegui-Carles (2022) note in their overview of literature on solo travel, there is a notable absence of comparative research between men and women. The subsequent issue that arises is that the female experiences described in a larger body of work cannot be compared to a baseline, obscuring the relative meaning of any statements made by women in these studies, in the context of gender inequality. In short, it is difficult to define inequalities in the female experience, without knowledge on the male experience.

2.3 YouTube and the significance of User Generated Content

While the presence of travel risks and anxiety for women negatively affects their travel intention, the presence of online social-psychological support mediates these effects and can therefore function as a meaningful tool to gain more confidence (Karagöz et al., 2020). Women have stated the importance of aids such as guidebooks in making them feel more secure about travelling through research and planning, with technology providing them increasingly detailed information and a platform to share their experiences with others (Jordan, 2016). Even as far back as 2008, online travel reviews have been recognized as a valuable tool in the travel planning process for idea generation, decision making, imagination, fun and confidence, especially for women (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). Online travel videos offer travellers an opportunity to search for activities, reviews and advice which would otherwise be difficult to obtain (Reino & Hay, 2016). As these online videos make extensive use of travel imagery, they play into anticipatory vision creation, aiding consumers in making plans by representing foreseeable outcomes (Goossens, 2000). Moreover, through online videos consumers can perceive a close and warm connection, which conveys a sense of life or a social presence (Silaban et al., 2022).

It is estimated that at least two out of three consumers in the USA watch online travel videos when considering taking a trip (Crowel et al., 2014). The make of this content can roughly be categorised into marketer generated content (MGC) and user generated content (UGC) (Lim et al., 2012; Reino & Hay, 2016). Between the two, UGC generally receives higher amounts of page views and comments than MGC (Lim et al., 2012; Welbourne & Grant, 2016). Consumers seem to put more trust in UGC than they do in MGC as they rate them to be more up-to-date, reliable, enjoyable, and authentic (Reino & Hay, 2016; Gretzel & Yoo, 2018). For instance, a study on Las Vegas found that, although UGC and MGC seem to generally discuss the same topics, the UGC appears to be more negative in tone as the perceptions of the city differed from the marketer generated destination brand, therefore implying a more reliable image of the city (Lim et al., 2012).

UGC being rated as more reliable can be explained partly by the phenomena of parasocial interactions and parasocial relationships. This concept, founded on the ideas of Horton and Wohl (1956), describes the illusion of a face-to-face relationship between a performer and their audience. Parasocial relationships (PSR) occur when a consumer of content develop a seeming bond with the performer through one sided communication on the performer's part. It appears as if the consumer knows the performer personally, while in reality the performer does not participate actively in this relationship. Parasocial interaction (PSI) describes the simulacrum of conversational give and take within such a relationship, or the interpersonal exchange (Horton & Wohl, 1956). While the phenomenon of PSR finds its origin within the study of traditional media, such as television, radio, or movies, it has similarly been measured regarding new media formats, such as YouTube. In this context, channel followers demonstrate a relatively strong parasocial relationship to content creators on YouTube (Rihl & Wegener, 2017). They are described as reliable, though superficial friends. PSI is more likely to be perceived whenever direct interactions take place between content creators and their audience (McLaughlin & Wohn). This can be live streamers responding to real-time questions asked in a chat format, or YouTube creators interacting with their comment section. The content creators thereby acknowledge the audience. It is argued that PSIs are strengthened to some extent through perceived similarity, with these identification mechanisms positioning Youtubers as role models or opinion leaders (Korres-Alonso & Elexpuru-Albizuri, 2022). Another important element within PSRs is the ability of the audience to judge the content creator as a reliable or credible persona, with an important predictor of PSI being the perceived realism of the content creator's online personality (Giles, 2002). It was similarly found that when consumer perceive strong PSIs with online media personalities, the information provided is regarded as more reliable, in turn reflecting purchase intentions and behaviours (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Penttinen et al., 2022). These PSI's and PSRs therefore illustrate some of the mechanisms at work to explain the success of UGC. In solo travel media, it can then be assumed that the perception towards the content creator as a reliable friend giving you trusted advice, plays a role in the receival of this information as reliable or authentic.

2.4 Gender depictions in solo travel advice

As previously depicted for solo travellers' experiences of motivations and barriers travel content similarly is found to contain gendered information, whether implemented consciously or unconsciously. Some analyses have been conducted on traditional travel and

backpacker guides in the past, showing a shift of the interpretation of gender in the context of solo travel. A historic overview by Gilmartin (1997) of female travel guides describes this shift of tone. Although dangers posed by men seem to be an overarching theme in these guides, Gilmartin notes that the responsibility for this behaviour has shifted from the woman to the man himself. Furthermore, the way that women are told to behave in such circumstances has shifted from ladylike to a stiffened and harsh approach. More recently, there has been some content analysis on travel blogs geared at women, specifically concerning the depictions of solo travel for different ages. There appears to be a larger focus on the experiences of younger women, as well as a difference in the type of content presented to younger women as opposed to older women (Douglas & Barrett., 2016; Barrett & Douglas, 2020). Blog articles speaking to younger women often focus on danger, harassment and risk avoiding behaviours, whereas those speaking to older women discuss relaxation, sightseeing, social interactions, and generally more pleasure related information (Douglas & Barrett., 2016).

Another notable finding of analyses on backpacking guides is the absence of “male” guides. As Glotfelty (1996) notes, even though most of the earlier guides were implicitly written for men, they were presented as unisex despite a strong male bias. Women guides on the other hand, are often explicitly marketed as such. This male bias that Glotfelty (1996) alludes to has been more broadly described by literature as part of the concept of androcentrism, which describes an evaluation of individuals and cultures based on male perspectives, standards, and values (Hibbs, 2014). The androcentric bias described by Glotfelty concerns in part the people = male bias, in which gender-neutral terms are associated with male biased mental imagery, while women are associated more so with their gender identity (Silveira, 1980; Hamilton, 1991; Bailey et al., 2020). For example, when asked to imagine an image of humanity there is a high likelihood that the human constructed is male (Bailey et al., 2020). Early research found that generic terms often correspond with an imagined gendered person, while women rarely report imaging a person at all (Silveira, 1980). However, later research contests these claims, finding an equally strong people = male bias among both men and women (Davis Merritt & Kok, 1995). Regardless, literature shows the existence of this bias to some extent for all genders. The origins of this androcentric bias is difficult to pinpoint, but some perspectives argued are that the greater societal power that men hold results in them being more frequently instantiated, or that a higher status is assigned to masculinity over femininity as the ideal category for broadly inclusive terms, such as the aforementioned ‘humanity’ (Bailey et al., 2018). Presently, the use of androcentric is also widely found among YouTube videos, which tend to use masculine terms more often, especially when referring to mixed gender groups (Hale & Melzer, 2023).

The extent to which the androcentric worldview permeates the solo travel information industry, goes beyond gendered language, and similarly taps into content. Aside from titular differences, Glotfelty (1996) describes how backpacking guides aimed at men and women describe varying focus topics and contain a different tone. While both unisex and women guides present basic information, unisex backpacking guides have a stronger focus on technical skills, with a straightforward tone. Women backpacking guides, on the other hand, pay more attention to the psychological aspect and identity of travel, while they adopt an intimate tone. More recently, research on YouTube’s content has shown clear difference

between discussion topics of male and female vloggers, with men discussing a wider variety of topics, while female vloggers often show traditionally feminine topics more frequently (Mahrt & Bock, 2021). This illustrates how even on YouTube a bias persists that the male is associated with general understandings, while the female remains a concept that is heavily gendered. It is argued that YouTube itself contributes to this gender divide in segregated genres through the algorithmic signals it sends out and through the perpetuating promotion of gendered products in videos entertaining to traditionally masculine or feminine topics, as well as promotion of sponsorships of gender affirming products (Bishop, 2018). As content creators are dependent on the algorithmic workings of YouTube for their viewership, the biases in content are maintained, forming a circular mechanism between the content creators and the algorithm of perpetuated gender roles.

It is striking then, how the androcentric bias shown in media both corresponds and opposes the gender research conducted on solo travellers. The male bias shows to be present in both language and content on YouTube, yet research on the motivations and barriers of solo travellers has primarily focused on female solo travellers (Otegui-Carles et al., 2022). It may be argued that this female bias within research is a reaction to exactly this androcentric bias, as it takes an activist approach to closing the inequality gaps that exist between men and women. On the other hand, the lack of research on male motivations and barriers proposes a renewed female bias, in which female solo-travellers are deemed more relevant for research efforts, neglecting the male perspective entirely. As mentioned in Section 2.2 this poses its own set of challenges in the pursuit of equality within the solo travel sector.

2.5 Conceptual model

It follows from the literature that there are multiple motivations and barriers to solo travel, which can be summarized into push and pull factors (Bianchi, 2016). These factors can be present and adjusted throughout various stages of a solo travel trip as pre-trip expectations, during-trip experiences, and post-trip assessment. They can be visualised in a basic conceptual model, adapted from a model of solo travel by Abbasian (2019) (Figure 2.2).

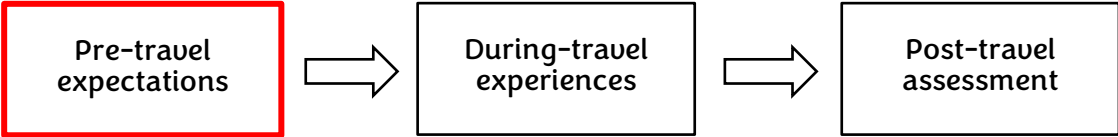


Figure 2.2. Basic conceptual model of solo travel stages, adapted from Abbasian (2019)

This thesis focuses specifically on the pre-travel expectations. Zooming into this stage, a more detailed conceptual model can be made of how pre-trip push and pull expectations are negotiated and shape the decision-making process (Figure 2.3). The model describes the initial travel intention that comes with pre-existing notions that potential solo travellers have of their trip. Their intention comes from their motivations such as the search for freedom, a sense of empowerment, or a transformative experience (Poopale Ratthinan, 2018; Abbasian, 2019; Yang, 2020; Hosseini, 2021). On the other hand there may be obstacles that cause doubt, such as safety concerns, high costs, or social expectations (Yang et al., 2018, Yang, 2020; Hosseini, 2021). These push and pull factors are what travellers take with them as they start

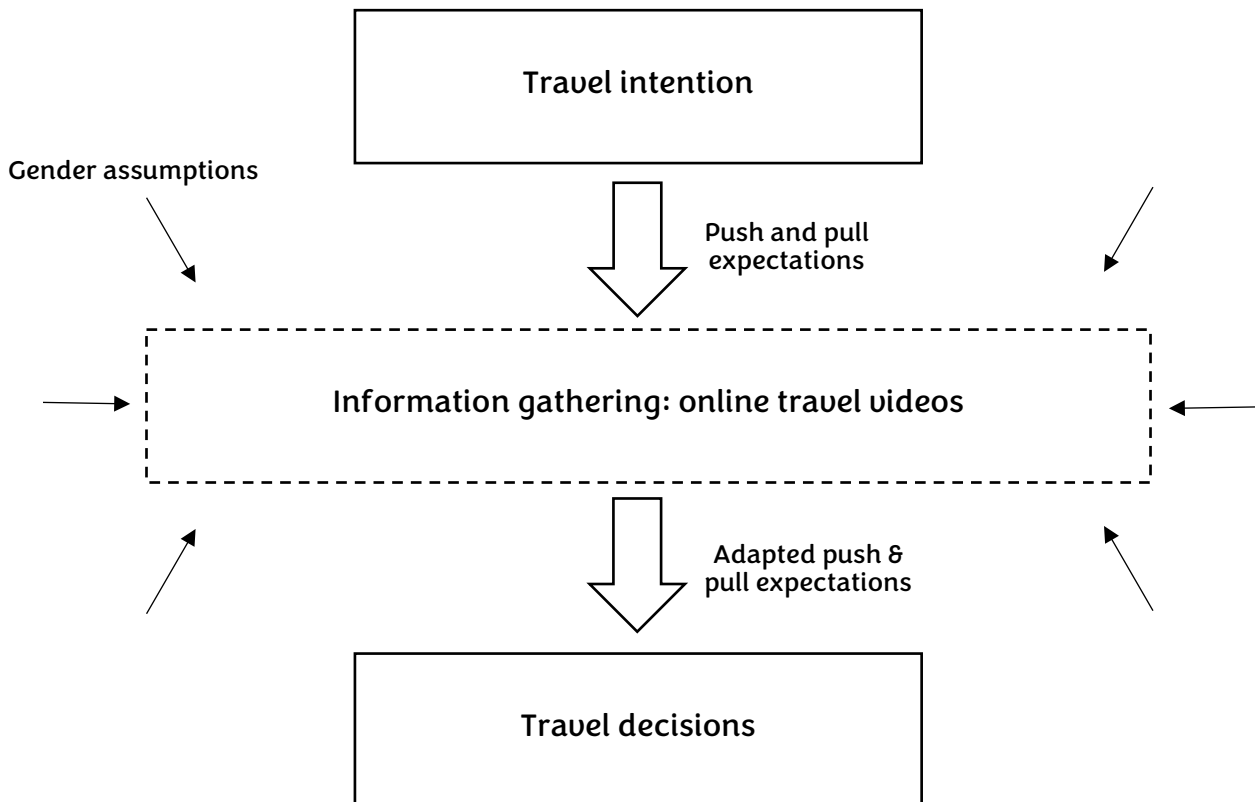


Figure 2.3. Conceptual model of the pre-travel negotiation process

negotiating and planning their solo trip. Online videos then, come in as a mediating factor when the potential travellers start gathering information about the travel process and their destination. As Karagöz (2020) explained the social-psychological support offered can assure potential travellers in their travel intention. However, negative information can also strengthen any doubts that a traveller might have. In short, their push and pull expectations are adjusted based on the information that they receive as they move towards the decision-making stage (Gretzel & Yoo, 2008; Reino & Hay, 2016). The mediating role of online videos within this process is what the thesis will focus on. As explained in the literature, the information that is given in travel advice is not neutral and generally seems to contain gendered messages and biases that influence the type of information that is given (Glotfelty, 1996; Gilmartin, 1997; Barrett & Douglas, 2020). The assumption here is that this does not only count for traditional travel guides or blogs, but also for online videos. By analysing which gendered messages are present in these videos and comparing male oriented to female oriented advice, the thesis will attempt to make a first step in explaining the mediating role of these videos. This already implicates a direction for future research, as the messages of online videos can later be compared to how receivers interpret them. This thesis is thus only a small part of a bigger question and offers a starting point for further understanding these processes.

To approach the research questions, an additional conceptual model can be employed to describe the process of content analysis (Figure 2.4). This model by Klaus Krippendorf (2019) visualizes the relation of the examined text with the research question and the position of content analysis in answering the questions. The debate and use of content analysis will be further discussed in the next section.

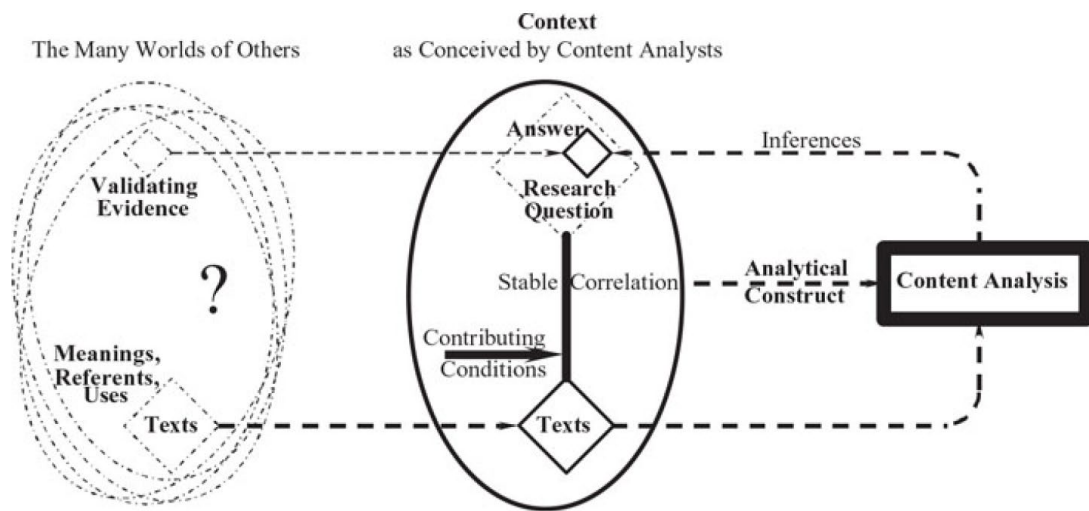


Figure 2.4. Conceptual framework of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019)

3. Methodology



3.1 Social constructivism and feminist geography

The conceptual model in the previous section has positioned solo travel advice videos as a mediating factor in the pre travel process. This mediation is not conducted in a vacuum and is influenced by pre-existing notions of the content creators and receivers, as does it influence the conceptions of the receivers. This process is thus viewed in this thesis from a social-constructivist approach, meaning that reality is assumed to be constructed and reconstructed by human interactions in daily processes (Risse, 2004; Lombardo, 2016). Culture and context are an essential part in this process of understanding the world, or in this case, solo travel (Kim, 2006). YouTube is not a platform of one-way communication, but one of constant social exchange. People report experiences, opinions, and emotions, which they share with a community that responds and searches for content that suits their needs, initiating a process of negotiation between content creators themselves and their audiences. In this way the medium contributes to its own construction and reconstruction of reality through language, which social-constructivism views as a mediator that aids in shaping and extending the receiver's thoughts on the world (Hirtle, 1996). That is, knowledge about solo travel does not come from a pre-existing reality but is interpreted and constructed by travellers as they attempt, among other things, to gather information through YouTube videos.

As the thesis is dealing with a topic of gender and especially gender differences, another layer can be added to this approach. Binary oppositions that are observed from the social-constructivist approach and the distinctions between these oppositions that it proposes have a strong link to the foundations of feminist geography, which concerns itself primarily with how gendered coding establishes differences in society (Dixon & Jones, 2006). Feminist geography and social constructivism operate from the same transformational ontology: the world is one that is in the process of becoming, and the meaning of gender is likewise constantly constructed and reconstructed (Locher & Prüggl, 2001). These two approaches combined therefore generate a comprehensible background to study the topic of gender differences within solo travel.

3.2 Quantitative versus qualitative content analysis

According to its broadest definition, content analysis is "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1969). However, the specifics of what a content analysis is required to entail are highly contested and debated. Concretely, these debates focus around two types of oppositions: whether content analysis is a purely quantitative or qualitative method or both, and whether the analysis can make inferences only about manifest text, or if it can also consider latent messages and meanings (MacNamara, 2018). The one side of the debate is clearly rooted in one of the earliest definitions of content analysis by Berelson (1952) as "a research technique

for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.” His core conceptions are supported by contemporary content analysts such as Neuendorf, who explicitly excludes forms of qualitative content analysis, labelling them as other types of text analyses (2017). On the other side of the debate we find Klaus Krippendorf, who describes the analysis to concern latent rather than manifest content and does not exclude qualitative analysis (2019). Instead, they question the validity and usefulness of a distinction between quantitative and qualitative analyses as they interpret all reading to ultimately be qualitative. The traditional quantitative approach can be further criticised as sidestepping the meaning and context of language symbols, in favour of counting and categorising words in a vacuum (Mayring, 2014). This approach to content in context also aligns with the assumptions of a social-constructivist and feminist geography, as it sees content as a means of mediating construction of meanings. Mayring, as a proponent of qualitative content analysis, summarizes the current state of this method as attempting to retain the systematic strengths of the quantitative approach, while making qualitative inferences on messages and meanings (2014). Drawing on Mayring’s approach to the methodology, the thesis will attempt to explore this qualitative leaning approach to content analysis, by investigating these latent messages in the research material.

3.3 The research material: solo travel advice videos on YouTube

As the thesis concerns latent messages in solo travel advice videos, it is of essence to adequately define which material is considered for analysis. The study concerns online videos published in an audio-visual format on YouTube, as it is the largest online medium for video sharing with over 2.5 billion active users (Statista, 2023). The videos that are selected for the thesis all concern the topic of solo travel and were created with the purpose of entertainment and education. This is achieved by entering specific search criteria into the website’s search bar, as illustrated in Table 3.1. This table contains the exact combination of search terms that are used in this research. The first level contains the general search term, which is then supplemented with a level 2 term and then a level 3 term to gain both a broad and specific range of available material.

Table 3.1. Search criteria for research material selection

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
- Solo travel	○ Tips	● For women
- Solo trip	○ Advice	● As a woman
- Travel(ling) alone	○ Mistakes	● Female
	○ Must know	
	○ To know	▪ For men
	○ How to	▪ As a man
	○ 101	▪ Male
	○ Essentials	
	○ Ways to	
	○ Hacks	

To select the sample from the material, videos were chosen that were published over a period of five years, between January 2018 and the start of the analysis, May 2023. This decision was made for two reasons: firstly, in light of a constructionist view the meaning of concepts is

constantly reconstructed over time, allowing meanings to shift. By keeping a narrow timeframe, I aimed to collect messages and meanings that are as accurate as possible for the time of analysis. Secondly, the research effort can be focused on gathering a broad diversity of content rather than a broad time range, enabling an analysis that considers nuances and the diverse ways in which the content is represented. I therefore aimed to find a balance between a period that is broad enough to gather sufficient data but narrow enough to capture a sense of time. In addition it must be noted that within this specific period the 2020 Covid pandemic occurred. Due to the effects of this major event on the travel industry, special attention was paid to whether the advice in videos during and after the pandemic was affected by the pandemic and in what ways. The time limit of selected videos must be within thirty minutes, as to not create too large of a variance between the amount of content that can be discussed between videos.

A purposive sampling method was used to select videos from this time range, based on the characteristics and the reach of the videos. The advice videos must be created by individuals, rather than tourism operators in line with the concept of User Generated Content (Chapter 2.3) However, the videos can be uploaded both by recreational users, as well as professional users, granted that the producer has participated in solo travel themselves. Next to that the video as a whole may not be part of a sponsorship agreement. The incentive for the creation of the video lies with the producer. They were thus not motivated by the researcher or a third party. When only one section of the video falls under a sponsorship agreement, the video can be included in the analysis, but the respective section will be omitted from the analysis as the content of this section is not guaranteed to voice the content creators independent opinion. The idea behind this selection criterion is that there is a sense of trust and comfort or even a factor of fandom towards the content creator and a perception that the material is therefore trustworthy and personally motivated (Reino & Hay, 2016; Gretzel & Yoo, 2018). Another characteristic that is considered is that the content of the video must concern solo travel in general and is not aimed at a specific destination. This is done to keep the advice given in the videos general and applicable to the act of solo travel itself, rather than do's and don'ts of one destination. To find videos with an international audience and to keep the analysis within the constrictions of my own spoken languages, the decision was made to include only videos that are recorded in English. To select for the reach of the videos, the order of selection is based on the amount of views, likes and comments as registered by YouTube, to indicate a high degree of audience engagement.

The amount of videos that were selected for analysis, is based on saturation of material and of concepts. This means that after analysis of these videos, no new eligible material could be found, or no new categories emerged from the material. The data collection was therefore conducted simultaneously with the analysis, as the outcome of the coding of the existing data set determines whether the sample should be extended. Within the sample collection attention was paid to a representative distribution of male and female content creators as well as audience. The aim was to have videos produced by a variety of content creators, not only in terms of gender, but socio-cultural background as well. However, it is important to acknowledge that this distribution is likely somewhat skewed, as the videos are in English. This increases the likelihood that creators and audience originate from either an English-speaking country or a country with a high degree of English proficiency. As the videos are

aimed at giving advice to solo travellers it is also likely that the audience is relatively inexperienced in the area of solo travel.

After the selection and coding process and eventual sample size of fifteen videos was reached before a saturation of material and concepts occurred. For solo travel advice videos created by men saturation of material occurred at six videos, meaning that no more videos could be found within the eligible constraints that were created by men. For videos created by women, saturation of concepts occurred after nine videos, at which point no new categories or subcategories occurred. The metadata for all videos was catalogued to provide background data, as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Metadata of the sample selection

Case	Alias	Date of publication	Duration	Creator nationality	Creator gender	Audience gender
1	Millie	8-11-2020	13:12	USA	Female	Neutral
2	Cassie	16-3-2019	12:51	USA	Female	Female
3	Emma	10-7-2020	12:37	UK	Female	Female
4	Jack	24-1-2021	11:53	UK	Male	Neutral
5	George	30-1-2018	06:08	UK	Male	Neutral
6	Steven	25-11-2021	09:32	Australia	Male	Neutral
7	Sophie	18-7-2021	11:38	USA	Female	Neutral
8	Ben	7-3-2019	09:35	UK	Male	Neutral
9	Sandra	20-1-2020	10:07	USA	Female	Female
10	Dean	25-3-2022	08:18	USA	Male	Neutral
11	Jane	4-9-2022	23:37	USA	Female	Female
12	Caleb	25-4-2022	19:00	UK	Male	Neutral
13	Kate	26-9-2019	11:09	USA	Female	Neutral
14	Louise	9-6-2019	17:11	Canada	Female	Neutral
15	Veronica	12-7-2022	20:31	USA	Female	Neutral

While the videos used for this analysis are publicly available on YouTube's website, the decision was made to assign each case a number and an alias. There are multiple reasons for this decision, one being that even though the content creator chose to publish the video to an online public domain, they did not make the conscious decision to participate in this research. The material was extracted from the website, but no immediate contact occurred with the content creator. The initiative of sharing data on a personal name should therefore remain with the content creator themselves, hence why an alias seems most suitable in this case. Secondly, by assigning an alias to the videos, an attempt was made to keep the content and outcomes of the analysis as neutral as possible. Since these videos are publicly available their content may be recognized by readers, leading to possible biases in favour or against certain statements. This too contributed to the decision to anonymize the data. Aside from

these ethical considerations there is also a practical consideration relating to given names and usernames. Many content creators do not publish their videos under a given name but choose to use a username or channel name. While these sometimes correspond to a given name, this is not always the case. Assigning aliases therefore aids in homogenising the description of the data sample and makes it easier to refer to a specific video later on. In the metadata, the videos are organized firstly by these numbers and aliases, in order of data collection. The first six videos were gathered collectively as part of a pilot study, while the videos following those were collected one by one until saturation occurred. For each case, the date of publication, duration of the video and some demographics of the content creator and audience are noted. Absent is an age demographic, as the videos rarely specify the exact age of the content creator. Nonetheless they tend to be on the younger side, most of them estimated to be in their twenties. No exact statements can be made on this, however. Aside from registered nationality of the content creator, the gender of both them and the audience is noted. It is essential to mention here what constitutes gender in these cases, as the interpretation of this concept may vary. For the gender of the content creator the focus is not on assigned sex but rather on identification and performativity. In some cases the content creator explicitly mentions their gender, while for other characteristics of the appearance were used to gauge gender. During data collection, no content creators were found in the search results that identified specifically as transgender or non-binary. This is one reason for why the analysis focuses on a binary representation of male and female, though future research should be undertaken to account interpretations of other genders. The gender of the audience on the other hand was chosen by explicit mention. If no gender was named as the target audience either in the video title, description, or content, a neutral label was assigned. During data collection it became clear that none of the videos eligible for analysis are aimed specifically at a male audience. The videos are either aimed at women or at a neutral audience. This means that the creator does not specify a target audience gender. One explanation for this occurrence, or lack thereof, can be found in Cheryll Glotfelty's account on the male bias in women's backpacking guides (1996), as referenced in Chapter 2.4. As they found neutral guides to exhibit a strong male bias, often using male pronouns to refer to the presumed reader, this could explain the absence of male oriented solo travel advice videos. Next to this it should also be noted that all videos aimed at a female audience were equally produced by women. No videos occurred that are specifically aimed at women but produced by men. However, there are videos created by women that are aimed at a neutral audience. This stands in contrast with the gender of the video creators, who were found to be mostly female. While saturation of male created videos was reached only after six videos, there were a number of videos created by women that did not make the selected sample, due to saturation of concepts. While I initially attempted to create a sample with an equal amount of male and female created videos, the final sample did not adhere to this criterium, as it would not be representative of the total population of solo travel advice videos. This explains the overrepresentation of female created videos in the sample. Lastly, as expected, the data skews heavily towards an Anglo-spheric perspective, most likely due to English being the spoken language in the videos. This implies a need for extended research to include videos in different languages, to see whether national or cultural influences produce different outcomes.

Transcription guide

Type of transcript:	minimal
Font:	Courier new 10 pt
Line spacing:	1.5
Hyphenation :	non
Interpunction:	conventional
Grammar:	informal, true to speech

GAT 2 minimal transcript conventions (Selting et al. 2011):

[]	Overlap and simultaneous talk
[]	
(.)	Pause
-	Cutoff
((laughs)), ((cries))	Characterization of non-linguistic event
<<laughing> so>	Speaking interspersed with non-linguistic event, with indication of scope
(XXX)	Unintelligible passage
(May I)	Assumed wording
(May I/Let us)	Assumed wording with alternative

Box 3.1. Elaboration of the adapted GAT2 transcription system

To prepare the videos in the sample for analysis the audio of the videos was transcribed into textual form, using a special character protocol according to a simplified version of the GAT2 system. This system, illustrated in Box 3.1 allows the transcripts to contain both spoken words, as well as some non-verbal cues and assumed wording that are used to contextualise the content. After each video was transcribed and fully prepared, data coding and analysis was performed in Atlas.TI on both the audio transcript and video footage. The following section describes this process.

3.4. Qualitative content analysis techniques & procedural model

As the goal of the thesis is to discover latent messages on gender inequalities in the material, the content-analytical communication model by Mayring (2014) indicates a text-analytical direction. This includes both the text itself, as well as the non-verbal textual context. Considering the explorative nature of the research, an inductive approach was chosen to

categorize the video transcripts and develop subsequent themes. The analytical parameters and procedure are described in an adapted inductive procedural model, according to the steps by Mayring (2014). The steps in the procedural model are visualised in Figure 3.1 on page 22 and are described in the remainder of this chapter.

The transcripts and video footage were coded using Atlas.TI according to defined content analytical units. The coding unit for the transcripts was set to include passages as compact as a phrase, allowing the code to contain some context to the words included. For the video footage the coding unit was one shot, which is defined as the complete range within the camera's view within a given moment. The most amount of text or footage contained in a code is the content of one video; this is thus defined as the context unit of analysis. Using these parameters, every passage or image that relates to the research question was then selected and coded. The level of abstraction for processing these passages was kept low, corresponding to the spoken text and wording of the video producer.

After determining the content analytical model, the first part of the content analysis to be conducted consisted of a pilot study to determine whether the set parameters were accurate for the purpose of the analysis. This also aided in getting acquainted with the material and in subsequently constructing initial categories. For this pilot study, six videos and their corresponding transcripts were selected and worked through line by line and shot by shot respectively, coding any meaningful passages and shots. This information was then used to construct categories and revise the procedural model. During the pilot study a decision was made to reverse the coding process. Instead of working through the transcripts before coding the video footage, it was discovered that coding the footage first was more beneficial to the analysis. As the transcripts add meaning to the shown video footage, it became clear that an added bias was introduced in the coding of the footage. To enable coding of the video footage without the context of audio information, the video footage of the proceeding material was coded prior to the transcripts, while disabling the audio. After finalizing the procedural model the material was then worked through a second time, including the remaining videos, until no new categories emerged. These categories were then checked for consistency and divided or merged to account for overlapping content. As part of the intracoder reliability check the material was then checked for consistency of passages or shots within these categories. If inconsistencies were present within the categories or between them, the categories were adapted to describe the content more accurately, or passages were recoded to a more suitable category.

Once a coherent category system was built, the first part of the analysis was then performed by conducting a quantitative frequency count of each category and their sub-categories, to measure the occurrence of codes and themes in the material. This was done for the total frequencies across all material, as well as for document groups divided into the gender of the content creator and the audience gender. This distinction is made to not only account for differences occurring in messages aimed at a certain audience, but to also include gender-based differences in who produces or reproduces these messages. This decision refers back to the way in which similarity and identification of the audience with these content creators are deemed to influence parasocial interactions and role model positions (Korres-Alonso & Elexpuru-Albizuri, 2022). It also accounts for previous findings stating how online content is often shown to be gendered according to the gender of the producer (Mahrt & Bock, 2021).

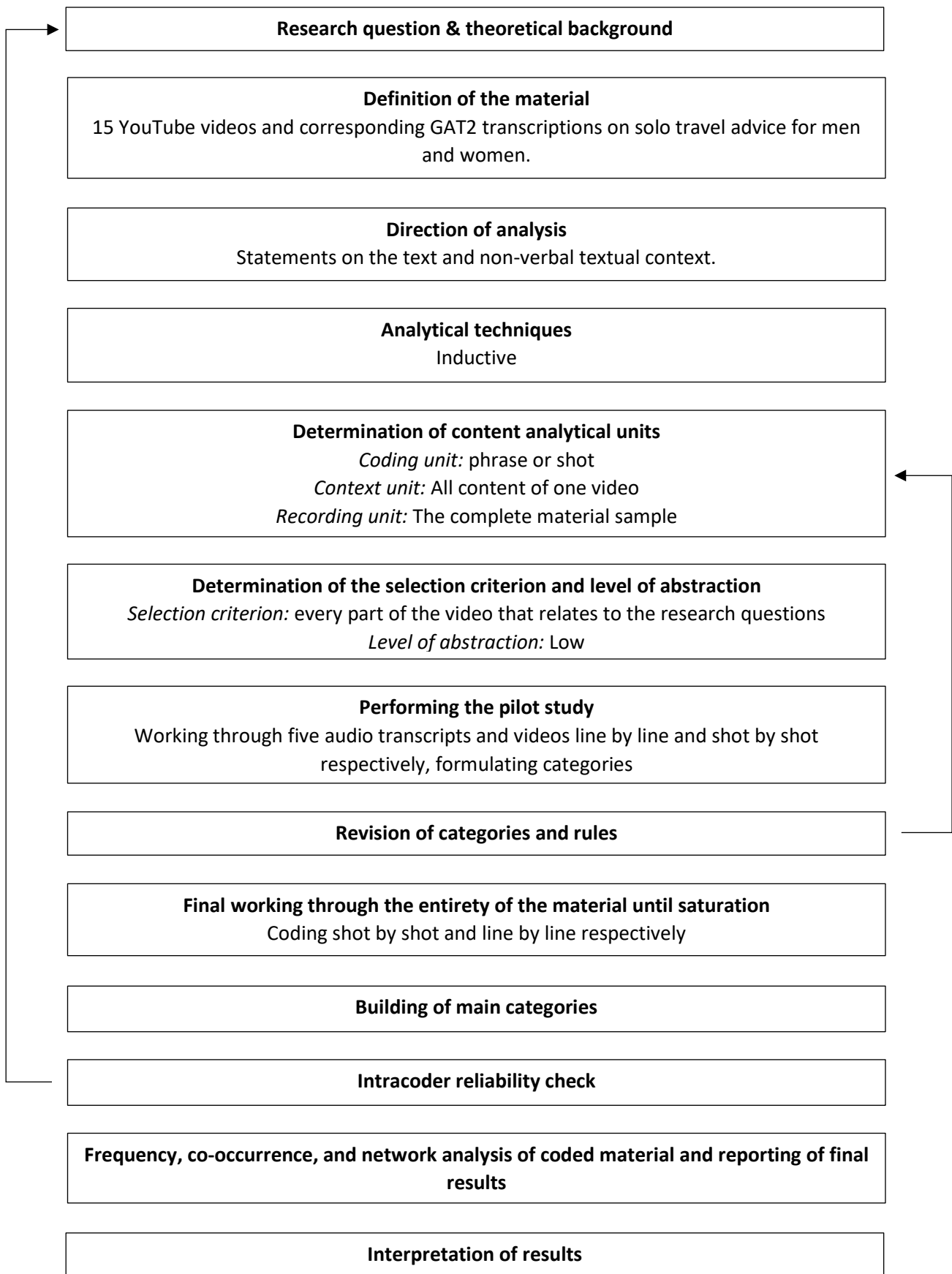


Figure 3.1. Constructed procedural model for inductive qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2014)

The results that follow from this analysis are reported in Chapter 4. The frequencies and percentages are used to find differences in occurrence of categories, but as the analysis was done on a small sample and has a qualitative focus, they are not employed to make statements on objective counts. This is especially the case for the audience gender frequencies, which serve to observe large discrepancies between occurrences for the content creators and the audience.

The categories, along with their frequencies were subsequently interpreted with the aid of co-occurrence and network analyses. All categories were firstly checked using the co-occurrence analysis feature in Atlas.TI to find links between categories or subcategories. This was supplied by a manual check, by working through the material once more to find if codes were specifically linked in the material. This step was taken as Atlas.TI does find co-occurrences in overlapping codes but does not account for codes occurring in succession to each other. Another limitation of Atlas.TI is that it is currently unable to match coding of audio transcripts to coding of video images, therefore limiting co-occurrence analysis across media types. The categories were therefore also manually checked for cross media co-occurrences.

Corresponding to this analysis, any codes that were found to have a link were connected in through the Atlas.TI linking system. This enabled a subsequent network analysis of all category links. Through the visualization of these networks and through interpretation of the content of the categories, a final interpretation was enabled, in which connections were made between categories and their individual and relational meanings were interpreted. The latent messages following from this analysis are subsequently illustrated and explained in Chapter 5.

4. Findings: categorizing the content



Analysis of the fifteen videos produced a category system that contains the topics that are discussed by the content creators. This category system is divided over three different information transfer types: audio, video, and text on screen (TOS). The audio categories concern topics that are verbally transferred and are extracted from the transcripts of the videos, the video categories contain information on the content of the visual imagery, and TOS describes textual data that is added to the video footage in post-production. Each category describes a topic or content description and is elaborated upon by sub-categories, detailing what talking points or footage type the categories contain. The following sections will elaborate on the content and frequency of these categories, to create a picture of what topics solo travel advice videos show and discuss. The frequencies presented in these sections represent the amount of videos in which a category is mentioned or depicted. These frequencies should be interpreted with caution, as they represent a small data sample. The numbers presented in this chapter illustrate differences in occurrence and provide a direction for further analysis, but do not represent exact frequency. For the purpose of readability, a short table of the main categories for each media transfer type will be given. The full category system of subcategories can be consulted in Appendix I.

4.1 Audio content

The audio content of the travel advice videos within the sample concerns the concrete advice that is given to the audience. From the coding of this content, a category system emerged that distinguishes between different topics of advice that are discussed once or more. This spoken content was found to generally discuss some of twelve topics: accommodation, attitudes, behaviour, concerns, destination choice, documenting, itinerary, meeting people, money, motivations, packing, or transportation. These categories appear in the videos in varying degrees. The frequencies are displayed in Table 4.1.

Noticeable from the division of these categories is that while most topics are discussed at similar rates by male and female content creators, some topics are mentioned at different degrees. This is the case for attitudes and money, which are discussed relatively more often by men than by women, and for destination choice, documenting, packing and transportation, which are discussed relatively more often by women. Furthermore, the topic of money, while being discussed less frequently by women, is contrarily present throughout all videos aimed at a female audience. While these frequencies give some indication about which topics are discussed by which gender and for whom, more meaningful differences start to occur within the subcategories.

Table 4.1: Audio categories and frequencies

AUDIO Category	Total (15)		Female creator (9)		Male creator (6)		Female audience (4)		Neutral audience (11)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Accommodation	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
Attitudes	10	67	5	56	5	83	2	50	8	73
Behaviour	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
Concerns	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
Destination choice	10	67	8	89	2	33	4	100	6	55
Documenting	14	93	9	100	5	83	4	100	10	91
Itinerary	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
Meeting people	13	87	8	89	5	83	4	100	9	82
Money	13	87	7	78	6	100	4	100	9	82
Motivations	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
Packing	11	73	7	78	4	67	3	75	8	73
Transportation	8	53	6	67	2	33	3	75	5	45

Accommodation

As part of the accommodation selection, two main aspects can be distinguished within the videos. Firstly, the content creators name specific requirements that they adhere to or that they advice to their audience. Secondly, A distinction is made between different accommodation types and whether they are suitable for solo travellers.

Several accommodation requirements can be distinguished among the videos. Most prevalent for both genders is the social requirement, which describes how an accommodation should accommodate social interactions between travellers or with locals. It is discussed especially frequently by men, with five out of six male created videos mentioning this requirement. Next to this requirement there are several requirements that are mentioned, although not to the same degree. Some variances can be found, however, between male and female content creators, as women tend to mention more different types of requirements. Especially the location of the accommodation, and the price level stand out as secondary prevalent requirements. For men on the other hand, the amount to which an accommodation is deemed to provide a local experience is a secondary requirement. While being named only once, a requirement restricting the gender of travellers allowed at an accommodation, is notably applied to women while being mentioned by a male content creator:

“If you're a female traveller you can also stay in female only hostels.” – Steven

Striking about this requirement is that non of the videos produced by women mention this requirement.

Concerning accommodation types, hostels seem to form the primary talking point. They encompass a type of accommodation that is focused on communal living. Especially for young people, they provide inexpensive accommodation in shared and sometimes private

rooms. (Cambridge University Press, 2023). The prevalence of this type therefore corresponds to the degree to which content creators emphasize social requirements for accommodations. While social requirements and hostels are discussed more frequently by male content creators, both topics are discussed in videos aimed specifically at women, implying that a social environment holds additional significance for solo women travellers.

Some variance occurs in the discussion of accommodation types between men and women on the types discussed secondarily. Women notably discuss Airbnb's more often, followed by homestays, while men discuss Airbnbs at a similar rate to hotels. A striking difference occurs in the discussion of couch surfing, which is mentioned once by both a male and female content creator:

"If you want a more cultural stay by staying with people that are actual locals in the area, I'd suggest using something like Airbnb or couch surfing. Because this allows you to actually stay in the home of a local, and by doing that you're gonna get to know a local and get recommendations firsthand." – Caleb

"Couchsurfing is like a free way to travel but again as a solo female traveller, but a little risky cause you're basically just sleeping on a stranger's couch for free." – Cassie

While Caleb recommends couch surfing as an inexpensive alternative to get into contact with locals, Cassie actively discourages this type of accommodation for women, implying concerns over safety. This hints at a slight gender difference in interpreting the suitability of certain accommodation types.

Attitudes

Attitudes on solo travel can be distinguished as either positive or negative sentiments. These sentiments are not mutually exclusive, as a content creator can express both negative and positive sentiments in one video relating to different facets. These attitudes can be both general in nature, or provide specific argumentation in support of the attitude, such as in George's case:

"For me personally I do think it's one of the best ways to travel. It's the most fun and it's just a pretty cool experience to get out and experience stuff on your own." – George

Considering that the videos provide advice on how to travel solo it is not surprising that the content creators hold a positive view. What is striking is that male content creators relatively more often express these positive attitudes. On the other hand, only one content creator provides a negative attitude, which is notably a woman:

"It's not for everyone. You definitely have to be pretty independent and okay traveling alone. I personally definitely enjoy traveling with friends more. Like I just have a more fun experience, but traveling solo for me is when I feel like I grow the most and learn the most about myself." – Cassie

Her statement illustrates a more complex decision-making process, where having fun is not necessarily the main objective and the act of solo travel is a way to achieve other skills and values.

Behaviour

During analysis it was found that the solo travel advice videos in the sample would often not just give practical advice to potential solo travellers but would also advise them on certain behaviours. These behaviours pertain to various aspects of solo travel and usually have one of three contexts, which sometimes overlap.

Firstly, there are socially oriented behaviours. This type of behaviour is employed with the goal of having interactions with others. Examples of these behaviours are be approachable (13%), be confident (40%), be open (33%), be proactive (40%), and touch base (13%). The most common of these within the sample are to be confident and to be proactive, which encourages the audience to take initiative in social interactions and to actively seek out situations that enable these interactions. This is closely followed by be open. To be open can mean several things, but in this context, it refers to actively having an open attitude towards meeting new people, which is similar to be approachable, which describes ways to make yourself available for contact, such as not putting in headphones. This behaviour is somewhat less prevalent, along with touch base, which describes staying connected with relatives or friends at home.

Another goal of behaviour is to be safe, which are also predominantly the most described behaviours in the videos. They are found in be careful (67%), blend in (53%), don't drink too much (33%), follow your instincts (53%), and don't go out alone at night (47%), as well as the earlier mentioned be confident and being proactive, about keeping yourself safe in this context. As Emma describes:

“When you're travelling solo no one is really looking out for you as much as they would be if you were with a clear group of friends and whilst it's never anyone's fault if horrible things happen to them anywhere in the world it is important that you be proactive and just make sure that you're being safe.” – Emma

Similarly, confidence is not just a way to meet people, it is also a way to avoid getting unwanted attention by standing out as lost. This also alludes to the behaviour of blending in, which specifically describes the act of dressing and acting in such a way that a traveller does not stand out from the crowd as a tourist. However, this behaviour is also used in a cultural context for women, as conforming to the local dress code. The most mentioned safety behaviour however, which is also the most mentioned behaviour overall, is to be careful. Contrary to behaviours such as don't drink too much or don't walk alone at night, this advice does not concretely apply to undertaking a certain act but describes a general sense of awareness. For example, Steven says this:

“Just keep your wits about you. Be aware of your surroundings and know where your personal items are at all times.” – Steven

To be careful means to keep close attention to the surrounding area and people, and to keep sight of belongings to avoid losing anything or missing signs of danger. Travellers are to

approach every situation with some degree of scepticism or doubt, and not to trust a situation at face value. Other examples of this are to not leave belongings unattended (Sandra), not taking drinks from strangers (Sophie), or being able to hear what's around you (Millie, Jane, Veronica). Also common is to follow your instincts, which is not dissimilar to being careful. To follow your instincts means to act upon certain feelings, even if these feelings have no direct cause. As Millie says:

“When you feel like something is off, when you have a gut feeling that there's something wrong about the situation then follow your instincts and stop whatever you're doing or leave. You're allowed to change your mind when you feel uncomfortable.” – Millie

Lastly, some behaviours are used in the context of planning. These describe the approach to planning a trip or how to respond when plans change. Found here are be laid back (13%) and be spontaneous (27%). Also returning in this category is be open, which points to an openness towards experiences. Content creators use the advice to be open to push their audience to leave their comfort zone and try new things in which they would not normally participate. This ties into being spontaneous, which describes a preparedness to change plans or to not plan in advance entirely. To be laid back on the other hand, prescribes the audience to not worry about things going wrong, or to go at one's own pace. In contrast to being open, this behaviour encourages the audience to not go too far beyond the comfort zone or stay within it.

To be positive, on the other hand, does not fit into one particular behavioural goal, but applies to all three. This behaviour describes an overall attitude to deal with uncertainty. One can be advised to be positive while meeting friends, when luggage gets stolen, or when missing a flight. It encourages resilience and to have fun regardless of circumstance.

As mentioned previously, be careful is most popular, followed by blend in and follow your instincts. Other safety-oriented behaviours are prevalent as well, implying a focus towards this type of advice. However, looking at gender difference provides a more nuanced picture.

Female creators are noticeably overrepresented when safety related behaviours are discussed. Especially follow your instincts is mentioned more often by women (78%). They are also somewhat more likely to advice to be positive (56%), and to not go out alone at night (56%). Moreover, it is not uncommon to mention women specifically when talking about safety related behaviour.

“One of the most important rules I have as a female traveller is that I just don't adventure at night.” – Sandra

“I never let my guard down as a woman, never let my guard down no matter where I am.” – Jane

Men, on the other hand, also mention safety related behaviour most frequently, but they are somewhat more likely than women to discuss social or planning related behaviour. When comparing this to the advice given to differently gendered audiences, this image persists, showing that advice on social or planning behaviour often gravitates towards a neutral

audience over a female audience. The female oriented videos lean more towards these safety aspects. This implies a skewed balance within the prevalence of behaviour types, where safety is a predominant factor for both genders, but it is balanced to a different degree with other types of behaviour between male and female content creators and audiences.

Concerns

There are several aspects of solo travel that cause concern for the content creators or that they alert their audience to. The most common concerns mentioned in the videos are social concerns. This sub-category describes several concerns that relate to social activities or to how solo travellers think they are perceived by others. It includes worries such as loneliness, a fear of missing out on activities at home, how they are judged on their behaviour, or whether they are dressed appropriately. While social concerns are present at relatively high rates for both male and female content creators, they are mentioned especially often by women, as 89% of them mention these concerns, compared to 50% of men. Women also mention the concern of being alone at equal rates to social concerns (89%), while men rarely report on this concern (17%). Being alone differs from social concerns in that it does not describe a perception of the self or the social environment, but an objective state of being alone. Jane explains why this causes concerns:

“When you're by yourself you are more of an easy target, you just are. For pickpocketing, for scams, for whatever. Especially if you're you look like a tourist you, maybe you're carrying like a big camera.” – Jane

There is a perceived vulnerability due to being alone, as there is no companion to protect or help them whenever something goes wrong, and they can be an easy target.

In line with being alone, another aspect that cause concern specifically for women is marginalization, which is mentioned in 56% of videos created by women and in 33% of videos created by men. Generally this concern describes a worry that someone experiences disadvantages based on belonging to a certain group, such as gender, race, or religion. In the videos, the type of marginalization discussed is without exception based on being of the female gender, in one case supplemented with race. Often marginalization describes general safety concerns due to being a woman, without specifying what causes that concern:

“There are some car sharing services (...) but as a solo female traveller I personally did not partake because I was like you know what, let's just not risk it.” – Cassie

A more common concern for male content creators, though also mentioned frequently by women, is losing belongings, either through accidental loss or theft. Being mentioned in 50% of male created videos, this is the most common concern for men alongside social concerns and scams. The concern of scams goes hand in hand with losing belongings, as this type of crime often causes a traveller to spend more money than they intended. Contrary to losing belongings, male content creators more often mention scams than female content creators (33%). This is also the case for one other concern, which is finances, which are discussed by 33% of men, but by none of the women. Financial concerns are expressed in the form of doubts about whether a solo traveller has sufficient funds to continue their travelling stint. There are also some concerns, for which the opposite is the case. Being drugged, getting

killed, and kidnapping are only mentioned by women. Kidnapping, however, does not necessarily mean that a solo traveller is taken by brute force. Moreso, it implies a milder form where a solo traveller is intending to go to one place, often by taxi, but is instead taken to a different place.

One key factor to address is the comparison of home versus elsewhere. This is not a concern as such, but is a method used to mediate concerns or justify safety measures. When discussing safety concerns, the videos in the sample tend to address how safe solo travel is in comparison to staying home. This is especially the case for female content creators, as 56% of videos mention this comparison, as opposed to one male content creator. The comparison of home to another place can fall one of two ways. It can be used to imply a sense of safety:

“I can say that I have felt more unsafe a lot of the times in the US in certain situations, than I have abroad.” – Jane

In this case, Jane comparing her home to a destination as being equally safe diminishes safety concerns about travelling, while the opposite is the case for Jack:

“Just be careful even though you think it is safe. You never know who it can be. It could happen in your own town, it could happen anywhere so don't put yourself in danger.” – Jack

However, in both instances the comparison serves to imply to the audience that they are equally safe or unsafe whether they stay home or travel, thus providing some mediation for any concerns that the audience might have about solo travel.

Destination choice

One of lesser occurring categories is destination choice. It describes several aspects that contribute to choosing which destination is suitable for solo travel. The videos in the sample advise to choose a destination based on six distinct aspects, being ease, interest, popularity, price, safety, and seasonality. The most prevalent of these is ease, with 47% of the total amount of videos mentioning it, and female content creators mentioning it in 67% of videos. Ease bases the decision-making process on the perception of difficulty to travel. Content creators that describe this topic consider facets such as the spoken languages, if the culture is similar to their own, whether it is close to home, or if you need special documentation. Other aspects of destination choice are similarly mentioned more by women than men. The difference between frequencies is especially high for safety, with 44% of women mentioning this aspect against only one male content creator. This aspect also stands out in its frequencies for the female audience. Not only do women mention the aspect of safety more, but this advice is also more often aimed at other women. While it is only the third most prevalent sub-category for neutral audiences, it shares the most prevalent position with ease for female audiences. Striking is the statement on safety by the male content creator, Jack:

“I've met so many solo female travellers and there are certain places, especially if it's your first time, you should not go to. For example India and Sri Lanka can be kind of dangerous and you're (more) likely as a female to get a lot more eyes as you can call it.” – Jack

So while a male content creator mentions the topic, he explicitly refers to women in his advice, implicating that choosing a destination based on safety is primarily a female concern.

Documenting

There are different forms of documentation that are discussed in the videos, with different purposes. Within the videos, six different types of documenting were identified: access to data, content creation, important documents, location sharing, memories, and offline maps. Location sharing stands out, at 73% of videos discussing the topic. There are some similarities with the aforementioned touch base, as one form of location sharing is to contact family at home to let them know of whereabouts during a solo trip. This is however done with the intention of creating documentation on one's location, rather than to share experiences. Moreover, location sharing can also be achieved by different tactics, such as leaving a copy of the itinerary at home or sharing details with a government agency. Sharing a location is primarily intended as a cautionary measure, in case something goes wrong, and a solo traveller fails to establish contact. Location sharing is also more common for female content creators (78%) and audiences (100%).

Two other sub-categories that are often mentioned are access to data and offline map, both in 47% of videos. In some ways these aspects stand in extension as well as opposition to each other. Access to data is often deemed convenient, among others, to access online maps, while offline maps are downloaded beforehand in case it is not possible to access online information. However, access to data is also used for online messaging services, translation apps, or for booking websites. The similar prevalence of both categories show a certain preparedness of solo travellers to both a situation where it is possible to be online, or where that isn't possible. Both categories also show a slightly higher prevalence in videos created by women. However, they do differ in their prevalence in audiences. Offline maps appear in all videos aimed at women, while only 27% of neutral aimed videos discuss the topic. Access to data, on the other hand, is discussed by only one video aimed at women, but with 55% it is the second most mentioned sub-category for neutral audiences. This implies that female oriented travel advice focuses more on instances with a lack of online access, and increased precaution.

Another significant difference in frequencies between genders is found in important documents. This sub-category describes the keeping or producing of documents that contain essential information during a solo trip. This includes for example, passports, emergency phone numbers, or booking information. While only one male content creator mentions this topic, it is prevalent in 56% of videos created by women. It is also one of several categories that is mentioned in all videos aimed at a female audience, showing a tendency to advice on thorough preparation of documents necessary for a solo trip.

Itinerary

Itinerary describes the planning or undertaking of activities during a trip. As such this category describes both aspects. Planning is mentioned in 80% of videos and describes the way and the extent to which the videos advice their audience to plan out a trip. Some variance is present between male and female content creators, as women are more likely to mention the planning aspect than men. However, mentioning planning does not mean that all videos show a similar approach. There is a range of approaches to planning that range from an open

itinerary to a rigid one. Louise, for example describes a very fluid itinerary, in which everything is open to change:

“Have a fluid itinerary. and what I mean by that is have goals and plans and what you wanna see and do, uhm, but be open and fluid to that changing. my flight was cancelled, I was a day late, and then I was like, you know what, I'm gonna extend my trip. I extended my trip, and I had said I'm only going to this one location and instead it turned into four.” – Louise

On the other end of this spectrum is Kate, who likes to plan out her itinerary in detail before embarking on her trip:

“You first need to consider how many days you're going to be at your destination, which will be determined by your flight dates. Now, depending on your flexibility, you might want to do this backwards, like create your itinerary first and then book your flights, (...) So I make a list of things I want to see or do and then generally speaking I try to plan on doing two of those each day” – Kate

These statements by the content creators show a diverse range in the amount of planning that is done for a solo trip. However, in general most of them advice to keep the itinerary somewhat fluid.

Next to general planning advice, the videos also mention specific activities that solo travellers can undertake: drinking alcohol, eating out, physical activities, sightseeing, or guided tours. Drinking alcohol stands out, being mentioned in 53% of videos. Male content creators (67%) also mention it relatively more often. Drinking alcohol is an activity that is generally treated by content creators with some caution, as evident by the behavioural advice to not drink too much. This treatment is however not consistent across videos and there appears to be some differences between male and female content creators. Some, especially women, primarily warn of alcohol, while male content creators tend to view alcohol as a tool for socializing, sometimes without consumption restrictions.

Meeting people

There are several places and techniques that can be employed to meet people while solo travelling. The videos mention several ways to meet people, which are to meet people at their accommodation, at cafés, through connections of relatives or friends, through dating, through girl code, at group activities, while journaling, through the nightlife, or through social media apps. Most commonly discussed is the accommodation tactic (67%). As shown in the discussion on accommodation factors, solo travellers frequently set a social requirement for their accommodation. Some accommodations, such as hostels or homestays are deemed to be suitable places for socializing with either other travellers or locals. Both men and women mention this technique most often, but men mention it relatively more at 83% opposed to 56%. It is nonetheless mentioned in all videos aimed at a female audience. In contrast, most other tactics for meeting people are mentioned more or at equal rates by women.

They also frequently discuss group activities as a way to meet people (44%). These are activities such as (walking) tours, classes, or a night out and are therefore deemed as places that attract many other people for solo travellers to connect with.

Less frequently mentioned but nonetheless striking is the employment of girl code. It is the only tactic to meet people that is solely applicable for women. Girl code is specifically mentioned by Steven, who describes it as follows:

“There’s a sort of a code amongst travellers, from the people that I’ve spoken to, that it is like if a girl goes out by herself and she sees other girls out hanging out then they’re sort of welcome to join and everyone will kind of look after each other.” – Steven

The concept of women seeking each other out and looking out for each other is later mentioned again by Veronica:

“I’m sitting there, and this man does not leave me alone. I make eye contact with this woman who’s sitting there with her friends and this woman calls me over, as if we’ve known each other for years.” – Veronica

From these statements, girl code is implied to include a safety aspect, allowing women to take care of each other in case of precarious situations. Overall, women mention meeting people as a whole more frequently than men. However, looking at the sub-categories it appears that women divide this into various categories, while men most mostly tend to meet people at their accommodation and less frequently through other tactics.

Money

The topic of money is focused on various aspects throughout the videos, discussing the perspectives of backups, insurance, saving, and spending behaviour. Most frequently mentioned are backups and spending behaviour (47%), both of which are discussed more frequently by male content creators (50% and 67% respectively). Spending behaviour describes general money handling of solo travellers during, or sometimes prior to a trip. It mostly concerns budgeting tips and considerations. A consistent theme throughout advice on spending behaviour is cutting costs. Advice given to solo travellers generally contains tips on where to get the cheapest tickets or how to save money on phone plans.

Backups describe strategies that solo travellers employ in case of an emergency, such as when money gets stolen, or a credit card is blocked. These strategies include having extra cash stowed in different places, budgeting for unexpected spendings, having multiple credit cards for the duration of the trip, or carrying a decoy wallet. Although more frequently mentioned by men, is the most popular sub-category among female content creators concerning money (44%). What is also noticeable is that this sub-category is rather prevalent in videos aimed at a female audience (75%). Another category somewhat frequently mentioned by women is object or health related insurance (33%), which is mentioned relatively little by men (17%).

Motivations

The content creators express varied reasons on why they choose to travel solo, being autonomy, escapism, exploration, freedom, inspiring others, a lack of a travel partner, meeting people, or personal growth. Most commonly mentioned is personal growth, with 80% of videos mentioning the concept. It is mentioned by both men and women at equal rates. Personal growth describes how solo travellers aim to learn something new when they embark on a solo trip or go through a transformative experience. They hope to either learn something about themselves, such as personality traits, or to learn a new skill, such as a new language or increased independence.

As such, this last type of personal growth relates to autonomy, which is the second most prevalent sub-category at 53%. It describes a want or need to act independently from the routines and social contexts that are experienced at home. Solo travel provides an escape from the home environment, thereby promoting the desired independence. Solo travellers aim through autonomy to become comfortable on their own. When there are no family or friends around to help out, the solo traveller is forced to figure things out alone.

It is not dissimilar to the concept of freedom. However, freedom describes an absence of constraints, rather than a desired push for independence. It can pertain to a freedom of self, allowing the traveller to 'be themselves' or to act for their own benefit rather than a group collective, or it can pertain to a freedom of movement. In this case, freedom encompasses a flexibility in schedule and a freedom to choose what to do and when to do it. Freedom is mentioned slightly more often by men (50%) than by women (44%). Exploration is discussed at equal rates to freedom and encompasses an expressed interest in going to new places or seeing a specific destination. Exploration stands in contrast to escapism (20%), which are pull factors that draw a solo traveller away from their home. These pull factors can include aspects such as bad weather, or societal pressures.

A notable deviation in frequency occurs for meeting people. While women tend to mention this motivation relatively little (22%), it is the second most mentioned motivation for men (67%). It therefore appears that the social aspect of solo travel is a more prominent motivation for male travellers. Men similarly mention inspiring other more often as a motivation, although it should be kept in mind that as these content creators share their advice on YouTube in hopes to inspire other solo travellers, the frequencies for this motivation are likely skewed, since people who do not post their experiences online are probably less likely to aim towards inspiration.

Packing

There are several aspects of packing that appear in the videos. These are contents, luggage type and luggage organization. The most prominently featured type of content are electronics (40%) and minimalism (33%). Electronics contain devices such as chargers, laptops, or cameras. This sub-category is especially prominent for female content creators (56%) who mostly mention portable chargers. Minimalism, on the other hand, is more prevalent among male content creators (50%). To practice minimalism in the context of packing means to pack as few contents as possible, mostly to save on carrying excess weight and airfare luggage charges. In a societal context however, packing fewer items is also connected to decreased consumerism and freedom of movement.

Minimalism is also connected to luggage type, as this usually determines how many things a traveller can take due to size constraints. Vice versa, the same is true as the contents can determine which luggage type is most suitable. Men are also more likely to mention this category (50%), in line with their tendency to discuss minimalism in contents. Solo travellers most often advice to bring a backpack for a solo travel trip, to allow the traveller to easily carry their belongings. They also usually advice carry-on sizes, to avoid additional luggage fees at the airport.

Transportation

The least mentioned category in the audio transcripts is transportation, which discuss different modes of transportation used to get to or around a destination. Mentioned are boats, buses, cars, planes, subways, and trains. The most prevalent mode of transport is cars (47%), which also include (tuktuk) taxis and ridesharing services. Content creators rarely discuss the use of a private vehicle, but rather explain how to approach taking a taxi or using a ridesharing service. It is notable that women are more likely to mention all types of transportation, especially cars, buses, and planes.

4.2 Video content

The video footage that is shown in the videos contains several types of content. Contrary to the audio categories, these types of footage do not concern what is discussed, but merely what is shown in the imaging. Overall, nine main categories of footage could be identified. Some of these categories correspond to categories found in the audio data, while others are unique to the video format. The prevalence of these video categories will be briefly described in this section. An overview of their frequencies is visible in Table 4.1. For clarification purposes, the frequencies of the category 'other' are visualized, however this category is not regarded for analysis, as the contents are heterogeneous and do not represent a topic of content in the videos. In addition to the textual description of each video category, example sheets visualizing the video categories can be consulted in Appendix II.

Table 4.2. Video categories and frequencies

VIDEO	Total (15)		Female creator (9)		Male creator (6)		Female audience (4)		Neutral audience (11)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Accommodation	9	60	6	67	3	50	2	50	7	64
Activities	13	87	9	100	4	67	4	100	9	82
Belongings	9	60	6	67	3	50	3	75	6	55
Documenting	11	73	9	100	2	33	4	100	7	64
Graphic aids	14	93	9	100	5	83	4	100	10	91
Talking to camera	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
Transportation	11	73	8	89	3	50	3	75	8	73
*DESTINATION										
IMPRESSION	13	87	9	100	4	67	4	100	9	82
*OTHER	5	33	2	22	3	50	0	0	5	45

The basis of all solo travel videos is the use of face-to-face communication by means of talking directly to the camera, as such this category occurs in all videos. However, the frequencies show a clear difference in the use of additional visual imagery between male and female content creators. Without exception, all other categories are mentioned to a larger degree by women than by men, sometimes with large differences. Especially the use of documenting imagery shows a large discrepancy in its prevalence, as all the female created videos have shown to use it, while only 33% of male videos utilize this imagery. Furthermore, women are shown to use more imagery of transportation and activities. The audience to which the imagery is aimed generally corresponds to the gender that presents them, although some variance is present for accommodation. This type of imagery is used more frequently by female content creators but is mostly aimed at a neutral audience. In general, the use of visual imagery shows a pattern, in which women tell their story to a higher visual degree than their male colleagues. The use of this visual imagery may differ within the categories themselves, which will be elaborated upon in the following sections.

Accommodation

Footage concerning accommodation can be distinguished into five distinct types of spaces: bathrooms, common spaces, dorms, private rooms, and the situation of the accommodation in its surroundings. The frequencies of occurrence for these spaces are divided relatively equally across categories, indicating that content creators show a variety of aspects concerning accommodations. There are some small variances. For both male and female content creators, the most common spaces shown are common spaces and shared dorms (33%), reinforcing the trend of social aspects occurring in the discussion of accommodations. Also shown relatively more often are the situation of the accommodation, and private rooms (27%). However, private rooms are shown exclusively in videos created by women.

Activities

The videos in the sample show the undertaking of ten different type of activities, most of which are shown to a larger degree by women. An especially large gender gap is noticeable for sightseeing activities. Women show these activities in 89% of videos, while men shown them in only 33%. While sightseeing is similar to a destination impression, this type of footage shows the solo traveller while interacting with their surroundings. It is noticeable that this type of video footage is quite common overall (67%), while the discussion on sightseeing in the audio is considerably less so (13%). This implies that while especially female content creators deem sightseeing footage of value, the discussion on it is less urgent. Physical types of activities are equally shown most prominently (89%), which range from hiking in the mountains, to scuba diving or skydiving. They are mentioned to a larger extent by women (89%) than men (67%). In addition, Female travellers are also showing the meeting of other people more often than men (78% compared to 60%), as well as relaxation. While 44% of women show footages of relaxation, none of the male content creators included footage of this type. This is similarly the case for clubbing and shopping, although the gender gap is not as large for these activities.

Contrary to this trend, activities containing health or walking at night are shown at similar rates by both genders. The latter stands out in the context of its category, as most activities shown in the videos are based on leisure, or travel practicalities. Walking at night, however,

is an activity that does not form a purpose in itself but is one that is undertaken as a form of commute. It shows similarities in its nature with the behavioural audio category “don’t go out alone at night,” acting out this activity in visual form. Thus implying an exemplary function of this type of footage.

Belongings

Belongings of solo travellers are shown in the videos in three ways. They either shows luggage, money, or valuables. Of these sub-categories, luggage is shown most often (53%). This includes either a backpack or suitcase, or the contents of their luggage. Male and female content creators mention luggage at similar rates (50% and 56% respectively). The same holds true for money, which is shown at low frequencies by both men and women.

Valuables, on the other hand, are shown more often by women. 56% of female content creators show some type of valuable, such as a necklace, electronics, or passports, compared to 17% of men. Imaging of luggage and valuables used by female content creators is also frequently aimed at a female audience, (75%).

Documenting

Like its similarly named audio category, documenting contains ways in which solo travellers keep or produce documentation. However, unlike the audio category, the sub-categories for this video category contain ways of documenting as they are shown in the footage. They do therefore not allude to contents or purpose. Documenting in video footage is shown in the form of digital aids, navigation, pictures, research, or writing.

The content creators are frequently shown using digital aids as a form of documentation.

This content shows solo travellers using electronic devices such as a laptop or smartphone to access or produce documentation. Sometimes the contents on screen are visible, as illustrated in Figure 5.1. In this case they are additionally coded. This type of documenting shows a large divide between genders. Documenting through digital aids is shown most often by female content creators, who show this sub-category in 78% of videos, whereas only one video produced by a man shows this.

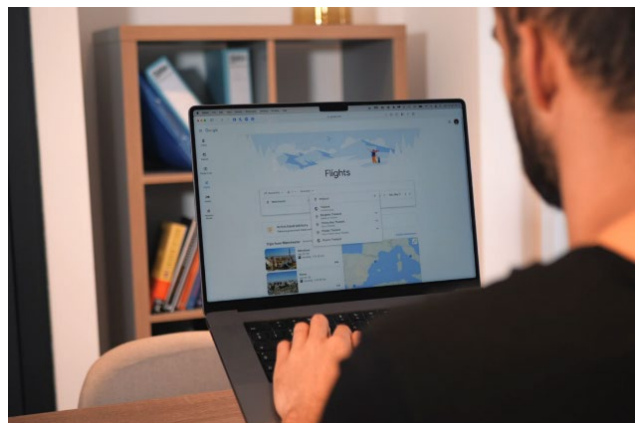


Figure 4.1. Digital aids showing visible contents

The use of navigation, taking or keeping pictures, and doing research are shown by women slightly more often as well (33%). Research, the act of finding information on the internet or in a book, is shown only by women, whereas male produced videos don't. Writing, on the other hand, is relatively shown slightly more by men (33%), than by women (22%).

Graphic aids

The use of graphic aids supports any other recorded footage or text by including images, transitions, or screen recordings. Seven types of graphic aids were identified: the use of brand

logos, emojis, screen recordings, social media logos, subscription icons, transitional shots, and videos clickthroughs. Most frequently used are video clickthroughs and subscription icons, in 87% and 80% of the videos, respectively. These aids function as promotional cues. Video clickthroughs are most often used at the end of a video to refer the audience to other content by the same content creator, although sometimes they refer to videos of other content creators that they recommend. In most cases, the subscription icon accompanies a video clickthrough to encourage the audience to subscribe to the content creator's YouTube channel. Both men and women frequently use these promotional strategies, although women tend to use subscription icons relatively more often than men (89% compared to 67%). Social media logos (53%) have a similar promotional purpose, referring the audience to a preferred social media page of the content creator.

A noticeable difference occurs for screen recordings. These aids show a snapshot or a video recording of a webpage, image, or app, and are shown by female content creators at an equal rate to subscription icons and video clickthroughs, making them one of the most frequently used graphic aids for women. Screen recordings are frequently used to give examples or illustrate a talking point. They can, for instance, insert newspaper articles, locations on maps, or a screenshot of a product. Screen recordings are also used to guide the audience through a process, such as the use of a booking website, a social media app, or a navigation app. Contrastingly, only one of the male content creators uses this graphic aid. These results show how men primarily use digital aids with the purpose of promotion, while women utilize them additionally for exemplary or explaining purposes.

Talking to camera

As the basis of the format, the content creator talking to the camera is present in every video. However, the way in which they do this varies. Firstly, a content creator can simply explain something in front of the camera. In this case they are not holding something and are directly facing the camera. This way of talking to the camera is present in every video.

In addition, content creators sometimes show an item while they are talking to the camera. They may, for instance, hold up a backpack or a mobile phone. This technique is applied most frequently by female content creators. 78% of female produced videos show the content creator showing something on screen, opposed to 33% of male created videos.

Lastly, a content creator may speak to a different person while they are addressing the camera. This happens when something happens off-screen or when they want an outsider perspective. It is shown by the creator facing another way or looking over the camera while speaking. They may also occasionally shift the camera perspective to show the person to which they are talking to, instead of themselves by way of an interview. As such there can be a temporary second content creator. This technique is applied least frequently (20%).

Transportation

The sub-categories of transportation are similar to the sub-categories of its audio equivalent, as they both convey transportation modes. However, they contain an additional category, bikes. These are notably not discussed in the advice of audio content. Furthermore, it is not

possible to reliably distinguish images of train from images of subways, as both transportation modes look alike. They are therefore grouped into the same category as trains.

The most often shown mode of transportation is by car (60%), corresponding to the audio category. However, cars are shown more often in the video content than they are mentioned. Male content creators show them at the same rate as they are discussed, but women show cars in 78% of their videos. Cars are therefore shown in a broader context than for the one in which they are discussed as a focus point.

4.3 Text on screen content

Aside from the video footage, content creators use on screen text messages (TOS) to provide additional information to their audience. TOS is widely used in the videos, as visible in the distribution of their frequencies, shown in Table 4.3. TOS can serve purposes of activation, recommendation, video structure, context, or emphasis, as well as to provide a destination or contributor name. The degree to which male and female content creators use them differs slightly. Women overwhelmingly use TOS for the purpose of recommendation (100%), activation (89%) and video structure. They do this at similar rates to male content creators (83%). Men, on the other hand, are shown to use TOS mainly for the purpose of video structuring. Compared to women, they make significantly less use of the format for recommendation purposes (50%). Videos made by male content creators are additionally void of emphasising TOS, while 56% of female created videos contain the format.

Table 4.3. Text on screen categories and frequencies

TEXT ON SCREEN Category	Total (15)		Female creator (9)		Male creator (6)		Female audience (4)		Neutral audience (11)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Activation	12	80	8	89	4	67	3	75	9	82
Recommendation	12	80	9	100	3	50	4	100	8	73
Video structure	13	87	8	89	5	83	3	75	10	91
*Context	8	53	6	67	2	33	3	75	5	45
*Contributor name	8	53	5	56	3	50	2	50	6	55
*Destination name	4	27	3	33	1	17	1	25	3	27
*Emphasis	5	33	5	56	0	0	3	75	2	18

Thirdly, TOS can be employed to structure the video. This type of TOS includes titles and headers, to provide additional information that aids the audience in discerning one section from the next. Structural TOS is used most frequently in the videos, at a rate of 87%. No notable gender differences occur. Some detailed variances occur within the usage of activation, recommendation, and video structuring TOS, which will be explained in the following sections.

Activation

Activation is used to incentivise the audience of the videos to take immediate action, which can be done for several purposes. Some activations refer the audience to the content creator

themselves, while others may refer to products or services. Most often used is a promotional social media handle (73%), which refers the audience to the content creator's preferred social media page, to follow them on an external channel from YouTube. Social media handles are used slightly more often by female content creators than by male content creators (78% compared to 67%). In addition to the social media handle, some content creators include a specific request to follow them. This sub-category is present exclusively in videos created by women (44%).

Also frequently used in self promotion is 'like and subscribe' (47%), which encourages members of the audience to subscribe to the content creator's YouTube video and to like the video. However, this sub-category is employed slightly more frequently by male content creators (50%). Comparing this category to the video category of the subscription icon, shows that men likely use a textual format to encourage the audience to subscribe, while women are more likely to employ a graphic aid to reach this goal.

Recommendation

TOS used for recommendations often corresponds to one of the categories found in the audio data. Textual advice is given on ten different topics, of which only specific brand names and advice on whether to travel solo or not, do not occur as audio categories. Most frequently the advice given through TOS concerns either behaviour or documenting (53%). Both topics of advice are used more in videos created by women (67%) than they are in those by men (33%), although they are among the most frequently used recommendation TOS for both genders.

Next to these topics, women tend to offer textual advice on either brand names or destination choice (44%). Brand names also show a notable variance in the audience that they are aimed at, as the sub-category occurs in most videos aimed at women (75%), while they occur in only 18% of videos aimed at a neutral audience. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to offer textual advice on the itinerary (33%).

Video structure

Video structuring TOS can be divided into five different types: closing messages, a list of topics, structural headers, teasers, or titles. Of these types, structural headers, dividing the video into different section or topics, are most prevalent in the videos (73%). Structural headers are most frequently used by women, in 89% of videos, while men use them in only 50% of their videos.

Other structural TOS that are used with some regularity are the title and the closing message (33%). These sub-categories signify the beginning and ending of a video. Both categories are used at similar rates by male and female content creators.

5. Interpretation: in search of latent messages



When looking at the categories and frequencies presented in Chapter 4, some patterns start to occur. Reading the passages from the videos' content creators it becomes clear that these categories of topics do not exist independent of each other and that mentioning a topic does not necessarily mean that all videos share a similar opinion towards them. Through the conduction of a co-occurrence and network analysis, the relation between the topics becomes visible, constructing latent messages within them. This chapter will therefore further explain how the contents of the videos relate to one another as they form five distinct latent messages which are communicated to the audience.

5.1 Solo travel is an opportunity for growth

A common theme in the videos is that solo travel is not merely a fun experience but is moreover an opportunity for personal growth. More than anything, the audience is told that solo travel will change them and teach them new skills. This growth can be outwardly directed, to explore the world and learn about cultures, heritage, or cuisine, but it can be equally inward directed. A common remark is that solo travel teaches a solo traveller to become comfortable on their own:

"It is an amazing way to learn about yourself, to learn about the world on your own watch. Traveling alone is a way of learning how to be alone without feeling lonely. It's a way of learning how to enjoy your own company" – Caleb

"The most important part of solo travel is learning how to have fun with yourself and discovering how to be alone, but not feel lonely." – Sandra

"I think that's the whole point of solo travel. making friends and going on dates and creating these connections is a bonus that will likely happen, but if it doesn't, which sometimes it doesn't, you will still have enjoyed yourself. so if anything, consider it a trip to become friends with yourself." – Veronica

The dividing characteristic that separates solo travel from other forms of travel is the inherent aloneness, which these solo travellers view as a challenge. Being alone and feeling comfortable is not a self-evident quality for the content creators and as such the solo aspect is employed as a learning experience. However, being alone and doing things alone does not hold the same meaning for male and female content creators. There are nuances to be found in what type of growth they hope to achieve by setting out into the world alone. One important goal male content creators point out is that they aim to give their travel intention:

“I wish I had a goal or a vision of where I wanted to take this travel experience and how I wanted to shape my experience while I was traveling around that vision. For me having a more purposeful travel stint enables me to travel in a more meaningful way and also enables me to travel for much longer and further. It also helps me to meet new people along the way that have similar interests to me, and I also have a much more richer experience in many unexpected ways, which are more intentional as opposed to just floating around.” – Ben

“It's totally normal to feel lonely sometimes. I think that time is some of the best time just to reflect on life, you know why you're taking this trip, what you want out of it, and just you know the type of person that you wanna be.” – Dean

By travelling solo, they hope to discover more about their goals in travelling and in life and to develop their personality. Being on their own, they are also keen to expand their comfort zone:

“Be open to like any suggestions people have, be able to meeting new people, talking to people you wouldn't normally talk to, hanging around with, doing things that you wouldn't normally do, trying new foods, just everything. And like that's what traveling is about.” – George

“Be open-minded, be open to meeting new people, experiencing new things, trying new foods. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, just make sure that you learn from them, and you move forward.” – Caleb

For them, this comfort zone mainly entails doing things they are not used to doing and learning new things. There is a thrill-seeking element to this, as they are excited to dive into the unknown. There are some commonalities here with the female experience, as they too desire to expand their comfort zone. However, their comfort zone does not contain this same thrill-seeking element, as the women in the sample tend to focus more on empowerment:

“Traveling solo for me is when I feel like I grow the most and learn the most about myself. I personally wanted to do the journey for myself to kind of prove to myself that I could do it” – Cassie

“It's going to be a learning experience and it's gonna be something that's entirely unique. It is so like confidence boosting and empowering.” – Kate

Rather than merely trying new things, the female content creators express a need to prove to themselves that they are capable of undertaking a solo trip. Pushing boundaries for these women seems to be born out of a sense of insecurity. They view the planning and undertaking an itinerary as evidence that they are capable and therefore frequently connect the goal of personal growth to the experience of autonomy:

“You will feel the benefits of this like independence and this joie de vivre, that you feel when you're alone.” – Veronica

“Honestly for me I loved the hard parts, I loved figuring it out on my own and I loved pushing myself and exploring a new place.” – Cassie

The impression that they are on their own and assigned to their own responsibility gives a sense of empowerment that these female content creators strongly sense through solo travel. This need to prove themselves is not found in the accounts of male content creators and seems to be more specific to the female experience. This is further highlighted by the frequency of the concern of being alone among women:

“The thought of just going off and alone into the world is always gonna be a scary feeling at first.” – Millie

“Because you're by yourself you are your guardian, so you have to be on lookout for yourself at all times.” – Jane

There is an inherent sense of insecurity in the accounts of women on being alone in the world. The reports of a heightened sense of awareness further emphasize the empowering aspect of travelling solo as these women perceive to stand for themselves at all times. Travelling alone is a barrier to be broken as much as it is a goal to achieve. This precedent is visible in practical choices that women advice in their videos. For example, ease is a frequently mentioned aspect in destination choice for women:

“If you're new to traveling solo, start small. You don't need to like dive all in and do your first solo trip in like Thailand for three weeks, you know. You can just start small, go somewhere in your home country, just go somewhere a few hours away and take a weekend trip by yourself. Everyone's comfort zone is different so like push yourself a little bit, you know. But don't just like dive off the deep end and then taint your entire experience because of that. Don't psych yourself out about it, just start small.” – Jane

“Go at your own pace. If you've never travelled solo before, maybe, just maybe you shouldn't dive in head first into a yearlong trip around the world. Maybe you should dip your foot in by travelling locally or just to your neighbouring country. Starter destinations that are not too challenging to visit, for example if you're American you might wanna go to the UK first or Canada or Australia, because you can already speak the language or maybe you just wanna start off with easy laid back trips to the beach. You know, go to Thailand, go to Costa Rica, instead of a full on hiking trip in the wilderness somewhere. Wherever your comfort zone lies, you know, don't take a giant leap outside of it if you're not ready to do that, just take that first baby step.” – Emma

These accounts show hesitation to dive into the solo travel experience all at once, and women frequently advice to employ a step-by-step procedure. The experience is meant to build confidence through process rather than blunt exposure. Although Caleb mentions something similar, this concept is absent in further accounts by male content creators. Overall, the accounts on personal growth show a bolder approach in men, focusing on personal development and extension of boundaries. On the other hand, women show a more cautious

approach to this with a focus on empowerment and confidence building, overcoming perceived personal barriers.

5.2 Solo travel is a social experience

While solo travel is undertaken alone, the videos place a large emphasis on the social aspects of the experience. As Chapter 4 showed, meeting new people is named frequently as a motivation to travel solo, especially by male content creators. Although this desire stems in part from an intrinsic want to make new friends, it also ties into social concerns of loneliness that may arise. As a solo traveller is primarily on their own, they do not have a companion by default that fulfils any social needs a solo traveller may have. The content creators often indicate that undertaking activities alone and being comfortable alone are not self-evident in their day-to-day lives, leading to a fish-out-of-water experience, or they may even feel that in their absence they are missing things at home:

“When you're traveling on your own there're gonna probably be hours and hours where you're by yourself and you may not have anyone to talk to. You won't be able to talk on the phone because you probably won't have service. You know even the people around me on trains were usually talking in a different language, and so I couldn't even occupy my mind by listening to what they were talking about. So like I said, it's totally normal to feel lonely sometimes.” – Dean

“On my first solo trip I remember landing in Copenhagen and I felt so alone. I was spending so much time on social media, feeling fomo from what my friends and my family were doing back home, and here I was in one of the coolest and greatest countries in the world and I couldn't even get my mind right.” – Millie

“Another thing to consider when you are traveling alone is loneliness. Traveling alone isn't for everyone, (...) It can feel quite weird when you're in a restaurant and you're eating on your own and you're surrounded by couples and I'm just there with my camera and, you know, it's not for everyone.” – Caleb

This desire for social interactions and to combat these feeling of loneliness shine through in much of the advice that is given in the videos. First and foremost, the desire to meet people and to combat loneliness translates to concrete actions that content creators advice to their audience. The category meeting people contains a diverse set of strategies that solo travellers can employ and that in turn influence other decisions. Most prominently featured here is the choice of accommodation. Meeting people at the accommodation is perceived as the first and most important step to meet people, therefore leading content creators to advice their audience to choose an accommodation based on the prevalence of social interactions. In most cases, hostels are advised:

“If you're travelling solo accommodation might be the dividing line between feeling lonely on your travels or not feeling lonely and the way I typically get around the loneliness issue is staying in hostels.” – Emma

“Stay in hostels. Hostels is the hub of solo travellers. That's where most, majority of solo travellers go to, because it's so easy to meet people. (...) not only do you sleep in

the same dorm room as people, there's often meals you can eat together like breakfast or sometimes dinner, and so you meet lots of people. There's also day tours you can go on and that is where you meet other solo travellers. Also staying in hostels, a lot of people are in the same situation where they're traveling solo and they want to meet other people, so when you're staying in hostels you see a lot of like-minded people and that's who you wanna meet.” – Jack

Choosing an accommodation is for these content creators not solely about a convenient location or a roof above their head but serves primarily as a location that increases the likelihood of meeting new people. This principle of the likelihood of social interaction informing concrete decisions also applies to the activities that these solo travellers advise to their audience. Following the accommodation, group activities are the most frequent way in which solo travellers are advised to meet people to the extent that they are advised to undertake these activities for mainly this purpose, over other benefits they might have:

“Another great way I connected with people was on free walking tours, or just engaging in any of like the free activities that hostels might be putting on for their guests.” – Dean

“One thing I always try to plan on every single solo trip is some sort of group tour or activity. I find that it's a really nice way to chat with other people, meet people from all over the world.” – Kate

Another viewed primarily as a social activity is drinking alcohol. Although it is discussed with precaution, mainly by male content creators who employ it as a way to initiate a relationship:

“Sat down in the hostel common room with my laptop editing some YouTube videos back in the day and a bunch of people just sit next to me out of nowhere. They just got on the bus from the other hostel, they're like ugh, are you drinking tonight, I'm like, no no I'm (getting some rest like ugh I'm just), so you gonna be you're doing some work, they're like, nononononono you, you go drinking. And then they uh come over with a bunch of drinks. Next minute I'm not editing videos anymore, I'm getting (curbed), (...) Anyway best decision I've made. Made a bunch of new friends, had a really good night, did a lot of cool stuff, it was great.” – George

“One thing I would recommend doing is come to one of those bars, if you're a guy, come to one of the bars that have all the girls hanging out the front, cause they'll sit down and they'll have a chat with you. Sometimes you have to buy them drinks or whatever, but that's cool. You know, if you want someone to talk to and you wanna have a more enjoyable experience then that's something I would definitely recommend doing.” – Steven

However, drinking alcohol is viewed by most with a fair amount of reservations, which is further elaborated upon in Section 5.4. While the social advantages of alcohol consumption come through explicitly in accounts by male content creators, the same does not hold true for the women in the sample. While they recognize the social aspects of the activity these

women mainly view alcohol consumption as a source of danger and tend to advise other activities for socialization and to abstain from the social pressure of drinking:

“I know that when you're traveling for the first time you wanna meet people, you wanna be social, and you can totally do that, but that doesn't mean that you have to get totally wasted. And so really watch it, really pace yourself when you're drinking; and if you struggle with that then maybe don't drink. I haven't drank for four years now and I can tell you from the bottom of my heart, traveling sober is amazing as well.” – Sophie

These types of advice on decision-making for activities and accommodation illustrate how the desire to meet people informs many aspects of the solo traveller's potential itinerary. Aside from these practical decisions, the social experience also comes through in how the solo traveller is supposed to act according to the videos. Many of the behaviours discussed in the videos apply to social interactions and the initiation of these interactions. As discussed in Chapter 4, for instance, some of the more common behavioural advice is to be confident and proactive. Travellers are therefore not only encouraged to seek out situations in which they can meet other people, but they are also encouraged to take the first step and to adjust their attitude accordingly:

“On Instagram if you see someone's in the local area and they might be traveling by themselves, maybe they're in a group, just message them. See if they wanna hang out. (...) message them and then you might be able to meet up or whatever.” – Jack

“If you can find it within yourself just to strike up a conversation, I've found that it's really worth it in the long run, because you could have a new best friend to explore a city with for the day.” – George

Up until this point, the social experience has been mostly about the desires of solo travellers to meet other people. However, it also translates to other social concerns and corresponding actions that solo travellers may experience, that relate more so to how others view them as solo travellers. Solo travel advice does not only focus on how to interact with people to connect with them, but it is also aimed at balancing socially acceptable behaviour, and to appear convincingly to other people. There are two aspects to these social types of concerns. Firstly, solo travellers amount a great deal of attention to the normality of the solo aspect of solo travel:

“The first thing you might struggle with, and honestly, I think it was the first thing that I found quite challenging, is to eat out alone. It can be really weird to walk into a restaurant by yourself, especially if when you arrive at that restaurant you see everyone in there and it's all groups of people or couples or peoples on dates and stuff like that and you're going to be the only person sitting by yourself in a restaurant. It can be quite intimidating;” – Steven

“Some people get awkward about being by themselves. I used to go to the movie theatres by myself, and I remember it wasn't a big deal when I was in university. I think it was like two-dollar movies on Tuesdays. It was something ridiculous so

everyone would generally go by themselves. but I remember when I moved to Vancouver. and I didn't really have anyone to go to the movies with, I was new there. I went by myself, but then I got so embarrassed. (...) And so I'm in the movie theatre, I recognize someone coming. They were the row behind me, (...) like they saw me, and I pretended like I didn't see them.” – Louise

As these solo travellers perceive activities such as eating out as a social activity, they describe a worry of being thought of as not normal or even weird for being alone. Although they express that this is an aspect of travel to get used to, they do warn their audience of its occurrence and the need to adjust to this. Secondly, there is an aspect of politeness. Content creators frequently express social concerns based on a fear of offending someone or something:

“Don't be an ignorant tourist like try to at least learn a few words in the mother tongue of the place you're visiting even if it's just like do you speak English? Like you don't wanna just be that asshole that just assumes everybody speaks English, you know.” – Cassie

“I remember feeling this huge amount of guilt. Like, who was I to be going to Rome for a month alone for no reason at all, other than my own desires. did I really deserve this trip? would this benefit anyone?” – Veronica

“If you're travelling to a conservative country don't wear boob tubes, crop tops and short shorts, because people will a, be kind of shocked by that (...)” – Emma

“I feel like women are kind of like, and I've gotten this question from you guys, you're like afraid to be rude or to look stupid or whatever.” – Jane

Solo travellers express a diversity of concerns where they offend someone or are deemed rude or are even undeserving of solo travelling. It is implied that they adjust their behaviour as to not stand out from the crowd and to adhere to local cultural norms. However, as Jane's statement alludes to, social concerns on how a solo traveller is perceived applies almost exclusively to videos created by women. They seem to be more so than their male counterparts concerned with the opinions of others and feel a need to fit in or to adhere to people's wishes to a larger degree. Cultural dressing conventions or modesty culture is a social aspect of travel that appears to be unique to the female experience. Where man advice to not 'look like a tourist,' referring not only to dressing but to a general attitude, women such as Emma are more specific about which clothing is acceptable and which isn't.

As such, the social experience is not only one that blankets solo travel as a whole, but also one that divides the male and female experience. As men appear to be driven more by an intrinsic desire for meeting new people and, to a degree, a concern of loneliness, women are more frequently concerned with how they are perceived not only as a solo traveller, but also as a woman.

5.3 You can do whatever you want

Rather than set a strict itinerary, the videos in the sample emphasize the flexible characteristics of solo travel. An advantage of a lack of a travel companion is that the solo traveller has a large degree of freedom to make decisions for themselves. This characteristic of solo travel is seen most prominently in the way that the content creators describe the process of itinerary planning. An emphasis is placed on creating a fluid itinerary, where most activities are planned at the destination itself. However, as this section will illustrate, the male and female content creators in the sample interpret the meaning and consequences of freedom in different ways. The commonality here is that freedom, in essence, means that one is free to make their own decisions. What differs is the content and extent of these decisions, and what it is that they wish to be free from. For male content creators, freedom is often interpreted as spontaneity and flexibility:

“This is one of my favourite tips about solo traveling and that is Freedom. The freedom you have when you're solo traveling compared to traveling with someone else or in a group is like crazy. You can literally choose when you get up every single day, you can choose to go out, you can choose to skip breakfast, have breakfast, have five meals, six meals, eight meals, you can literally do what you want when you want. If you wanted to suddenly fly across the world, you can do that, if you're bored of a country. The freedom you get is just unbelievable and you can't, there's no way of having that in a group, cause you've always gotta compromise and make sure that someone else agrees with you.” – Jack

“When you're traveling you want as little stuff as possible. Having a bag that's way too big, uh, and packing all this stuff, it stops you from cutting away from the consumer lifestyle. Having a much smaller pack enables you to live a more minimalistic lifestyle and helps you to be free from carrying the burden of all of that stuff on your shoulders. You'll feel so free and so much happier I guarantee it. You'll take a lot less time to pack your backpack and you won't have all of that stuff to worry about.” – Ben

Freedom, in this context, means that the solo traveller is able to make instant decisions based on their immediate desires, be quicker in the process and decide their specific itinerary at the last minute. Especially for Jack, not having a companion with different preferences means that he is free to move in unpredictable ways and is free to act upon impulses. These notions of freedom are communicated as well through the behavioural advice that these men give. They put more emphasis on being open and spontaneous, compared to their female counterparts. This is reflected in their approach to itinerary planning:

“Be prepared to change your plans in the blink of an eye. You could be traveling, you could have a set route, you could know where you're meant to be every single day, you could have your accommodation booked for the next week and a half, but you might see something that you think is an amazing and once in a lifetime opportunity that pops up and you have to take that.” – George

“I was just really excited and there was just a sense of fear too, just being in a new country. And I think all of this was heightened by the fact that I didn't have a clear plan for the first few days of my trip. I really just knew the city I wanted to be in, and

I had a couple of hostels in mind that I would like to stay at, and that was pretty much it. I could have made the start of my trip a lot easier on myself, just by over planning for the first few days, and maybe even the first couple of weeks. And by over plan I mean just finding specific activities that you wanna do in each place, that make you excited and having your accommodation clearly laid out, knowing exactly where you need to be each night. I think this would have just really eased me into the experience a bit better” – Dean

The advice on itinerary reflects an openness to change and to be carried through the experience, rather than to guide it. Dean’s statement especially is multi-faceted as he implies a different approach based on the experience and level of comfort of his audience. While he suggests a rigid itinerary for the first days to get comfortable with the experience, he does not necessarily recommend this itinerary strategy for the duration of the trip. Moreso, he confesses not to have employed the strategy himself. Moreover, Dean gives a specific definition of what he means by ‘overplanning.’ This gives some insights when compared to the itinerary choices of the female content creators:

“You don’t have to have it all figured out beforehand. You don’t need to go crazy with like stressing yourself out about every small detail. Obviously, the basics, where you’re staying, transportation, how you’re getting around, those kind of things like the currency, the basics, you need to know. The cultural norms, what to wear, that kind of stuff research beforehand” – Jane

“Part of the fun it’s definitely figuring it out once you’re there. You can just get there and then you can ask a bunch of locals, maybe your Airbnb host or the people at the front desk at the hostel. I personally like to look up a few things in advance just to kind of plan out my day.” – Cassie

While these itineraries do not defer much from Dean’s it is the way in which they are described that sets them apart. The same characteristics that Dean describes as overplanning are part of most fluid itineraries described by the female content creators. While Dean considers planning accommodation and activities in advance, many of the women describe these aspects as the basis and employ fluidity more so once they plan specific days or timeslots. This example shows how rigid and fluid are interpreted differently. In general, the female content creators show a greater tendency for research, even when they do hold a vastly more fluid itinerary. Fluid may mean not to book certain activities, but as Cassie mentions some research is done into which activities they would like to do roughly at a certain time. Even Sophie, who shows the most flexibility in her itinerary shows some preparational behaviour:

“I am the type who just loves to show up somewhere and totally wing it. I went to Bangkok nine years ago with a one-way ticket and nothing booked, and I had the best trip of my life, but I did read up on scams, dangers, and things to know before I went.” – Sophie

The reduced amount of research and planning, combined with a fluid itinerary, seems to be reflected in the men’s view towards finances. They more often reflect concerns over finances,

as they view sufficient funds to be a contributing factor to freedom. Having no debts and sufficient funds enables them to travel for longer and have more freedom in their travel decisions. This also reflects in a higher frequency of mentioning spending behaviour:

“It’s very very good to pay off your debts. You’ll have absolutely no obligation to come back home. You’ll have no financial responsibilities back home to worry about and, uh, you’ll feel a much stronger sense of freedom and you’ll be able to travel for much much longer.” – Ben

“Going smaller usually means you can avoid some extra fees and make your trip just a little bit more cheaper for you.” – Dean

There is an overall tendency, among both men and women, to keep a tight grip on how much money is spent to save as much money as possible which can be spent efficiently. The male content creators stand out in this aspect in the frequency in which they tend to mention this in their videos.

Where male content creators emphasize the flexibility and spontaneity aspects of freedom, the female content creators often interpret freedom at a more existential level. For them freedom is not as much about acting upon impulse as it is to act according to their own agency:

“I hadn’t made a decision for myself selfishly until I was around twenty-five years old. it took me twenty-five years to finally decide that I was gonna do something for, me just for me. not for my family, not for my resume, not for, you know, the group collective well-being; genuinely a selfish decision. and that decision was my first solo trip. I decided that I had a month to spend in Italy. there was no reason for me to be there. there was no family, there was no friend, there was nothing, there was no work.” – Veronica

“I personally wanted to do the journey for myself to kind of prove to myself that I could do it, to have time to just think freely. It was like the perfect chance to kind of self reflect without the distractions that like make up my identity like my friends or the internet or the little trappings of day to day life and instead just kind of was stressed into a brand new environment with just just me and my my brain.” – Cassie

These examples show a tendency to explore intrinsic needs and personality traits and develop their own personality separate from the influence of day to day life and social media. For these women, freedom is not just doing what they want at the moment they want to do it, but also discovering what it is that they want or need. This interpretation corresponds to statements made in previous literature on female travel motivations (*Poopale Rattinan & Selamat, 2018; Osman et al., 2020; Hosseini, 2022*), as it is geared at self-empowerment and an escape from societal pressures. While this literature was focused primarily on the experiences of Muslim and Asian women, the sample in this research consists predominantly of women from an Anglospheric context. This perspective shows an added dimension in the perception of freedom by women, as their descriptions fall somewhere between the male interpretation of freedom as flexibility, and the Muslim or Asian representations of freedom

as an escape from traditional gender roles. While the women in the sample explain a want of escape from society to some extent, they do not emphasize traditional gender roles as heavily as previous studies. It illustrates a spectrum in the interpretation of freedom from practical towards existential, in which women tend towards the existential dimension to different degrees, while male accounts tend to remain at the practical dimension. While both show to favour flexibility and spontaneity during their solo trip, they employ this to a different extent. On top of that women often take the concept of freedom beyond their itinerary choices and apply it to their independence in itself.

5.4 The world is a dangerous place, but a little more for women

A common theme across the videos is safety, being mentioned in most videos in some capacity. Solo travellers tend to recognize some form of danger during their trip, stemming not necessarily from the act of travel itself, but from the fact that they are alone and lacking the safety net of their community at home. Moreover, these solo travellers often travel to a place that they have not explored before, which means that they are in most cases not familiar with the surroundings, the culture, and the language. They therefore seem to recognize the vulnerability of the position that they are in. When talking about safety concerns that they may have, the content creators tend to use general terms to describe the situation or the measures that they are to take:

“Obviously have a good time but don't, don't get so drunk that you're like I don't know where I am because that puts you in danger and at the end of the day even if you are with people, you don't know them, you haven't known them for a long time. So just be careful even though you think it is safe. You never know who it can be.” – Jack

“Think of the things that you already do to stay safe and apply that when you're traveling. For example always know your surroundings. Of course you need to research the area that you're going to and make sure that you know the customs, the environment, and the dangers” – Millie

The audience is told to be careful, take note of their surroundings, and follow their instincts. But the question arises what this danger consists of. In some ways it is left to the audience to deduce that when they need to watch their belongings, for example, there is a risk of theft. But especially when the danger comes from other people or places, it is left unclear to some capacity what is meant.

This is where differences start to occur between advice given by male and female content creators. For men, the most common safety concerns mentioned are losing their belongings and scams. Five out of six male content creators mention these concerns. These men therefore tend to be cautious when it comes to their finances and their belongings:

“Hide money, have like four different places you keep your money so that if you do lose some or you have to give it away to like bribe someone or whatever, you're gonna be all right.” – Jack

“Pack lightly. This just makes it easier to keep track of everything that you have with you. It also makes you look less like a tourist, which sometimes can pinpoint you as a target for people that might wanna pickpocket you.” – Dean

It is common for men to advice on measures to blend into the crowd. The concept of looking like a tourist is something that is mentioned frequently and is advised to be actively avoided. They reason that looking unsuspecting makes them less easy to target as a victim for theft or scams. They also tend to focus on the handling of luggage and money. The men in the sample advice their audience to keep track of their luggage, to pack light, and to keep backup cash that is distributed across their belongings. They are also keen to keep track of the ‘right’ price for items and services that they intend to purchase. They tend to give this type of advice at higher frequencies than their female colleagues.

Although women share the concern of loss of belongings to a similar degree, there is an added aspect of marginalization. This is a concept that is not merely mentioned by women, but is in all instances applied to them, especially when it comes to safety. The account on safety during solo travelling by Jack illustrates this quite fittingly:

“So one of the biggest questions I also get asked is safety. Is it safe to go by yourself, is it dangerous? Like, my mum's not sure about whether I should go because it's so dangerous being a girl on your own. Obviously, I'm not a girl, as you hopefully know ((clicks tongue)). But I've met so many solo female travellers and there are certain places, especially if it's your first time, you should not go to. For example India and Sri Lanka can be kind of dangerous and you're (more) likely as a female to get a lot more eyes as you can call it. You let, you're more likely to get quite a lot of attention so sticking to countries like Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Indonesia, these countries are so safe for solo female travellers.” – Jack

When discussing the aspect of safety there is an immediate shift in focus from the general audience, to a female one by pointing out the dangers of women alone. Moreover, the measures suggested limit the options that women are given in their choice of destination in this instance. While this quote is illustrative, it is not merely an exception. Additional analysis on male and female terms used in the videos reveal a trend where women are viewed as disadvantaged based on their gender, while the same does not apply to men:

“There are some car sharing services (which means) basically like ride share with a driver who's going from one place to another which is usually very inexpensive uhm, I know there's something called Blablacar and there's some other options, but as a solo female traveller I personally did not partake because I was like you know what, let's just not risk it.” – Cassie

“You'll find a little bit of Dutch courage goes a long way and just because you go out alone doesn't mean you're going home alone. Now, for females this can be both easier and more difficult. And I need to choose my words carefully here, because there is definitely the safety issue of a woman going out alone, but it's also easier for a woman to meet people and you can meet other women, especially when you go out, you know, there's a sort of a code amongst travellers, from the people that I've spoken to, that it

is like if a girl goes out by herself and she sees other girls out hanging out then they're sort of welcome to join and everyone will kind of look after each other.” – Steven

“I get so many questions asking how I travel alone safely, especially as a woman.” – Sandra

Male terms, on the other hand, tend to be used in the context of a non-gendered form to address the audience. Content creators frequently address their audience as ‘guys’ irrespective of intended gender. Moreover, when men are specifically mentioned, they tend to be depicted as perpetrators rather than victims:

“Like how many times have I been in bars or whatever alone and something sketchy happens, a guy comes up to me and doesn't leave me alone” – Veronica

“A few minutes ago I was sitting in a park across the street, and two older men approached me. They had seen my camera and were asking how much I would charge to come to their house and take photos. So obviously using common sense a lot of red flags come up.” – Sandra

Whether justified or not, the idea that arises throughout the videos is that women on their own are in an especially vulnerable position, which calls for specific measures to be taken. These measures can be tied to various aspects of solo travel, such as destination choice, transportation, consumption of alcohol, or meeting other people. Especially in this case, it is notable that the danger described is reserved to an abstract level. Rarely do the content creators specify why it is more dangerous for a woman to travel alone, it is taken as self-evident. These statements, however, do imply that this danger stretches beyond the descriptions of danger that men provide, such as being more susceptible to theft or scams by virtue of being a tourist. The danger described here is one that is specific to the expressed female identity. For example, when reviewing the category system, there is a noticeable absence of concerns related to sexual interactions, but the statements do sometimes imply this undertone. Take the aforementioned statement by Emma for example:

“Don't drink too much. Ladies, you get me. A really horrible annoying part of having all these bits apparently is that people will try and take advantage of you, okay?” – Emma

Emma uses ‘bits’ to describe female bodily characteristics and implies a danger specifically related to these characteristics. Being drugged or harassed comes with similar sub-text, implying that women do not face safety issues based merely on their status as a tourist that can be taken advantage of financially. They can additionally be taken advantage of in a physical sense. This marginalizing aspect for women restricts them in their perceived ability to move and act, which is evident in the advice they provide to their audience. More so than men, these women emphasize to not consume alcohol, to not walk alone during the nighttime, and to dress modestly. Above all, women are told to follow their instincts:

“Our intuition is a lot sharper than you think and if you've got that little voice in the back of your head that's telling you this is bad you don't need to be polite, you don't

need to explain yourself, you don't need to say yes, you don't need to be honest.” – Sophie

“When you feel like something is off, when you have a gut feeling that there's something wrong about the situation then follow your instincts and stop whatever you're doing or leave. You're allowed to change your mind when you feel uncomfortable. Make sure you're making your own decisions and not having anyone else coerce you into doing something that you might feel hesitant about.” – Millie

Striking about the use of intuition is that it does not require a situation to be inherently dangerous. Women are told to be aware of situations and their comfort levels and an increased rate, and to act upon a subjective feeling of safety over an objective level of safety. It shows how these women abide by a 'better safe than sorry' mentality in their movements and interactions.

Something that is also noticeable, especially for women, is how the existence of danger in the world is specifically detached from the act of solo travel, and generalized to the overall experience:

“I can say that I have felt more unsafe a lot of the times in the US in certain situations, than I have abroad. Bad things can happen literally anywhere” – Jane

“It happens at home and it happens in other places around the world. I don't wanna overstate the dangers of travel at all, because having been to some supposedly super dangerous places I have to say I felt very very safe there.” – Emma

The purpose of the comparison serves on one hand to express that the world is dangerous regardless of where you are and to therefore be careful at all times, but on the other hand it mediates the danger of solo travel. By implying the existence of danger at the home location, the content creators reduce the perceived risk of solo travel, therefore inspiring their audience.

These notions of safety concerns and risk avoidance illustrate how the videos portray a world that is inherently unsafe, but therefore not less worth exploring. They never actively discourage their audience from travelling. Rather, they implore them to take measures to reduce risks. While this holds true for both men and women, there is an added gravity of this for women. Not only do female content creators more often report concerns related to their gender, but the female audience is also more often discouraged from undertaking certain activities or going to certain places, reducing their perceived movement compared to men. So while the world is viewed as a place of risk and danger by both genders, the world appears to be viewed as somewhat more dangerous for women.

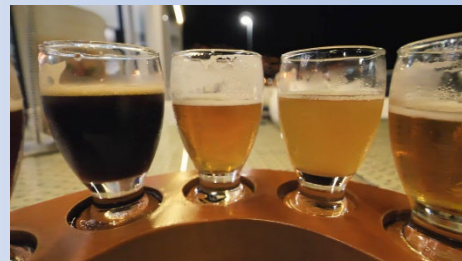
5.5 Show versus tell

One of the essentials to the format of a video is using visual imaging as an addition to a spoken message. The basic format of these travel videos is to show the person who is bringing the message. Some videos by male content creator are based in their entirety on this video format. However, most of the videos and all of the videos by female content creators supplement this by providing additional types of footage. While the video footage is not necessarily used to provide a message on its own by the content creators, it provides the videos with support for the spoken content. The videos therefore all balance show versus tell aspects, which creates distinct visual stories that differ between content creators of different genders. Visual imaging is used for a variety of reasons, emphasising the advice that is given and visualising the picture that is created of solo travel. The footage often provide an impression that is linked to what is said at the current moment, especially when this message provides a warning. Such is the case for advice on walking alone at night or consuming alcohol:

“Don't walk through dark streets or dark alleyways alone.” – Millie



“Don't get too drunk at night, because of course people can take advantage of you.” – Caleb



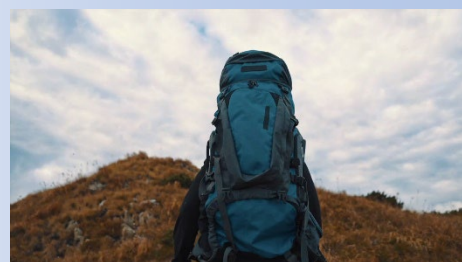
This emphasis can be applied to merely show the subject of what is being told, but more often the footage has a purpose to provide an impression of a situation, for instance of the destination or an activity or to provide visual explanations of processes such as accommodation booking or downloading applications. But aside from content related purposes the footage is used most prominently for promotional purposes. These purposes contain categories such as subscription icons internal video clickthroughs, sometimes given in visual form and sometimes in the form of TOS. Male and female content creators provide this footage at similar rates. The difference lies in their comparison to other types of footage. While for women these categories occur at similar rates as other types of footage, they are part of the primary imaging types for male content creators.

Male content creators generally apply their primary focus to showing footage of themselves telling a story, adding promotional cues to this footage. Aside from a promotional purpose, the video footage also shows a high frequency of impressional footage. When men use other types of footage in their videos, they are most frequently showing destination impressions or activities undertaken during a solo trip, such as physical activities or meeting people. They also show their luggage or transportation in their travel images. These are generally used in the context of showing their audience what solo travel looks like, without referring specifically to what is shown in the images:

“(music)” – Steven



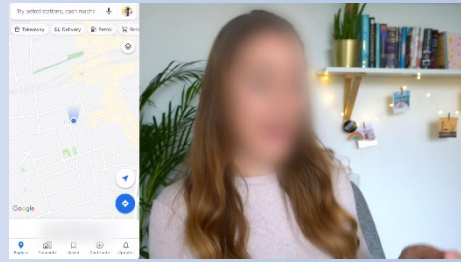
“If I could go back, I think I would just like to be more generous. I think there were opportunities where I could have just been a blessing to people and maybe bought them a meal” – Dean



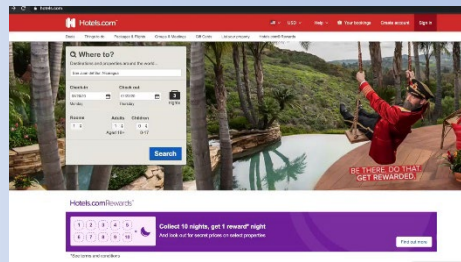
As these quotes and their corresponding images show, the spoken words do not necessarily correspond to the images shown. In Steven’s case there is no spoken text, but merely music to serve as a transition between segments. He does provide a textual description of the destination name to tell his viewers where the destination impression originates. The images are there to show an impression of solo travel and offer inspiration.

For women, the emphasis is less on showing the person that is talking and more on other types of footage. They show impressional footage to a similar or higher degree than male content creators, such as in the case of destination impressions, but also show a more diverse range of this type of footage. For example, women show images of themselves sightseeing, of food and drinks, and of transportation by car more frequently. However, aside from this impressional footage women are also more likely to use footage with an explaining purpose, especially screen recordings in combination with their own use of digital aids. These screen recordings are used frequently to show a process of downloading an application or to show a booking website for tickets or accommodations:

“Grab your phone, open up the google maps app,” – Emma



“There is a whole mess of different hotel websites to choose from.” – Sandra



In these cases the visual footage is used to provide examples of the information that is communicated in the spoken text. Sandra, for example, explains that travellers can choose from different websites to select and book their accommodation, but shows them in her screenshots instead of mentioning them specifically. Emma uses her screenshots to show her audience how to download custom maps that they can use in the absence of access to the internet. Rather than telling their audience how to do these things they choose to show them. In addition the female content creators, while telling their story to the camera, tend to show products more often to the audience. They thereby show them examples of luggage types, electronics, or other products that they recommend.

It is therefore shown that an overall difference exist in the visual storytelling of male and female content creators. Both men and women primarily use the talking to camera format as the primary way to convey information, but the way in which they balance this format with impressional and explaining types of footage implies that women tend to use show over tell more than their female colleagues, expressing visual information at a higher degree.

6. Conclusion



This thesis has attempted to bridge the gap between solo travel content creators and their audience by studying the messages of advice that they transfer to one another. It has thereby intended to uncover the differences in solo travel motivations and barriers between men and women that are created and perpetuated through online media. In this chapter, the outcomes of this research objective are presented and compared to previous literature to see how the results fit into the current discourse on solo travel and gender. The chapter will conclude by providing the limitations of this study and further recommendations and directions for practice and research.

6.1 Not all advice is created equal

During this study, a wide variety of topics of advice were uncovered and compared. While this advice is primarily communicated in the audio of a solo travel video, this is further emphasised and expanded upon in both visual images and on-screen textual messages. The topics of solo travel videos can therefore be distinguished into these three parts of media formatting, that together form their whole. In the audio information of the videos, the content creators have discussed different topics that relate to solo travel advice, including advice on why to travel solo, how to behave, what to worry about, and which practical decisions to make. These decisions include topics such as destinations, accommodation, itinerary, transport, finances, what to bring, and how to meet other people. However, not all of these topics are discussed to the same extent and differences occur in the frequency to which men and women discuss these topics, or at which audience their advice is aimed. Most notably, Women prioritize discussions on ways of documenting, destination choice, and modes of transportation compared to their male colleagues, while the men in the sample focus more heavily on their attitudes towards solo travel and financial advice. While this division provides some insight into the difference in how much certain topics are discussed between gender, a more detailed picture can be painted when looking at the contents of these categories. This reveals how men and women hold different focuses when discussing topics of travel advice. The frequency analysis shows how male content creators emphasize advice geared towards social interactions more heavily than women. While both these genders put a large emphasis on this subject, the frequencies for male content creators were shown to be higher for topics such as social requirements for accommodation, alcohol consumption, or social behaviours. They also showed a higher frequency in management of their finances during a trip, while they placed less emphasis on financial preparations beforehand. Women, on the other hand, show more emphasis on topics related to preparedness, such as keeping important documents, insurance, or saving money for a solo trip. This distribution of topics shows different focuses of men and women within their travel advice. Additionally marginalization was found as a category that stands out in its aim at women specifically. When marginalization is discussed

in the videos, it applies almost exclusively to women. Marginalization is a frequent cause for concern and causes some forms of perceived danger to be specified for women only, creating an image of increased concern for this gender group, over concerns for men. It can therefore be concluded that men and women do not only have different focuses in their discussion of solo travel advice topics, but that there is also an implication of inequality between men and women in terms of travel concerns.

The visual footage of the videos was likewise distinguished into several categories, which showed some overlap with the advice provided in the audio. Solo travellers primarily used the sit down and talking to the camera format in their visual footage and added to this with other types of footage to different degrees. The frequency distributions show a difference in the degree to which the content creators use the concept of 'show versus tell,' as men show a larger tendency to talk to the camera for the duration of the video, while women use a larger variety of footage. The female content creators were more likely to show footage of their solo travel trip and made more use of graphic aids. When employing different types of footage, men show a higher degree of using promotional imaging, such as video clickthroughs or subscription icons. It can therefore be concluded that men and women use the visual format with slightly different purposes. Female content creators tell a more visual story in general, using a larger variety of footage, while male content creators utilize talking to the camera more, thereby providing priority towards the story told in the audio. For them, the visual footage mainly serves a promotional purpose.

Finally, the audio and visual footage are complemented and emphasised by text on screen (TOS). This text, which is added to the videos during the post-production stage, also shows a variety in usage. It is overall used mainly for structural purposes in the videos, adding transitions between segments and indicating what certain sections will be discussing. However, it is also used to a different extent by the male and female content creators to activate the audience, emphasize their text, offer context, or give recommendations. Especially female content creators show a tendency to offer additional advice through TOS and to add emphasis, context, or an activating message. The male content creators tend to use TOS primarily for structural purposes. They are also shown to activate their audience through the use of TOS.

Overall, it has become visible that male and female content creators of solo travel advice videos discuss and show different topics of solo travel advice to their audience. To make sense of the meanings hidden within these topics, a further discussion of the latent messages within these categories and their frequencies is provided, aiming towards a further clarification of the research objective.

6.2 What is hidden beneath the surface

Several latent messages were discovered in the videos over the course of the study, which apply to different kinds of motivations and barriers that solo travellers may have regarding a potential solo trip. Contrary to previous findings that state that women more frequently aim towards a transformative experience than men (Yang, 2020; Ernszt & Marton, 2021), this study found similar rates for the discussion of personal growth between male and female content creators. However, they were found to interpret and therefore advice practices based

on this concept in different ways. The results show how women aim to push boundaries to expand upon themselves and attempt to negate doubts about themselves by proving that they are capable of solo travel. It corresponds to previous findings that women tend to experience a sense of pride about their solo travel achievements (Bianchi, 2016; Osman, et al., 2020). Male content creators, on the other hand, show an eagerness to learn new skill, instead pushing their boundaries in a thrill-seeking manner to find excitement in new experiences. Personal growth was therefore found in this study to be applied by men at a larger rate to practical skills, such as language learning, while for women it attends more so to a sense of independence, teaching them to navigate the world on their own and becoming confident with themselves.

This aloneness is a central aspect of solo travel, which is in turn interpreted in different ways by both genders. It is perceived by both men and women that solo travel is, contrary to its implications, a social experience. One of the primary goals is to meet new people and make friends. However, the search of growth and independence that women portray also shows a preparedness to face this aloneness, therefore seeing new friendships as a bonus rather than a goal in itself. This study has therefore found, that while socialization was found as a motivation for solo travel in previous studies (Laesser et al., 2009; Osman, 2020), it is more dominantly present in male accounts. They place socialisation central in their advice, as they explain to their audience which places to go to and which activities to undertake in order to meet people. Women, on the other hand, focus more on personal growth and autonomy, and are told to be more careful in their interactions, by virtue of their womanhood. This similarly shows a difference in perception of what it means to lack a travel partner. While previous research found that solo-travellers in general view the absence of someone to share experiences with, or to rely on, as a disadvantage to solo travel (Bianchi, 2016; Yang, 2020), this study additionally found that these perceived disadvantages are unequally distributed across genders. As male content creators tend to focus on the social experience, they tend to advice their audience to find other people to share their travel with, in search of social satisfaction. Women on the other hand see the absence of a travel partner more as a risk and emphasize the need to look after themselves and to follow their instincts, sometimes rejecting certain social interactions. They should be wary of especially unknown men and should not put themselves in positions of danger, by drinking too much alcohol or walking the streets at night.

As men and women navigate these opposing factors in growth and socialization, they tend to discuss freedom to a different degree. This study found, in accordance with previous studies, that women tend to interpret freedom at a more existential level, desiring an escape from societal pressures (Poopale Ratthinan & Selamat, 2018; Osman et al., 2020; Hosseini, 2022), while men favour flexibility and spontaneity (Yang, 2020). Freedom particularly allows men to act upon their immediate desires, whether that is to change their itinerary or to choose a restaurant for dinner. The research found in addition that these degrees of interpretation are found at a scale rather than a binary opposition, as the women in the sample tended to interpret freedom more so as an escape from societal norms in general and an escape from their routine, than as an explicit escape from gender norms. They discuss how solo travel allows them to let go of the wishes that family and friends have for them and not be influenced as much by social media. It is therefore concluded that women position their

interpretation of freedom on this scale towards an existential dimension, while men tend to remain at the end of a practical dimension.

What these motivations and their differences show is that first of all, men and women share many of the primary reasons to travel solo. Most motivations are mentioned at similar rates, but interpreted in different ways that cause the discussion of solo travel advice to emphasize different aspects of the experience. Male and content creators aim to achieve different goals and perceive the world differently to an extent. Although these goals and views primarily serves as motivators towards the audience to travel solo, female content creators do implicitly perceive boundaries in them. Societal pressure, a lack of independence, and mistrust are all topics that weave their way through these women's narratives. These are barriers that do not necessarily prevent them from solo travels, but that are perceived as hindrances in their day-to-day life and that require special measures to be taken. Solo travel is therefore a way to escape boundaries, but they may also be imposed on components of a solo travel trip. As women can be suspicious of strangers, they advice for more safety measures, such as following one's intuition, or not going out at night. In their search for personal growth and freedom, women show more restraint in their spontaneity than men. Thus, women put more emphasis on preparing the right documentation, what contents to bring and the planning of an itinerary, while men tend to figure these aspects out as they go.

On top of that, there are some explicit boundaries that results from content creators' accounts. These primarily stem from safety and financial concerns, often a combination of these two. Men tend to point out barriers stemming from financial worries, such as having debts, or not budgeting, which are perceived to endanger the freedom that the male content creators aim to achieve. They perceive financial means to enable freedom of movement as it allows them to travel for longer, undertaking any activity that they wish to undertake. It is therefore not surprising that their safety concerns focus primarily on the loss of belongings and scams. Consistent with previous findings (Jordan & Aitchison, 2008; Yang, 2020), men rarely mention physical harm as an obstacle on their solo travel trips, and safety measures primarily involve watching their belongings and not looking like a tourist, to avoid unwanted attention of scammers or pickpockets. While women share some of this financial concern, they experience an additional aspect of physical harm. The female content creators show an awareness of their vulnerable position as a woman and refer to their bodily characteristics and a sexualised gaze as a reason for concern. It is not uncommon to inform the audience of safety measures to dress modestly, and to stay sober during a trip. Safety concerns tied to marginalization therefore implicitly or explicitly restrict the freedom that content creators allow their audience, and particularly their female audience. Women are advised to avoid certain destinations, to abstain from certain modes of transportation or accommodation types, and to behave in a way that keeps them away from situations that are perceived as dangerous. Confirming the findings of Ngwira et al. (2020), these concerns are often perceived, rather than based on negative experiences that these women have had, but the view of women being vulnerable is perpetuated, nonetheless.

The messages that penetrate the advice given in the videos are further emphasised in the way that women and men are shown to make use of visual imagery in the video content. Male content creators tended to stick to face-to-face communication in their accounts, emphasizing the story told in the audio. The female content creators, on the other hand, illustrated a larger

tendency to make use of impressional or explaining footage, guiding their audience in the foresight and planning of their trip. They show them in a visual fashion how to book tickets or save maps and saturate their stories with impressions of destinations and activities, thereby creating a clear picture of what solo travel is like and how to approach the process. Both male and female accounts imply high chances for parasocial interactions and therefore a higher likelihood of acting upon the advice given through their direct face-to-face interactions and informal setting (McLaughlin & Wohn; Korres-Alonso & Elexpuru-Albizuri, 2022; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Penttinen et al., 2022). However, the use of visual imagery by women implies a larger degree of the visual imaginative, thereby stimulating motivation or anticipation (Goossens, 2000). It could therefore be argued that some of the restraining effects of the barriers that women portray in their verbal accounts are negated through the visual story that they tell, embedding a sense of confidence through thorough visual explanations, and a sense of anticipation through the visual impressions that they give of solo travel destinations and activities. Nonetheless, the latent messages discovered in the videos paint a picture of remaining inequalities between male and female solo travel experiences imbued in the advice that they are given, prompting an ongoing necessity for practices of increased awareness and contestation of gender assumptions and gendered practices.

6.3 The operation of qualitative content analysis to discover latent messages

As part of this study, the suitability of qualitative content analysis for analysing latent messages on gender was evaluated, with the aim of offering directions for future use of this method. Overall, qualitative content analysis has proven itself a useful tool in extracting information from existing media sources, which are not created for the purpose of analysis. The method enables the researcher to systematically identify and interpret topics of discussion, as well as visual imagery. This stems from the quantitative basis from which the content analysis is operated. While it is in its core a qualitative method, it allows the researcher to employ frequency counts to conduct qualitative comparison analyses, thereby identifying differences between groups. In this case, the use of frequency counts aided in identifying differences in the discussion of certain topics concerning solo travel advice. This systemic approach allowed for concrete numbers to form the basis of further analysis. On the other hand, the qualitative approach to content analysis added an interpretive element, allowing a deeper level to these frequency counts. The researcher is therefore able to not only evaluate which topics are discussed, but also to analyse the context of statements and the meanings that they hold. The qualitative approach therefore embraces some degree of interpretation that is not present in its quantitative counterpart. It can therefore be used as an addition to quantitative forms of content analysis in some cases. In this instance, the exploratory nature of the study called for interpretation beyond frequency counts, as it attempted to find nuances in the latent meanings that are given to the solo travel advice provided. It can however also be a useful method to employ in cases where only small amounts of data are present, disabling the use of methods for large samples, while still enabling a systematic approach to analysing this data. This is in some part due to the criteria for reliability that this type of analysis adheres to. The system's approach includes constant checks and balances, preferably through intercoder reliability, to encourage the researcher to critically reflect on their manner of coding and the subsequent findings. Furthermore, the procedural model that the researcher is encouraged to draft forms a concrete basis for the analysis that ensures the systematic approach throughout the study. The model functions as a guide that the researcher

can turn to for guidance and separates each step of the analysis to ensure an effective workflow, prior to starting the analysis process.

While content analysis has mainly been employed to analyse textual sources, it has also proven to be an effective method for analysing multimedia sources. The method allows the researcher to code topics of several formats separately, developing individual codings for audio, visual, and textual data, and cross analyse them with the aid of co-occurrence and network analyses. The researcher is therefore able to identify overlap between spoken text and visual imagery to further explore their relations. During this study it became apparent that although textual and visual data manifest their content in different ways, the subsequent co-occurrence and network analysis aided in finding their common ground. For instance, visual content showing solo travellers drinking alcohol does not hold meaning by itself, but comparing these images to the audio spoken during the duration of these frames revealed how this imagery is often used while discussing the dangers of alcohol, next to the consumption of it. The multimedia analysis therefore provided context to the footage shown in the videos.

However, due to the novelty of applying qualitative content analysis for multimedia sources, and its complexity, Atlas.TI was found to contain some limitations as a digital aid during this analysis. As of the time of analysis, Atlas.TI is not yet able to systematically conduct a co-occurrence analysis for textual and visual codings. As the program does not recognize which visual footage corresponds to which spoken text, it is not able to identify which visual codings occur with which audio codings. This poses a challenge for the researcher, as they are required to perform this type of co-occurrence analysis manually. This has proven a rigorous and time-consuming task. Researchers wanting to employ qualitative content analysis using these types of digital aids should therefore take note of this limitation. Aside from time induced disadvantages the lack of this function also includes a risk of human error, as it is more likely that connections are missed. Researchers employing this method should therefore be systematic in their approach to textual-visual co-occurrence analyses. This disadvantage applies in similar fashion to other methodologies employing visual-textual co-occurrences. However, as it is a useful tool for qualitative content analysis it should be approached with diligence.

Another possible disadvantage of qualitative content analysis is that the method does not account for skew of meaning or interpretation of the audience. Content analysis can provide insight into merely what is present in the content, without verification of intention. The possibilities of the methods are therefore limited to a select number of research objectives, containing only inferences about what is present in a text. The interpretative aspect of qualitative content analysis as such provides an additional challenge, as it attempts to extract some degree of meaning from the text. It is therefore dependent on the interpretation of the researcher themselves, without verification from the content creators. This imposes the problem of the researcher as an individual, imposing their own contextual frame on the research. Inter-coder reliability is therefore an essential part of the checks and balances of the methodology, providing the insights of multiple coders to partly mediate these issues. In the case of this study, the research was required to be undertaken by only one researcher. It was therefore necessary to find confirmation and outside perspectives from peers during the analysis and to not conduct the research in a vacuum. Moreover, additional note was to be

taken from the literature that preceded the analysis, to analyse whether the results are in line with previous findings on the topic. As such, qualitative content analysis is recommended to be conducted in teams of multiple researchers, and to be checked thoroughly for inter-coder reliability.

6.4 Recommendations for practice

UGC as an informal sector of information transfer is difficult to mediate, as it lacks an organized organisation behind it to moderate the content. It is therefore a sector that is not easily reached by independent research and its implications. However, this does not make it unsusceptible to societal change. It is therefore crucial to increase awareness on topics of gendered inequality, to set in motion a shift towards increased equality between people of different genders. This study is an attempt to contribute to this awareness first and foremost, adding to a gradual change within solo travel content and UGC in particular.

As the current range of solo travel advice on YouTube is focused largely on a neutral audience or a female one, it is recommended to pay attention to the necessity of this division and the lack of male oriented solo travel advice. At its current standing, the range of solo travel advice implies a male bias, in which men are seen as the base line, and women needing additional information. This study argues the industry would benefit from decreasing this perception. However, as Glotfelty (1996) argues, media should not be blind to sexual difference, thereby ignoring gender specific advice that may be found useful. A concrete recommendation following from this study is therefore that content creators, both in formal and informal media, increase focus towards specialized male advice, allowing information that is useful for the male traveller to crystallize into concrete forms. At the current time, the advice given on YouTube does not include information that is specifically useful for men, at least when regarding English spoken videos. This should be approached with some caution, as this specialization should not degrade from the attention paid to neutral and female oriented advice, as these target audiences remain equally important, especially with the gender specific challenges that women are found to face during solo travel. Moreover, this thesis recommends diversifying the range of solo travel advice even further, to provide more information aimed at non-binary or trans people, as it was found during this study that advice concerning the specific challenges they may face while travelling is wholly absent.

As organized tourism information services, mainly travel guides, have the ability to implement change in an organized fashion, they are strongly encouraged to lead by example, tapping into these new segments of male, non-binary, and trans solo travel information. Additionally, this thesis provides them with an insight into the format of UGC within the solo travel segment, allowing them to learn from and play into its success. While this study provides frequencies and categories of topics which are popular among UGC creators, it would be valuable to add to these existing topics with the inclusion of less prevalent topics of information.

While content creators on YouTube are in charge of their content, a critical look should be directed towards the inner workings of YouTube as a hosting website, and its algorithms in particular. As these content creators produce content that they are interested in sharing, it should not be ignored that the favouring of certain content by the algorithm influences the

type of content that is distributed to some extent. It is therefore recommended that YouTube and similar hosting websites are critical of the potential of favouring by the algorithm of content concerning specific genders, and that they ensure that a broad range of content is recommended, to provide their audiences with a full scope of the content that is present on their websites and to not discourage their content creators from producing content for a selective audience.

Aside from the diversifying the range of content for its audience, this study also recommends for content creators to pay more attention to the latent gendered messages that videos send out. Although gendered inequality may not be a priority when producing solo travel advice, this study should be viewed as a call to action, to pay increased attention to the gendered messages present in videos and whether these messages are justified.

Furthermore, the consequences that are implied in these messages, especially concerning safety and the position of women in society, should be paid attention to be tourism practitioners at the site and hosting destinations. This study has concluded inequalities in the perception of safety, and physical safety in particular, between men and women. These concerns in safety are consistent with previous literature on male and female solo travellers' experiences, and as such imply a need for increasing women's physical safety and solo travellers' safety more generally. These actions include objective safety measures to decrease the risks the solo travellers experience but should equally include subjective feelings of safety. Whether it be changes to policy, the physical environment, or the organization of tourism practitioners, all of these facets deserve increased attention to the amount and inequality of safety that men and women experience.

6.5 Limitations of this study and further research

This study has attempted to paint a picture of the gender inequalities that exist in solo travel advice videos. It has discovered a large amount of topics that are discussed in solo travel advice videos as well as some of the latent message that support these topics of advice. However, the explorative and qualitative nature of this research proposes some limitations that should be addressed. As the study has focused on analysing the content of a small sample of videos the inferences can be made solely on this content. Therefore, nuances that might be present in the meanings that content creators would give to their statements are not able to be clarified. As mentioned before, content analysis is limited to the material that is within the research. As such, content creators were not asked to clarify statements or provide additional context. On the same note, the research does not make inferences about the manner in which the audience interprets the context. This manner of analysis has its advantages. By taking a closer look at the content on its own, the research identifies what is present in the text, and only that. It can analyse the material before transfer of the message to the audience has taken place. Additionally, any context that the content creators did not convey in the text, does not make its way to the audience. Content analysis therefore analyses the text in its basic form, as it would appear to the audience itself. As content creators do not provide priority to certain segments of their videos, all data is viewed through the same lens and given the same amount of importance. However, this can also pose a disadvantage, as the outcomes of this study are not able to identify which pieces of advice would have the largest significance for solo travellers themselves. The frequencies of categories within the

videos and the messages subtract from them do not consider in which order certain topics are discussed, or the amount of time for which they occur. This offers a point of reference for future research into the topic, as it is currently unclear how topics of content are prioritized within solo travel advice videos.

Another limitation that should be taken into consideration, is that although the content is not interpreted through the lens of the content creator or the audience, some interpretation, and therefore some possibility of skewing, still takes place in the form of the researcher. Even though the interpretation of the content was discussed and verified by sharing the findings with peers, this study was undertaken by a single researcher, and as such it is likely that some of the preconceptions of the researcher have influenced the course of the study. It is therefore of essence that the procedure of this study is repeated, as well as extended to a larger body of material, to further verify the findings and subsequent conclusions.

Furthermore, as this study was of a qualitative nature, it examined a relatively small body of material. It is therefore recommended to extend the analysis to a larger sample and conduct a quantitative analysis to complete and verify the frequencies found in this study. As such, a more accurate picture can be painted of the degree to which topics of advice are present within solo travel advice videos.

To expand on the findings of this research, a closer look should be taken in the transfer of solo travel advice between content creators and their audience. Firstly, as no clarification is given on the intention behind the advice that content creators offer, future research into the clarification of this content may be valuable. Interviewing the content creators on the intention and meaning of the content within their videos could provide additional information on what they intend to transfer to their audience. On a similar note, valuable data could be extracted by further researching the impact of these videos on the audience. What do they take away from the advice that is given? Which pieces of it do they utilize whilst solo travelling? Or to which extent are they encouraged or discouraged by the videos to partake in solo travel in general? Subsequently, as this topic of research concerns user generated content, the influence that the audience has on the creation of future content could provide additional information into how certain messages are perpetuated, thus coming full circle.

With respect to gender, this study has taken a binary approach to studying solo travel advice. Therefore, it has assumed two categories: male and female. While data sampling showed that videos generally aim at either end of this binary, it should not be disregarded that there are many more genders partaking in solo travel, who are in need of advice before embarking on their trip. It is therefore encouraged to extend this research with a non-binary approach, enabling to study the broader spectrum of genders that is at play in the segment of solo travel. Although this may prove a challenge, it would prove to be valuable to unearth the specific challenges that non-binary or trans people perceive and experience during their solo travel trips.

Finally, solo travel advice videos, in their format, form only a small part within the broader segment of solo travel videos. Future research has the potential to focus further on other type of solo travel videos, such as travel vlogs, or destination specific videos, as well as videos on specific aspects of solo travel, such as packing or booking. Additionally, other formats and

languages offer possibilities for additional outcomes. This study had analysed full length videos in the English language. As YouTube has recently started to offer videos in the format of a short, and other media such as TikTok or Instagram provide similar options to post videos of a shorter duration, this type of format has started to offer an increasing amount of data on solo travel, which could provide additional findings in future research. Similarly, there is a range of videos in different languages that could provide further information on cultural gender differences within solo travel advice. It is therefore encouraged that researchers fluent in different languages and with understandings of the mechanisms of different cultures further contribute to the analysis of solo travel advice videos.

Overall, it can be stated that solo travel and gendered information are an area of study that offer a world of possibilities, of which this study has merely scratched the surface. This thesis has added a comparative perspective to an area of research that is overwhelmingly female centred, thereby allowing for a broader perspective in which to view gender inequalities. The results of this thesis have shown how gender inequalities continue to permeate our lives and language in often subtle ways. The exploration of solo travel content and their gendered messages serve to show one of these ways, exemplifying the broader experience of men and women as they navigate their lives. The limitations and recommendations this study propose should serve as a call to action and further exploration, as more potential areas for research are identified. As solo travel and gender continue to be studied by a growing number of researchers, the aim is to make travel just that little bit more equal, and to encourage more solo travellers, both male and female, to partake in this unique form of travel.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Detailed category system and frequencies: audio

AUDIO	Total (15)		Female creator (9)		Male creator (6)		Female audience (4)		Neutral audience (11)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
ACCOMMODATION	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
requirement: comfort	2	13	1	11	1	17	1	25	1	9
requirement: gender	1	7	0	0	1	17	0	0	1	9
requirement: local	3	20	1	11	2	33	1	25	2	18
requirement: location	4	27	3	33	1	17	1	25	3	27
requirement: price	4	27	3	33	1	17	2	50	2	18
requirement: ratings	2	13	2	22	0	0	2	50	0	0
requirement: social	11	73	6	67	5	83	4	100	7	64
type: Airbnb	6	40	4	44	2	33	2	50	4	36
type: couch surfing	2	13	1	11	1	17	1	25	1	9
type: guesthouse	1	7	0	0	1	17	0	0	1	9
type: homestay	3	20	3	33	0	0	1	25	2	18
type: hostel	12	80	7	78	5	83	4	100	8	73
type: hotel	4	27	2	22	2	33	1	25	3	27
ATTITUDES	10	67	5	56	5	83	2	50	8	73
negative	1	7	1	11	0	0	1	25	0	0
positive	10	67	5	56	5	83	2	50	8	73
BEHAVIOUR	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
be approachable	2	13	1	11	1	17	0	0	2	18
be careful	10	67	6	67	4	67	2	50	8	73
be confident	6	40	4	44	2	33	2	50	4	36
be laid back	2	13	1	11	1	17	1	25	1	9
be open	5	33	2	22	3	50	0	0	5	45
be positive	7	47	5	56	2	33	1	25	6	55
be proactive	6	40	4	44	2	33	3	75	3	27
be spontaneous	4	27	2	22	2	33	2	50	2	18
blend in	8	53	5	56	3	50	3	75	5	45
don't drink too much	5	33	3	33	2	33	1	25	4	36
don't go out alone at night	7	47	5	56	2	33	2	50	5	45
follow your instincts	8	53	7	78	1	17	3	75	5	45
touch base	2	13	1	11	1	17	1	25	1	9

AUDIO	Total (15)		Female creator (9)		Male creator (6)		Female audience (4)		Neutral audience (11)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
CONCERNS	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
being alone	9	60	8	89	1	17	4	100	5	45
being drugged	1	7	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	9
being lost	3	20	2	22	1	17	1	25	2	18
finances	2	13	0	0	2	33	0	0	2	18
getting killed	1	7	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	9
harassment	4	27	3	33	1	17	1	25	3	27
health	4	27	3	33	1	17	2	50	2	18
kidnapping	2	13	2	22	0	0	1	25	1	9
losing belongings	8	53	5	56	3	50	4	100	4	36
marginalization	7	47	5	56	2	33	4	100	3	27
nerves	6	40	4	44	2	33	1	25	5	45
safety home versus elsewhere	6	40	5	56	1	17	3	75	3	27
scams	6	40	3	33	3	50	2	50	4	36
social	11	73	8	89	3	50	3	75	8	73
DESTINATION CHOICE	10	67	8	89	2	33	4	100	6	55
ease	7	47	6	67	1	17	3	75	4	36
interest	1	7	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	9
popularity	3	20	2	22	1	17	0	0	3	27
price	4	27	3	33	1	17	1	25	3	27
safety	5	33	4	44	1	17	3	75	2	18
seasonality	1	7	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	9
DOCUMENTING	14	93	9	100	5	83	4	100	10	91
access to data	7	47	5	56	2	33	1	25	6	55
content creation	2	13	1	11	1	17	0	0	2	18
important documents	6	40	5	56	1	17	4	100	2	18
location sharing	11	73	7	78	4	67	4	100	7	64
memories	3	20	2	22	1	17	1	25	2	18
offline maps	7	47	5	56	2	33	4	100	3	27
ITINERARY	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
activity: drinking alcohol	8	53	4	44	4	67	2	50	6	55
activity: eating out	4	27	2	22	2	33	0	0	4	36
activity: physical	3	20	2	22	1	17	2	50	1	9
activity: sightseeing	2	13	1	11	1	17	1	25	1	9
activity: tours	5	33	3	33	2	33	2	50	3	27
planning	12	80	8	89	4	67	4	100	8	73
MEETING PEOPLE	13	87	8	89	5	83	4	100	9	82

AUDIO	Total (15)		Female creator (9)		Male creator (6)		Female audience (4)		Neutral audience (11)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
accommodation	10	67	5	56	5	83	4	100	6	55
cafés	1	7	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	9
connections	3	20	2	22	1	17	0	0	3	27
dating	3	20	2	22	1	17	1	25	2	18
girl code	2	13	1	11	1	17	0	0	2	18
group activities	6	40	4	44	2	33	2	50	4	36
journaling	1	7	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	9
nightlife	2	13	1	11	1	17	0	0	2	18
social media	5	33	3	33	2	33	2	50	3	27
MONEY (A)	13	87	7	78	6	100	4	100	9	82
backups	7	47	4	44	3	50	3	75	4	36
insurance	4	27	3	33	1	17	2	50	2	18
saving	3	20	2	22	1	17	1	25	2	18
spending behaviour	7	47	3	33	4	67	2	50	5	45
MOTIVATIONS	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
autonomy	8	53	5	56	3	50	3	75	5	45
escapism	3	20	1	11	2	33	0	0	3	27
exploration	7	47	4	44	3	50	2	50	5	45
freedom	7	47	4	44	3	50	1	25	6	55
inspiring others	4	27	1	11	3	50	0	0	4	36
lack of travel partner	3	20	2	22	1	17	1	25	2	18
meeting people	6	40	2	22	4	67	0	0	6	55
personal growth	12	80	7	78	5	83	4	100	8	73
PACKING (A)	11	73	7	78	4	67	3	75	8	73
contents: amenities	1	7	0	0	1	17	0	0	1	9
contents: clothes	1	7	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	9
contents: electronics	6	40	5	56	1	17	3	75	3	27
contents: minimalism	5	33	2	22	3	50	1	25	4	36
contents: safety measures	1	7	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	9
contents: valuables	2	13	1	11	1	17	1	25	1	9
luggage type	7	47	4	44	3	50	2	50	5	45
organization	1	7	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	9
TRANSPORTATION (A)	8	53	6	67	2	33	3	75	5	45
boat	1	7	1	11	0	0	1	25	0	0
bus	3	20	3	33	0	0	2	50	1	9
car	7	47	5	56	2	33	3	75	4	36
plane	4	27	3	33	1	17	1	25	3	27

AUDIO	Total (15)		Female creator (9)		Male creator (6)		Female audience (4)		Neutral audience (11)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
CATEGORY/subcategory										
subway	3	20	2	22	1	17	0	0	3	27
train	2	13	2	22	0	0	1	25	1	9

Detailed category system and frequencies: video

VIDEO	Total (15)		Female creator (9)		Male creator (6)		Female audience (4)		Neutral audience (11)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
CATEGORY/subcategory										
ACCOMMODATION	9	60	6	67	3	50	2	50	7	64
bathroom	3	20	2	22	1	17	1	25	2	18
booking	2	13	1	11	1	17	1	25	1	9
common space	5	33	3	33	2	33	2	50	3	27
dorm	5	33	3	33	2	33	2	50	3	27
private room	4	27	4	44	0	0	1	25	3	27
situation	4	27	2	22	2	33	1	25	3	27
ACTIVITIES	13	87	9	100	4	67	4	100	9	82
clubbing	2	13	2	22	0	0	1	25	1	9
drinking alcohol	5	33	3	33	2	33	1	25	4	36
food and drinks	7	47	5	56	2	33	1	25	6	55
health	1	7	0	0	1	17	0	0	1	9
meeting people	10	67	7	78	3	50	3	75	7	64
physical	12	80	8	89	4	67	3	75	9	82
relaxing	4	27	4	44	0	0	1	25	3	27
shopping	2	13	2	22	0	0	0	0	2	18
sightseeing	10	67	8	89	2	33	4	100	6	55
walking alone at night	5	33	3	33	2	33	1	25	4	36
BELONGINGS	9	60	6	67	3	50	3	75	6	55
luggage	8	53	5	56	3	50	3	75	5	45
money	3	20	2	22	1	17	1	25	2	18
valuables	6	40	5	56	1	17	3	75	3	27
DOCUMENTING	11	73	9	100	2	33	4	100	7	64
digital aids	8	53	7	78	1	17	3	75	5	45
navigation	4	27	3	33	1	17	3	75	1	9
pictures	4	27	3	33	1	17	2	50	2	18
research	3	20	3	33	0	0	0	0	3	27
writing	4	27	2	22	2	33	1	25	3	27
GRAPHIC AIDS	14	93	9	100	5	83	4	100	10	91
brand logo	1	7	1	11	0	0	1	25	0	0

VIDEO	Total (15)		Female creator (9)		Male creator (6)		Female audience (4)		Neutral audience (11)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
emoji	1	7	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	9
screen recording	9	60	8	89	1	17	3	75	6	55
social media logo	8	53	5	56	3	50	1	25	7	64
subscription icon	12	80	8	89	4	67	3	75	9	82
transitional shot	7	47	5	56	2	33	2	50	5	45
video clickthrough	13	87	8	89	5	83	3	75	10	91
TALKING TO CAMERA	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
explaining	15	100	9	100	6	100	4	100	11	100
showing something	9	60	7	78	2	33	3	75	6	55
talking to other person	3	20	2	22	1	17	2	50	1	9
TRANSPORTATION	11	73	8	89	3	50	3	75	8	73
bike	4	27	2	22	2	33	0	0	4	36
boat	2	13	2	22	0	0	1	25	1	9
bus	4	27	3	33	1	17	1	25	3	27
car	9	60	7	78	2	33	2	50	7	64
plane	6	40	4	44	2	33	1	25	5	45
train	5	33	2	22	3	50	1	25	4	36
*DESTINATION IMPRESSION	13	87	9	100	4	67	4	100	9	82
*OTHER	5	33	2	22	3	50	0	0	5	45

Detailed category system and frequencies: text on screen (TOS)

TEKST ON SCREEN	Total (15)		Female creator (9)		Male creator (6)		Female audience (4)		Neutral audience (11)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
ACTIVATION	12	80	8	89	4	67	3	75	9	82
follow me	4	27	4	44	0	0	0	0	4	36
like and subscribe	7	47	4	44	3	50	2	50	5	45
product link	1	7	0	0	1	17	0	0	1	9
social media handle	11	73	7	78	4	67	2	50	9	82
video clickthrough	6	40	4	44	2	33	1	25	5	45
website link	2	13	2	22	0	0	0	0	2	18
RECOMMENDATION	12	80	9	100	3	50	4	100	8	73
accommodation	2	13	1	11	1	17	1	25	1	9
behaviour	8	53	6	67	2	33	2	50	6	55
brand name	5	33	4	44	1	17	3	75	2	18
destination	5	33	4	44	1	17	1	25	4	36

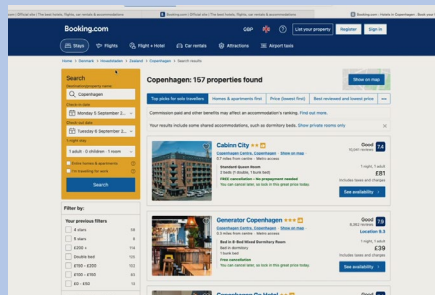
TEKST ON SCREEN	Total (15)		Female creator (9)		Male creator (6)		Female audience (4)		Neutral audience (11)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
documenting	8	53	6	67	2	33	3	75	5	45
itinerary	4	27	2	22	2	33	1	25	3	27
meeting people	1	7	1	11	0	0	0	0	1	9
money	4	27	3	33	1	17	1	25	3	27
packing	4	27	3	33	1	17	1	25	3	27
whether to travel solo	2	13	2	22	0	0	0	0	2	18
VIDEO STRUCTURE	13	87	8	89	5	83	3	75	10	91
closing message	5	33	3	33	2	33	1	25	4	36
list of topics	3	20	2	22	1	17	1	25	2	18
structural header	11	73	8	89	3	50	3	75	8	73
teaser	1	7	0	0	1	17	0	0	1	9
title	5	33	3	33	2	33	3	75	2	18
*CONTEXT	8	53	6	67	2	33	3	75	5	45
*CONTRIBUTOR NAME	8	53	5	56	3	50	2	50	6	55
*DESTINATION NAME	4	27	3	33	1	17	1	25	3	27
*EMPHASIS	5	33	5	56	0	0	3	75	2	18

Appendix II

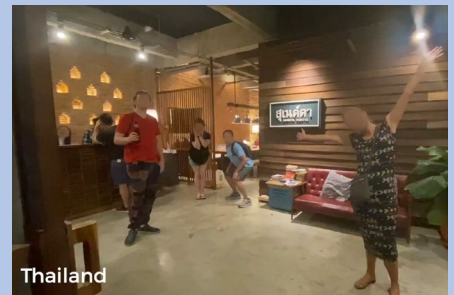
Visual example sheets of video footage categories



BATHROOM



BOOKING



COMMON SPACE



DORM



PRIVATE ROOM



SITUATION

Sheet I.1. Snapshot examples of accommodation footage



CLUBBING

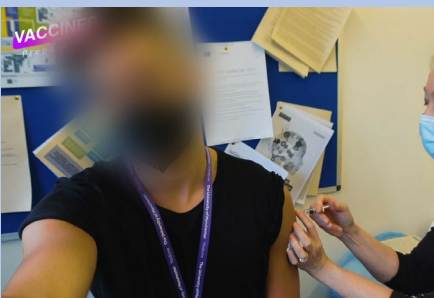


Munich, Germany

DRINKING ALCOHOL



FOOD & DRINKS



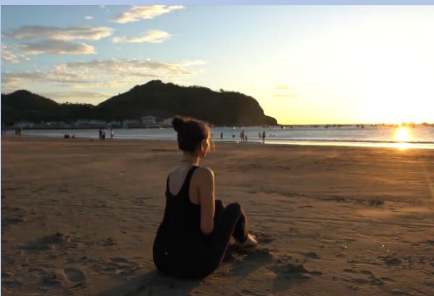
HEALTH



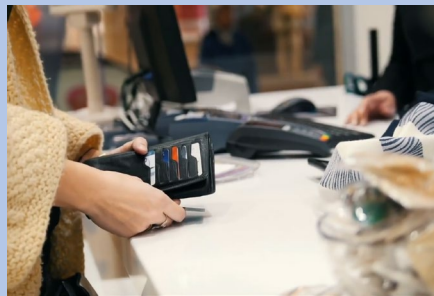
MEETING PEOPLE



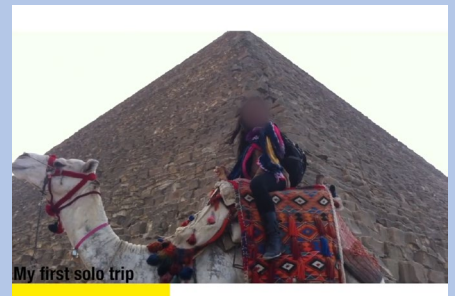
PHYSICAL



RELAXING

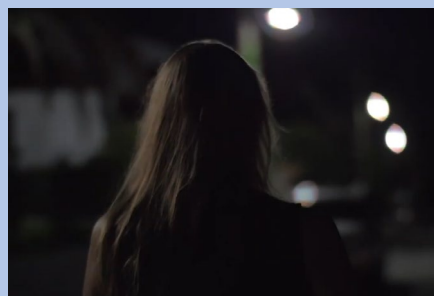


SHOPPING



My first solo trip

SIGHTSEEING



WALKING ALONE AT NIGHT

Sheet 1.2. Snapshot examples of activity footage



LUGGAGE

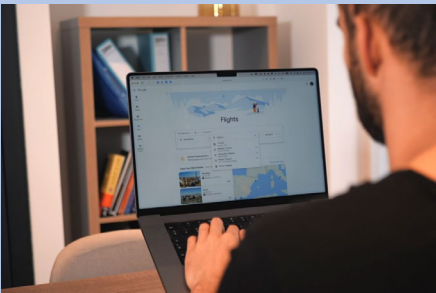


MONEY

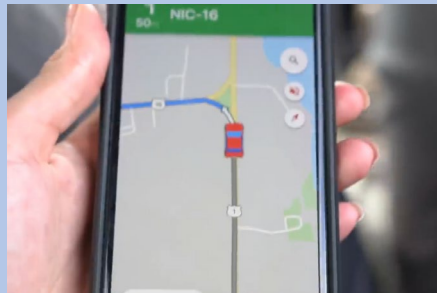


VALUABLES

Sheet I.3. Snapshot examples for belongings footage



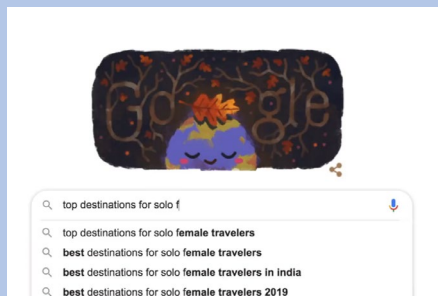
DIGITAL AIDS



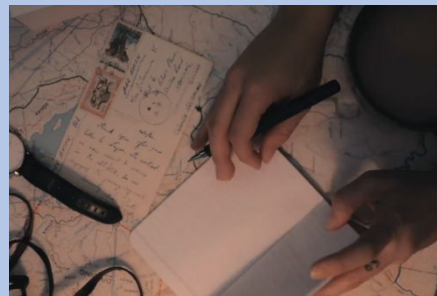
NAVIGATION



PICTURES

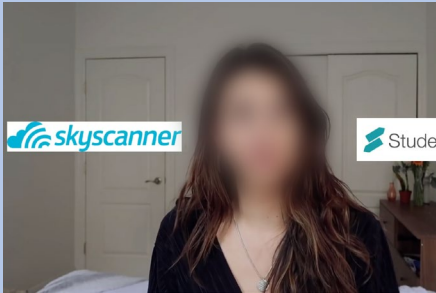


RESEARCH



WRITING

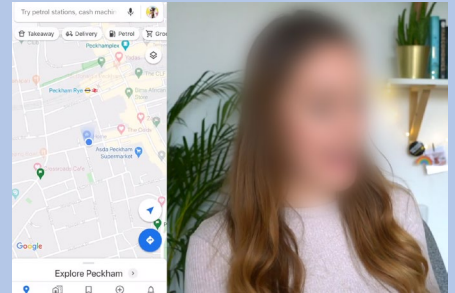
Sheet I.4. Snapshot examples of documenting footage



BRAND LOGO



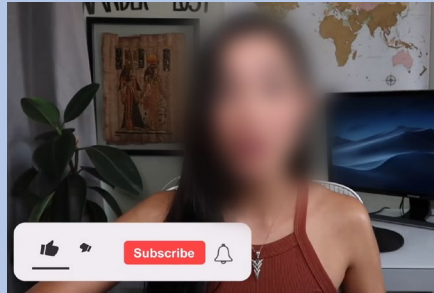
EMOJI



SCREEN RECORDING



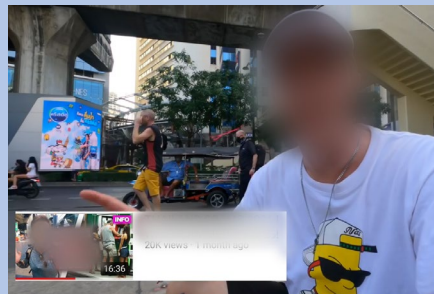
SOCIAL MEDIA LOGO



SUBSCRIPTION ICON

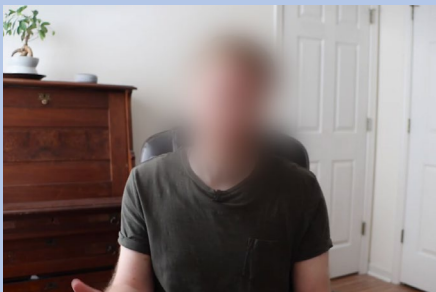


TRANSITIONAL SHOT



VIDEO CLICKTHROUGH

Sheet I.5. Snapshot examples for graphic aids footage



EXPLAINING



SHOWING SOMETHING



TALKING TO OTHER PERSON

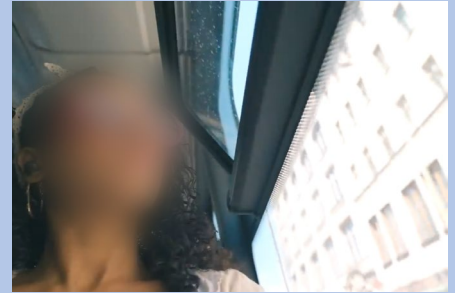
Sheet I.6. Snapshot examples for talking to camera footage



BIKE



BOAT



BUS



CAR



PLANE



TRAIN

Sheet I.7. Snapshot examples for transport footage



DESTINATION IMPRESSION



OTHER

Sheet I.8. Snapshot examples for destination impression and other footage