



Perception of Safety and Challenges Faced by Solo Foreign Female Travelers in Nepal



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Abstract

This thesis examines the safety perceptions, challenges, and coping strategies of foreign solo female travelers visiting Nepal, focusing on how these experiences intersect with personal motivations and a broader cultural context. As solo female travel grows globally, it becomes increasingly important to investigate the nuanced realities of women traveling solo in developing countries such as Nepal. This understanding is critical not only for academic research but also for informing tourism policies and practices that promote a more welcoming and safe environment for female tourists.

This study employs a qualitative methodology, drawing on data from seven in-depth, semi-structured interviews with international solo female travelers, supplemented by a netnographic analysis of discussions across online platforms, including Facebook groups, Reddit threads, YouTube comment sections, and travel forums such as TripAdvisor. This dual approach provides a more in-depth understanding of solo female travelers' lived experiences and perceptions, capturing both direct personal narratives and broader discourse within digital travel communities.

Three central themes guide this thesis. First, it investigates the underlying motivations for embarking on solo journeys, emphasizing autonomy, personal growth, and cultural immersion as key factors. These factors frequently reflect a broader desire among women to assert their independence, escape from household chores, question traditional gender norms, and engage more meaningfully with other cultures. Second, the study investigates the various safety concerns raised by solo female travelers in Nepal. These include pre-departure anxiety, on-the-ground incidents such as harassment, scams, and cultural misunderstandings, as well as the gap between perceived safety before travel and actual safety once at the destination. This segment also investigates how media, social narratives, and peer-shared content shape travelers' expectations and fears.

Ultimately, the thesis examines the coping and risk management strategies employed by these travelers. These include adjusting one's behavior and dress to local norms, seeking assistance from locals and other travelers, and utilizing digital resources and social media to gather real-time safety information and connect with like-minded individuals. These strategies emphasize the agency and resilience of solo female travelers while also highlighting the ongoing need for increased institutional support and policy interventions.

Although Nepal is frequently portrayed as a welcoming and spiritually enriching destination, research shows that gender-specific barriers continue to affect solo female tourists, ranging from street harassment to subtle forms of exclusion and stereotyping. These experiences necessitate a critical rethinking of how safety is constructed and maintained in tourism settings.

The thesis contributes to the growing field of gender and tourism by focusing on women's voices and using a feminist geographical lens to examine power dynamics, spatial practices, and embodied experiences. It provides both theoretical insights and practical implications, advocating for a Nepalese tourism landscape that is more aware of and responsive to the specific needs of female travelers. The findings aim to inform policymakers, tourism operators, and development stakeholders who are working to create a more equitable and secure environment for women navigating the complex terrain of solo travel.

Contents

Acknowledgment	2
Abstract	3
Chapter 1: Introduction	7
1.1 Background of the study.....	7
1.2 Problem Statement.....	8
4.3 Research questions and objectives.....	10
4.4 significance of the study	10
4.5 structure of the thesis	12
Chapter 2. Literature review.....	12
2.1. Solo Female Travelers.....	13
2. 2 Safety, Security, and Risk in Tourism	14
2.3 Common safety risks.....	18
2.4 Coping Mechanisms and Risk Management Techniques.	21
2.5 Online Narratives and Social media as influencers of safety perception and decision-making	22
2.6 Theoretical perspective	24
2.6.1 Risk Perception Theory.....	24
2.6.2 Feminist Geography Theory and Tourism Safety.....	27
2.7 Research Gaps and Justification for the Study	29
Chapter 3: Research Methodology	30
3.1 Philosophy of Science.....	31
3.2 Research design	33
3.3 Data collection method.....	34
3.4 Data analysis	39
3.4 The use of Generative AI (ChatGPT) in the Thesis process	40
3.5 Ethical Considerations.....	40
3.6 Limitations of the study.....	42
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis	43
4.1 Motivation for Traveling Solo	44
4.1.1 Freedom and Flexibility.....	44

4.1.2 Personal Growth.....	47
4.1.3 Cultural immersion and exploration	50
4.2 Safety Perception and Challenges Faced by Solo Female Travelers in Nepal	52
4.2.1 Pre-travel Safety Concerns	52
4.2.2 On the ground safety challenges	58
4.2.3 Safety Perception versus Actual Safety for Solo Female Travelers in Nepal	62
4.3 Coping and Risk Management Strategies	66
4.3.1 Adapting Behavior and Dress	66
4.3.2. Navigating safety through local and digital support.....	69
4.3.3 Problem-Solving and Internal Resilience	71
Chapter 5. Discussion.....	74
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	77
Bibliography	80
Appendix	96

Chapter 1: Introduction

For women, especially those who want to travel independently, tourism has traditionally been considered both a place of vulnerability and empowerment (JORDAN and GIBSON 2005). As statistics of global solo female travelers grow, it is important to understand the safety dynamics and cultural challenges women travelers face (Khoo-Lattimore and Wilson 2017). This study examines these experiences within the context of Nepal, a location that is increasing in popularity yet remains underexplored in gendered tourism literature. For those who enjoy different tastes, Nepal offers a great spectrum of experiences for solo visitors. Kathmandu where the capital city, is an epicenter of historical and cultural significance with its vibrant marketplaces, ancient temples, and vibrant cultural scene (Saurav 2018). Though somewhat neglected in the perspective of gendered tourism research, this study focuses on solo female travelers in Nepal, a country noted for its natural beauty and spiritual appeal. Despite Nepal's increasing attraction to adventure-seeking visitors, especially women, the scholarly research remains scant in addressing how gender dynamics, infrastructure, and local cultural expectations impact the experiences of solo female travelers (Hillman 2019). This study aims to add to a broader knowledge of tourist safety and mobility in an emerging setting by investigating both perceived and actual safety issues as well as the coping strategies women use.

1.1 Background of the study

In recent years, solo female travel has become a significant trend in worldwide tourism, indicating greater changes in gender roles, autonomy, and women's empowerment. Traveling solo is becoming more popular among women for several reasons, such as seeking independence, developing one's identity, learning about other cultures, and breaking away from daily routines (Wilson and Little 2005). The explosion of social media and online travel sites has raised awareness of and support for solo female travel, therefore motivating more women to break free from traditional constraints and set out adventures by themselves (Abubakar and Ilkan 2016). Solo travel has different challenges for women even if it offers opportunities

for development and empowerment. Solo female travelers often deal with issues relating to personal safety, harassment, gender-based discrimination, and culturally imposed expectations unlike those of their male counterparts (Yang, Liang, and Lin 2025). Women's tactics, actions, and memories of their travel experiences may all be very much influenced by these difficulties. Furthermore, the feeling of vulnerability that might occur when alone in a new setting frequently prompts female travelers to implement certain tactics, like altering behavior, attire, or travel plans, to reduce possible dangers (Wilson and Harris 2006). Nepal has become a favored destination for solo travelers, especially women, owing to its esteemed spiritual heritage, adventure tourism, and scenic landscapes. The country appeals because of its mix of cultural diversity, well-known trekking routes, and friendly people. Nepal serves as a venue for self-discovery and cultural immersion for several solo female tourists (Karki 2023). However, solo female travelers often face safety-related concerns connected with new gender norms, infrastructural shortcomings, and cultural expectations despite the country's generally positive image in international tourism. Incidents of unsolicited attention, limited mobility, or verbal harassment are prevalent, particularly in areas outside major urban centers (Karki 2023). Nonetheless the increasing interest in solo female travel, there is a deficiency of study explicitly addressing the setting of Nepal. Current tourism research frequently focuses on overarching economic effects, adventure tourism, or cultural attractions, while neglecting the gendered experiences and safety perceptions of solo international female travelers. Although worldwide literature has started to investigate the motives and coping methods of solo female travelers, there remains a significant deficiency in comprehending how these dynamics manifest in places such as Nepal, which contrasts spiritual appeal with socio-cultural conservatism. This study attempts to address this disparity by examining the experiences of solo female travelers to Nepal, with a specific focus on their goals, perceived and actual safety, and strategies they apply to overcome challenges. The study enhances comprehension of the intersection between gender and location in the tourism experience through the analysis of interview data and netnographic insights.

1.2 Problem Statement

These days, female travelers traveling alone are increasingly familiar and a rapidly expanding trend globally. Traveling alone provides a powerful experience that allows women to grow personally, enjoy cultural immersion, and become more independent. However, safety and

cultural barriers are critical concerns for female travelers who travel alone, especially in developing countries like Nepal (Shrestha, Shrestha, and Lama 2021). Nepal is a renowned tourist destination, particularly for women traveling alone, due to its stunning natural surroundings and rich cultural heritage. Despite these offerings, the country faces unique challenges, including safety risks and cultural difficulties for female travelers, which can significantly hinder the overall travel experience (Karki 2023). Safety is a primary concern for solo female travelers in Nepal. While the country is considered hospitable, issues such as scams and petty theft have been reported (Travers Nepal 2025). The lack of woman-friendly and safe infrastructure, such as secure public transportation and women-friendly accommodations, also further influences foreign women's perceptions while traveling alone in Nepal. (Himalayan Summit 2025). These safety issues may cause tourists to alter their travel plans, restrict their mobility to a particular location, and thereby significantly impact Nepal's tourism sector by deterring potential visitors. (Access Nepal 2023). Cultural barriers also significantly impact the travel experience of solo female travelers. Nepal has conservative gender norms, and societal expectations can lead to cultural misunderstanding for a woman who comes from a more liberal society. (Matador Network 2025). Behavior that is acceptable in a tourist's home country may not be respectful in Nepal, which can result in social isolation. Language barriers and limited knowledge about the new place can be vulnerable in an unfamiliar environment. (Meyers 2019). Despite Nepal's heavy dependence on Tourism for its economy, there is only limited research done on the experience of solo foreign female travelers in Nepal. (Otegui-Carles, Araújo-Vila, and Fraiz-Brea 2022). Previous studies have primarily focused on the travel behavior of Nepali women or provided a general overview of the tourism industry, without explicitly addressing the unique challenges faced by foreign women when traveling alone (Shrestha, Shrestha, and Lama 2021).

Addressing this issue is crucial for portraying a positive image and establishing a safe and inclusive destination that attracts more female solo travelers. This study aims to fill the gap by systematically investigating the safety perception and challenges faced by solo female travelers who have visited Nepal. Thereby providing recommendations for policy and practice to build a more supportive tourism environment.

4.3 Research questions and objectives

Research question

How do foreign solo female travelers perceive and experience safety and challenges during their travels in Nepal, and what strategies do they adopt to manage these challenges?

Sub question

1. What motivates foreign women to travel solo in Nepal?
2. What constraints do solo female travelers face while traveling solo in Nepal?
3. How do solo female travelers manage the constraints they encounter while traveling in Nepal?

Research objectives

Nepal is becoming a popular destination for adventure travel, trekking, hiking, and cultural exploration for solo female travelers. However, the unique experiences of this tourist segment are under-researched (Karki 2023). This study wants to address this gap by analyzing the safety concerns and cultural challenges that can influence the travel experience of solo female tourists in Nepal.

1. To explore the motivations behind why foreign women choose to travel solo in Nepal.
2. To identify and examine the safety concerns and challenges experienced by solo female travelers in Nepal, including both pre-travel anxieties and on-the-ground realities.
3. To investigate the coping mechanisms and strategies solo female travelers adopt to manage and navigate the challenges they face during their travels in Nepal.

4.4 significance of the study

The present research contains academic, practical, and social value in the area of tourism research, specifically within the field of solo female travel in Nepal. Due to changes in global tourism patterns, solo female travel has become more popular. However, research on women's

travel experiences in South Asia is still mostly focused on Western locations (JORDAN and GIBSON 2005). By concentrating exclusively on female tourists traveling alone in Nepal, this study adds fresh insights to a field that has received little attention. In doing so, it addresses a major gap in the literature on gendered tourism by investigating the perspectives, goals, and methods of self-sufficiency used by female tourists to Nepal on their own. The majority of research on gender-focused tourism is Western-centric, with few studies looking at how local gender norms, socio-cultural dynamics, and risk perceptions impact female solo travelers in nations like Nepal. Through the use of qualitative methodologies and theoretical frameworks like the Geography of Fear and Risk Perception Theory, this study adds to the body of literature on feminist tourism. These frameworks help investigate how women perceive and react to safety issues when traveling (Pain 1995). The study provides insights into how female solo travelers evaluate, steer clear of, or adjust to potentially dangerous situations by interacting with these theoretical models. It also demonstrates how fear is impacted by geographical, cultural, and emotional aspects in addition to real hazards. This approach improves tourism research by offering a more complex knowledge of women's decision-making and risk-management strategies using more expansive psychological and geographical points of view. The major practical application of this study is for policy and tourism development in Nepal, which may provide valuable insights. Understanding the demands of niche markets, such as female solo travelers, is becoming more and more crucial as the tourism sector recovers and diversifies after COVID-19 (UNWTO 2022). This study can assist tourism service providers such as hotels, trekking organizations, and transport operators in developing services and safety protocols specifically for solo female travelers. The findings can guide initiatives to improve access to travel information in areas where people claim to be afraid, make lodging safer, and increase the number of guided tours led by women. Furthermore, the study's results will enable Nepal to achieve its goal of becoming a more welcoming and inclusive tourism destination for women. Minimizing the concerns of solo female travelers, such as harassment, misconceptions about culture, or limited mobility, helps to increase tourist satisfaction, foster positive word-of-mouth, and inspire ecologically aware travel. The study also examines the broader social discourse on women's autonomy, advancement, and empowerment. Travel is often cited as a life-changing experience, offering opportunities for independence, self-discovery, and cross-cultural contact (Elsrud 2001). Nonetheless, gender-based challenges still affect women's lives and might restrict their safety and independence. This study adds to the body of knowledge about how women overcome these obstacles by changing their behavior and attire, asking locals for guidance, or staying away from particular places, and how, despite the dangers, travel still gives

them freedom. More than that, our research provides a platform for female tourists, whose stories may inform discussions about responsible travel, which helps guide incoming female solo visitors to Nepal, making them more confident and ready.

4.5 structure of the thesis

The current research is organized into six chapters, each of which delves deeply into the perspectives, difficulties, and methods of coping that solo female travelers in Nepal encounter. Chapter 1, the Introduction, provides the background and context of the study, outlines the problem statement, research objectives, and questions, emphasizes the significance of the research, and offers an overview of the thesis structure. Chapter 2, the Literature Review, critically examines existing scholarship on solo female travel, tourism safety and risk, and coping mechanisms. It interacts with theoretical models, including Feminist Geography and Risk Perception Theory, and investigates how digital narratives and social media affect travelers' safety impressions, thereby pointing out research gaps and promoting the study. Chapter 3, Research Methodology, discusses the philosophical foundation and design of the study, detailing the use of qualitative interviews and netnographic analysis for data collection, along with the analytical techniques employed and the ethical considerations addressed. Chapter 4, Findings and Analysis, presents the empirical data thematically, focusing on three major areas: motivations for traveling solo, safety perceptions and challenges, and coping and risk management strategies. These topics have been evidenced by direct quotations from participants, netnographic observations, and academic sources. Chapter 5, Discussion and Conclusion, integrates the findings with current literature and theoretical frameworks, examining how solo female travelers navigate empowerment with vulnerability, safety in conjunction with danger, and cultural involvement tempered by caution. Lastly, Chapter 6, Conclusion, examines the academic and practical contributions of the study, acknowledges its shortcomings, and proposes future research paths based on the primary conclusion.

Chapter 2. Literature review

This literature review aims to critically analyze the principal themes, discussions, and theoretical frameworks relevant to comprehending, particularly those traveling to Nepal. The chapter commences with an examination of current literature regarding solo female

travelers, describing their motives, obstacles, and unique positionalities within the tourism sector. Subsequently, it examines broad topics around safety, security, and risk in tourism, before focusing on the particular forms of risks frequently encountered by female travelers. This transitions into a concentrated examination of coping mechanisms and risk management tactics, emphasizing how women address safety concerns before and during travel. This review contextualizes these experiences within academic theory by utilizing two primary frameworks: Risk Perception Theory and Feminist Geography Theory. These viewpoints provide significant insights into how female travelers perceive risk and engage with physical and social environments through gendered perspectives. The chapter also examines the changing importance of online narratives and social media, illustrating how digital communities affect risk perception, destination selection, and behavioral changes among solo female travelers.

The chapter ultimately finishes with an examination of the existing research gaps in the current literature, especially in non-Western locations such as Nepal. This establishes the foundation for the present study, which aims to address these deficiencies by examining the lived experiences of single female visitors and their perceptions of safety in the context of Nepali tourism.

2.1. Solo Female Travelers

Solo female travel is one of the most rapidly expanding groups of tourism, driven by changes in social structures and lifestyles (JORDAN and GIBSON 2005). Bianchi states, "Solo holiday travelers are either married or unmarried people who choose to travel on their own for holidays"(Bianchi 2016: 197). Solo female travel is becoming more popular, challenging traditional stereotypes and reflecting a global trend toward women's mobility and independence (Wilson and Little 2008). This trend reflects the larger cultural shift as women are becoming economically independent, gender norms are evolving, and a growing desire to explore the world on their terms (Wilson and Little 2008).

Women who travel solo have a variety of reasons, which are mostly personal (Kaur 2023). Motivation is a multidimensional phenomenon that is shaped by a variety of components, including demographics, experience, and personality (Swarbrooke and Horner 2007). Women travel alone for a variety of reasons, such as self-discovery, freedom from societal expectations,

and empowerment (Kaur 2023). Primary factors influencing travelers' motivation are their characteristics, lifestyles, experiences, and pasts, as well as how they identify and wish to be perceived by others. One could argue that novelty, relaxation, escape, family, and friendship are the most prominent and significant motivators. (Swarbrooke and Horner 2007). "Many solo female travelers (SFTs) choose to travel alone in search of freedom, independence, empowerment, and exploration" (Dresler 2025). Studies indicate that women who travel alone experience more self-discovery and freedom, which enables them to make their own decisions without external influence. Factors such as personal growth, desire to escape from the routine, and boosted confidence level play a crucial role in their decision to travel (Chiang and Jogaratnam 2006). Traveling for well-being and mental health has become an increasingly relevant motivational factor among women. Emotional rejuvenation from the mental breakdown by the dissolution of the relationship, travel is common, particularly during stressful periods, relationship changes, or life transitions (Tiyce 2008). Stress, depression, life transition events, or a career change can all be managed with travel. To find balance and reconnect with themselves, women frequently use wellness tourism, spiritual retreats, or restorative experiences (Hamid et al. 2021).

Furthermore, Chiang and Jogaratnam (2006) investigated the reasons behind solo female travelers' leisure vacations. They found five main motivators: executing new activities, getting away from everyday routines, relaxing, socializing, and increasing self-esteem. Interestingly, the least significant of these criteria was considered to be self-esteem. It means that women who travel for pleasure are less motivated to strengthen their characteristics than women who travel for other purposes (Chiang and Jogaratnam 2006). For many women, travel has become a kind of empowerment rather than just a leisure activity. Traveling alone can be seen as a transformative experience for women where they break free from traditional roles and social expectations (Wilson and Little 2008). Traveling alone allows them to establish their autonomy over their lives, discover new things about themselves, and boost their self-confidence.

2. 2 Safety, Security, and Risk in Tourism

Traveling solo comes with different challenges, such as Special concerns of security and navigating different cultures come into play while using this kind of travel, which questions long-established gender roles (JORDAN and GIBSON 2005). Safety, security, and Risk are the key tourism components, that influence tourists' experiences and destination choices (Fuchs

and Reichel 2006). Safety and security are eliminating risk and the safeguarding of people, their property, and their reputation against harm from an individual or an object. Safety safeguards visitors against unintentional injury caused by mishaps, natural disasters, or medical conditions, whereas the definition of security is protecting tourists from danger caused by criminal activity, terrorism, or other destructive acts (Mansfeld and Pizam 2006). Both factors are critical to providing a great travel experience and preserving a destination's reputation (Fuchs and Pizam 2011). Safety and security are unquestionably important in the tourist industry since they significantly affect the choice of destination among solo female travelers. (Fuchs and Reichel 2006). Risk is an important subject in tourism studies since it has an enormous effect on travelers' decisions about which place to choose, the way they behave, and how their vacation goes overall. Risk in the context of tourism refers to the possibility of experiencing discomfort, loss, or harm when traveling due to a variety of factors (Reisinger and Mavondo 2005). Common types of risks associated with travel frequently include natural disasters, criminal activity, terrorism, conflicts over politics, gender-based violence, and health issues (including disease epidemics).

Travelers' perceptions of risk differ based on their experiences, background, and the information at their disposal; they frequently base their opinions on news articles, reviews on the internet, and social media stories (Rittichainuwat and Chakraborty 2009). Tourism literature has extensively investigated the contrast between perceived and actual safety in travel. The term "perceived safety" refers to how tourists subjectively assess a destination's safety based on their experiences, news reports, and cultural background (Liu-Lastres 2016). In contrast, actual safety pertains to quantifiable metrics such as political stability, health concerns, and crime rates. The discrepancies between these perceptions and realities can significantly influence travel decisions and behaviors (Liu-Lastres 2016). The majority of research indicates that perceived risks differ by gender and that female travelers are more risk-averse and perceive higher travel risks than male travelers (Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, and Arcodia 2017). The majority of previous research reveals that women perceive higher risks linked to physical factors, including sexual harassment, personal safety, and violence (Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, and Arcodia 2017). Women are frequently targeted or subjected to harassment and assault in gender roles and stereotypes that portray them as physically weaker than men, and in many cases, women can be victims of others' actions (Doherty 1989). Studies showed that women travelers are more concerned about personal safety, harassment, and socio-cultural differences in their chosen destinations (Wilson and Little 2008). Unlike male tourists, female tourists make extensive pre-trip planning,

gathering information about the place, searching for woman-friendly accommodations, seeking information regarding the safety conditions of the destination, and making plans in case of emergencies (Otegui-Carles, Araújo-Vila, and Fraiz-Brea 2022).

Traveling alone poses several challenges for all individuals, compared to men, women tend to face specific challenges that are significantly different from those encountered by male travelers. (Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, and Arcodia 2017). Similarly, Junek, Binney, and Winn (2006) state that women are likely to worry more than men about their safety. Women may believe that their fear of harassment prohibits them from engaging in the same manner as men. Some people experience worry, such as the fear of sexual assault, when they travel alone or go to specific public locations (Junek, Binney, and Winn 2006). Likewise, Naughton (2003) states that, The main commonly recognized concern for women traveling alone is personal safety. Both males and females are somewhat concerned about safety, but women are more likely to report verbal abuse, harassment, and more serious threats like coercion or sexual assault. Since women are physically weaker and may find it more difficult to protect themselves against aggressive men, particularly when it comes to non-domestic violence, they are more prone to street crime (Naughton 2003). This is especially prevalent in nations with distinct women's statuses from those in Western countries. In addition, daily issues and the fear of terrorism lead to stress and other medical problems when traveling. When traveling for work, women might experience anxiety about going to hazardous territories in hopes of furthering their careers (Junek, Binney, and Winn 2006). In comparison to men, women are more prone to be attentive when searching for tourism-related activities. For example, female solo travelers often experience increased anxiety about their safety and understanding of culture, which may affect their preparation and techniques while on the ground (Wilson and Little 2008). Additionally, women report a fear of crime two to three times more than men (Reid and Konrad 2004). Women feel more unsafe in the darkness and places like car parks, garages, underpasses, and public parks (Stark and Meschik 2018). This is in line with numerous previous worldwide studies on fearful locations (Stafford and Pettersson 2004). Fear makes women avoid or put off nighttime (leisure) travel; in this case, walking and public transportation are the primary avoidances (Flade 1994).

Women who travel alone frequently experience heightened alertness as a result of perceived or real dangers to their safety in new environments. This kind of constant alertness may limit their capacity to truly enjoy the place (Su and Wu 2020). Women who travel alone face a "double bind" where they are particularly vulnerable to unwanted attention and abuse due to their

prominence as foreigners and women (Su and Wu 2020). Another study by Wilson and Harris (2006) additionally explored what the experience was like for women to travel alone and in a meaningful way. Because many women see traveling alone as a means to accomplish personal growth and self-discovery, their results demonstrate that they also experience higher levels of anxiety and stress about their safety (Wilson and Harris 2006). A study by Wilson and Little (2005) discovered that when traveling alone, many women reported feeling unsafe. They discussed concerns like being sexually harassed or receiving unwanted attention. They believed they were more likely to have unpleasant or harmful encounters because they felt more vulnerable as women. Furthermore, these dangers prevented some of them from undertaking particular activities or visiting particular locations. The women reported that despite being aware of these challenges, they continued to go alone despite the hazards (Wilson and Little 2005).

Safety and security are vital in tourism since hazardous areas often reduce tourist numbers and have economic consequences. Most of the current literature supports this idea by demonstrating that travelers generally avoid locations with higher potential risks (Batra 2008). Travelers may be discouraged from visiting some places due to safety concerns, especially when those places are perceived to be high-risk because of crime, political unrest, or health risks. According to studies, it shows that travelers might change their travel plans as a result of perceived threats, opting rather to visit secure areas (Kővári and Zimányi 2011). This concern affects their travel behavior, such as choice of destination, choosing the right accommodation, and avoiding going out for dinner alone at night. In an investigation into tourists' perceptions of safety and security in Turkey, higher levels of travel satisfaction were associated with favorable views of both safety and security and hygiene and health. This emphasizes the importance of perceived safety in influencing total traveling experiences, regardless of real safety conditions (Tasci and Boylu 2010). Reisinger and Mavondo (2005) argue that even in cases when few actual risks exist, tourists may be discouraged from traveling to a place by perceived risk. Risks may arise from a range of sources, such as sociocultural issues like gender-based harassment, threats to health, natural disasters, and political instability (Reisinger and Mavondo 2005).

2.3 Common safety risks

Solo female travelers often encounter a range of safety risks during their journeys. These risks extend beyond physical threats to include psychological challenges (Wilson and Little 2008). The main safety risks or worries for female travelers are harassment or unwanted attention, which can range from verbal remarks to physical threats (Wilson and Little 2008). The term harassment, particularly sexual harassment, has been widely discussed in both academia and in the workplace (Fairchild and Rudman 2008). According to the Equality Act 2010, sexual harassment is defined as "unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for them" (Wurkplace 2019). Harassment is a broad term that adopts many different forms that impact the tourism and travel industry worldwide, in developed as well as developing nations. At the broader level, authorities like customs and immigration officers are engaged in institutionalized harassment. For instance, Arab travelers are humiliated during airport checks, British travelers are forced to marry officials in Indonesia to avoid harassment, and travelers with Hong Kong ancestry are suspected of drug smuggling in Canada (Woodside and Martin 2008). On a micro level, vendors and other tourism service providers annoy individuals. It is more prevalent and problematic than workplace harassment. Pressure can make tourists unhappy and damage the tourism industry's reputation. It is a widely recognized issue in European travel areas, but it is also growing rapidly in developing countries. Sexual harassment has long been an ongoing issue in the travel industry. Different cultures and nations possess distinct sexual norms. What is considered normal in one nation may be unacceptable in another (Woodside and Martin 2008). There is not much research on harassment of tourists; however, harassment in public places—also known as street harassment or stranger harassment—has been well documented which is called street harassment or stranger harassment (Wesselmann and Kelly 2010). Stranger harassment consists of two main components: verbal harassment and sexual pressure, which frequently occur in public spaces such as streets, public transport, and other social establishments (Bastomski and Smith 2017). Bowman 1993 defines "stranger harassment as 'both verbal and nonverbal behavior, such as wolf-whistles, leers, winks, grabs, pinches, and stranger remarks; the remarks are frequently sexual in nature and comment evaluatively on a woman's physical appearance or her presence in public'" (Bowman 1993).

Tourist scams are a global issue that can lead to unhappy travelers, financial losses for tourism stakeholders, and administrative difficulties for destination management (Ding, Laurie, and Chen 2023). A tourist scam is “a number of essentially unethical or deceptive practices that aim to eventually gain financial advantages from tourists where the scammers intentionally misguide and confuse the targeted individuals to extract assets” (Xu, Pearce, and Chen 2021). According to previous studies, tourist scams can be incorporated into a variety of social situations that travelers typically face, such as buying fake goods (Bukrapue 2015), obtaining excessively costly services (Harris 2012), social interaction with locals which involves blackmailing contacts with locals (Pearce 2011), and experiencing religious encounters that involve forced selling (Huang and Pearce 2019).

The cultural and gender norms also significantly shape the experience of solo female travelers. Women traveling alone can be seen variously in different parts of the world. It can be socially unusual or improper which leads to judgemental attitudes or exclusion from certain activities (Seow and Brown 2018). On the other hand, male solo travelers are seen as independent adventurers rather than those challenging societal expectations. Solo female travelers may encounter restrictions entering specific places, being denied service, and being repeatedly questioned about their travel status in societies where traditional gender roles are deeply rooted (Otegui-Carles, Araújo-Vila, and Fraiz-Brea 2022).

There has been discussion on whether certain crimes are particularly related to the tourism industry. Crimes against tourists are often the product of rational thinking rather than spontaneous actions. One may argue that, in general, tourists are easier and more attractive targets for criminals than residents. The reason for this is that tourists carry valuable items with them, and dress differently from other people (Henderson 2007). Additionally, they might not be familiar with the location, lack a network of local support, and be hesitant to report a crime. The crimes, which can define the character of the entire nation and the destination, range from small-time theft to murder. Moreover, tourists can participate in crimes, ranging from simple mishaps to more significant legal violations, which can harm the destination's reputation (Henderson 2007).

Transportation and mobility issues for women, particularly single female tourists, have become increasingly prioritized in urban planning and gender studies, especially in countries with poor infrastructure. The travel habits of men and women in developing nations vary significantly depending on their socio-demographics and travel characteristics (Pourhashem et al. 2022).

Women are also perceived differently from men regarding transportation; they prefer less congested and more adaptable modes (Uteng 2011) .

The absence of gender-inclusive transport infrastructure is a significant issue limiting women's mobility in the Kathmandu Valley (Bajracharya, Shrestha, and Bhatta 2022). The lack of gender-neutral transit options and dimly lit or poorly maintained pavements not only provide practical difficulties but also increase female travelers' feelings of vulnerability. These infrastructure constraints are particularly troublesome in the evening when seclusion and poor visibility make it more dangerous for women to go alone across the city (Bajracharya, Shrestha, and Bhatta 2022).

The intersection of infrastructure and gendered experiences is emphasized by the discomfort and harassment reported by female passengers in Kathmandu within congested metropolitan areas and public transit. These infrastructure shortcomings can restrict women's freedom of movement, particularly after dark, and contribute to feelings of insecurity (World Bank Group 2014). As far as tourism is concerned, Kathmandu's infrastructure does not always satisfy the needs of foreign women tourists looking for accessibility, safety, and cleanliness. Although tourist-oriented locations like Thamel have seen significant modernization, the surrounding neighborhoods sometimes lack uniform standards for road conditions, hygiene, and lodging amenities (Lamichhane 2024).

The tourism sector is greatly impacted by natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, and landslides in nations like Nepal where disaster risk is still high. Being in a seismically active region, Nepal has seen several disastrous earthquakes, most notably the 2015 Gorkha earthquake, which severely damaged tourism infrastructure and caused worries about travel safety around the world (Tuladhar 2016). Tourist arrivals drastically dropped in the early consequences of the earthquake, which sparked widespread international concern about safety, especially for vulnerable groups like female travelers traveling alone (Rijal 2016). Although such incidents can affect all travelers, the response to disasters is different for women than men. Female travelers traveling alone are more likely to suffer because of their increased anxiety about their safety, restricted access to local support systems, and gender-specific mobility limitations in situations of emergency (Neumayer and Plümper 2007).

Furthermore, travel behavior when traveling and choice of destination are significantly influenced by perceived disaster risk. Research indicates that women are more likely to alter

their travel schedules in light of perceived safety than men. Particularly in areas with a high disaster frequency or not sufficient emergency planning (Reisinger and Mavondo 2005).

Women are often affected by cultural and social barriers in the tourism industry. They might experience constraints related to sociocultural concerns and family commitments (Wilson and Little 2008). Such constraints could differ depending on nationality and culture. For instance, compared to some other parts of the world, women may face more restrictions when traveling to and from Asia (Seow and Brown 2018). Furthermore, in certain cases, societal norms can discourage women from traveling alone to many different places (Hosseini, Macias, and Garcia 2022). Their vulnerability and fear of violence and victimization seem to restrict not only their ability to travel but also their engagement in leisure activities, making them less satisfied and engaging with the local culture less. As a consequence, women feel less inclined to go out alone at night and to use public places like movie theaters, bars, public transportation, some urban regions, and remote and isolated natural areas, including outdoor leisure (Wilson 2004). Some women may blame themselves for being "in the wrong place at the wrong time" because they feel helpless, and they may believe that they must stay away from harmful situations (Wilson and Little 2008). Jordan and Aitchison's (2008) research on gendered tourism experiences emphasizes how female visitors' sexualization results in their objectification and surveillance in public places. The authors argue, based on their qualitative data, that women frequently encounter feelings of being "watched" or judged, particularly when they are traveling alone in societies with restrictive gender standards. Travelers might feel nervous and insecure as a result of this continual inspection, changing their behavior to escape men's attention by avoiding social interactions or making up stories (Jordan and Aitchison 2008).

2.4 Coping Mechanisms and Risk Management Techniques.

It is crucial to take into account the coping mechanisms and risk management techniques adopted by female solo travelers to preserve their sense of security when traveling alone, given the variety of safety hazards women may face. Scholarly studies are starting to examine the several coping methods and useful tactics that women adopt to confront obstacles while traveling. Women who travel alone frequently encounter specific risks about safety, gender norms, and cultural expectations, which leads them to create proactive as well as reactive plans that enhance their well-being and minimize vulnerability (Wilson and Little 2008). These tourists frequently employ preventative steps to reduce perceived risks and safeguard their

safety by planning and managing risks. Using online communities to acquire knowledge and support pre-trip is one of the most popular tactics. Studies showed that digital platforms such as TripAdvisor reviews, YouTube media sharing, and Facebook groups play a role in assisting women in preparing for culturally appropriate behavior, potential hazards, and local gender norms (Munar and Jacobsen 2014).

Additionally, women utilize situational coping mechanisms to avoid unwanted attention, such as adjusting their conduct or attire to conform to local norms (Jordan and Aitchison 2008). Another common practice is choosing accommodation and travel options that prioritize safety, such as hostels specifically for women, trusted cab services, or highly regarded Airbnb stays (Wilson and Little 2008). Many travelers report they avoid traveling at night after it becomes dark, avoid making eye contact and project confidence to prevent harassment or theft (Seow and Brown 2018). Also because of vulnerability women tend to carry defense tools, information about their real-time location with family and friends, and avoid nighttime public transportation (Wilson and Little 2008). Women often alter their behavior by wearing modest dresses, avoiding eye contact, and limiting nighttime activities to avoid danger (Wilson and Little 2008). This self-imposed restriction can hinder the travel experience of female travelers which can lead to anxiety and tension in comparison to male solo travelers who often generally report few safety concerns.

2.5 Online Narratives and Social media as influencers of safety perception and decision-making

Online travel communities are social networks where tourists with similar interests connect to exchange personal stories, build relationships with other users, share information, and create communities focused on particular travel-related subjects (Chen, Yang, and Tang 2013). Women embrace control of their experiences and lives by documenting their travels through the lenses of self-discovery, cultural immersion, and exploration (Vida, Udasmoro, and Noviani 2019). Numerous studies have highlighted the social benefits of engaging in online communities, where travelers can exchange useful information and knowledge that helps others plan their vacations, influences their decisions, and improves their travel experiences (Kim and Tussyadiah 2013). Moreover, the relationships established in these online groups are beyond the national borders (Kavoura and Stavrianea 2015). Some of this interaction also provides emotional support within the communities (Chu 2009).

Since the emergence of the Internet, numerous bloggers and social media users have been able to define and portray the world from their point of view. This technological and subsequent social shift has encouraged both professional and enthusiastic travel writers to share their experiences with a wide demographic through narrative and visual formats (Blaer, Frost, and Laing 2020). Travel writing has gradually evolved beyond reporting on cultures and locations due to an overwhelming amount of information about them. It is now more personalized to represent the writer's perspective and their interpretations of the places they visit (Bohls and Duncan 2008). Social media platforms like Instagram promote and enable a specific kind of travel-related writing that is more customized and demands a high degree of involvement with followers who are looking for more than just travel details that can be obtained online (Bosangit, Hibbert, and McCabe 2015). Despite the higher risk perception, young women remain committed to traveling alone, overcoming their worries in the process of discovering a greater sense of autonomy, empowerment, and independence (Wilson and Harris 2006). According to Johnson (2010), those elements in the narratives of female travelers promote qualities of heroism (Johnson 2010). According to Weatherby and Vidon (2018), women are increasingly heading into remote and untamed areas to demonstrate their dominance over these environments, their strength to themselves and others, challenge social norms, disprove stereotypes, and redefine what it means to be a woman. When viewed in this context, travel becomes an innovative means of protesting the limitations and obstacles of patriarchal responsibilities and expectations. Additionally, Weatherby and Vidon (2018) emphasize how social media could be used to promote women's empowerment, with the potential to change society to a greater extent (Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, and Arcodia 2018b). According to Lockwood (2006), women are more influenced by women than by men when evaluating role models. Additionally, women are unlikely to be influenced by "superstars" who reinforce gender stereotypes; instead, they greatly admire exceptional women who represent a stronger image of women (Kelan 2012).

Online forums and blogs have additionally emerged as valuable areas for recording case-based experiences. Although not subject to peer review, these sources often mirror deeper patterns in scholarly literature. For example, a study by Ngwira, Tse, and Vongvisitsin (2020) analyzed the blogs of women who traveled to Africa alone and found that these travelers had to confront both interpersonal and external obstacles. The bloggers were pleased with their experiences and felt adventurous despite these limitations. This study shows how blog personal accounts

regarding the challenges and techniques for coping faced by female travelers traveling alone reflect more general trends in scholarly literature (Ngwira, Tse, and Vongvisitsin 2020).

2.6 Theoretical perspective

To rigorously analyze the safety perceptions and travel behaviors of single female travelers, it is essential to base the examination on relevant theoretical frameworks. This study employs an interdisciplinary approach by utilizing risk Perception Theory and Feminist Geography Theory, which provide critical insights into women's navigation of danger, space, and gendered power dynamics while traveling. Collectively, these frameworks provide a detailed examination of how solo female travelers perceive, navigate, and respond to risk within the tourism setting of Nepal.

2.6.1 Risk Perception Theory

Risk perception theory studies how people subjectively judge the possibility and seriousness of possible risks, especially when there is uncertainty (Slovic 1987). In contrast to objective risk assessments grounded in statistical probability, perceived risk is shaped by psychological, social, cultural, and emotional influences. This idea has been crucial in comprehending how tourists assess location safety and how these views influence their behavior (Reisinger and Mavondo 2005). The realization that perceived risk differs by gender, age, experience, and cultural background is an important component of risk Perception Theory (Ritchie, Chien, and Sharifpour 2017). For example, research has indicated that women experience greater levels of perceived risk in traveling situations than males, especially in terms of physical safety and harassment (JORDAN and GIBSON 2005). This increased risk perception frequently impacts female travelers' destination selection, trip planning, and conduct on the ground. Where, Wilson and Little (2008) have observed that the perception of risk among solo female travelers frequently transcends conventional travel concerns, such as theft or illness, to encompass gender-specific hazards, including unwanted attention, sexual violence, or verbal harassment. These worries are heightened in new socio-cultural settings, where gender norms and local views regarding women could vary greatly from visitors' country of origin (Yang et al., 2017). As a result, women may use a variety of coping techniques, such as dressing conservatively,

avoiding particular areas or times of day, and reducing social interactions all of which are influenced by their risk perceptions.

In the 2009 paper, "Re-visiting Risk Perception Theory in the Context of Travel," Maximiliano Korstanje critically analyzes the field of tourism's current theories of risk perception. He points out important flaws in these theories, most notably that they do not sufficiently distinguish between danger, threat, dread, and anxiousness. Korstanje contends that this combination creates conceptual uncertainties and hinders an adequate comprehension of how travelers. Perceive and respond to travel dangers (Korstanje 2009). To overcome these drawbacks, Korstanje suggests incorporating attachment theory into the research on how people make travel decisions. Attachment Theory, typically employed in psychology to investigate interpersonal interactions and ties formed between individuals, provides useful insights into travelers' emotional connections with their locations. Researchers can use this approach to better study how emotional attachments influence visitors' perceptions of safety and subsequent travel decisions (Korstanje 2009).

The work of Korstanje emphasizes the need for a more sophisticated method of researching how people perceive danger in the travel industry. Scholars might better grasp the numerous aspects that influence travelers' risk assessments and behaviors by discriminating between similar psychological notions and combining multidisciplinary approaches such as Attachment Theory (Korstanje 2009). Moreover, Reisinger and Mavondo's (2005) research further demonstrates that psychological factors like trust, prior experiences, and cultural background have a significant impact on how tourists perceive danger. They claim that perceived risk is influenced not just by real dangers, but also by human emotions and societal constructions, supporting Korstanje's agreement for an additional complex and interdisciplinary approach.

Other academics, however, have questioned the notion that risk perception can be adequately explained by emotional and psychological variables alone. Independent of individual emotional ties, Williams and Baláž (2015) contend that wider structural and geopolitical factors—such as the media's depiction of destination dangers, international political unrest, and government-issued travel advisories also profoundly affect travelers' impressions (Williams and Baláž 2015). .

The decision-making process for travel for female travelers is significantly influenced by psychological and social factors. Comparatively, Women usually face unique challenges that shape how, when, and where they choose to travel more than men. Social norms, gender roles,

safety concerns, emotional health, and personal empowerment are all interlinked with these variables (JORDAN and GIBSON 2005). For female travelers, perceptions of safety continue to be the most important psychological factor. Women are more cautious about the risks such as threats including sexual harassment, theft, and gender-based violence, especially in an unfamiliar environment (JORDAN and GIBSON 2005). This perceived vulnerability frequently leads to more careful travel preparation, avoiding particular destinations, and visiting with organized groups. The choice of the destination can be influenced by even seemingly little factors, such as street illumination or the conduct of local men. Self-fulfillment and independence are the other psychological factors that affect the travel decision. In addition to academic studies, case study narratives highlight the reality that women experience in specific locations. For instance, Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, and Arcodia's (2017) study on Asian women traveling alone revealed that these women were frequently involved in psychological effort when determining risks, setting and maintaining personal boundaries, and adjusting to cultural norms. The study highlighted how taking risks was a psychological balancing act driven by gender norms and differences in culture rather than primarily a physical effort (Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, and Arcodia 2017).

Social factors such as family relationships, cultural norms, media depictions, and internet platforms, have a big impact on women's travel decisions.

In many traditional or conservative societies women may encounter social rejection or even outright prohibitions when they travel alone or venture far from home. They may feel less autonomous and independent due to gender roles and cultural expectations. Additionally, women are often expected to be care providers for their families which might limit their ability to travel or influence the kinds of trips they take (Mura and Khoo-Lattimore 2012).

Women's travel planning and experiences are significantly impacted by the rise of social media. Social platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and travel blogs are popular informational, inspirational, and reassuring resources, particularly for women thinking about traveling alone. When assessing a destination's safety, cultural norms, and general atmosphere, female tourists frequently rely on the content creation or information produced by other women (Abubakar et al. 2017). Furthermore, studies showed that when it comes to planning a trip and choosing a destination, women are more likely influenced by visual platforms and peer-generated content (Karatsoli and Nathanail 2021).

Therefore, Risk Perception Theory offers a helpful analytical prism through which one may grasp the intricate interaction among context, safety in travel, and identity. This idea helps explain why many single female visitors to Nepal participate in anticipatory and adaptive behaviors not necessarily because the surroundings are dangerous but rather because of cultural unfamiliarity, gender norms, and social expectations.

2.6.2 Feminist Geography Theory and Tourism Safety

Feminist geography is an aspect of physical geography that examines the geographical elements of the relationship between genders, employing feminist theories and methods. It was first developed in the 1970s and aims to include feminine perspectives in spatial evaluations while criticizing standard geographic research based on its male-centric viewpoints (Atuahene Djan 2025). An essential component of feminist geography is investigating how gender boundaries are geographically generated and perpetuated. This entails investigating how societal norms and power structures shape the organization of physical space, which frequently reinforces gender inequities (Atuahene Djan 2025). Similarly, Gillian Rose's major book, "Feminism & Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge" (1993), examines masculinist biases in geographical knowledge production. Rose contends that traditional geography has disregarded women's experiences, resulting in a limited and biased view of spatial relations (Rose 1993). Feminist geographers use a range of methodologies in their work to document the complex experiences of people in various spatial situations, including qualitative research methods like ethnographies and interviews. These techniques attempt to offer a voice to individuals traditionally marginalized in geographical research, which is consistent with feminist values of social justice and equity (Rose 1993). Pritchard and Morgan (2000) argue that tourism settings are not neutral, instead being gendered and frequently promoting gender stereotypes. They argue that the depiction of women in conventional, submissive positions in destination marketing materials often shapes tourist expectations and perpetuates gender spatial practices (Pritchard and Morgan 2000). This criticism is consistent with Wilson and Little's (2008) findings that cultural expectations strongly influence women's emotions of safety and mobility when traveling (Wilson and Little 2008). Furthermore, recent research has questioned whether feminist geography has sufficiently addressed interconnectedness in tourism safety issues. Aitchison (2005) criticizes early feminist

geographic methods for only portraying white, western women's experiences, ignoring how race, class, and sexuality interact with gender to alter spatial encounters in diverse ways (Aitchison 2005).

Feminist geography provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for analyzing the influence of gender on spatial experiences and power dynamics, while a more specific concept within this discipline is the Geography of Fear. Valentine (1989) introduced this concept, which examines how women's spatial mobility is influenced by fear, particularly the fear of male aggression in public environments. The Geography of Fear emphasizes that women's spatial use is frequently constrained not by real occurrences of violence, but by socially created norms and narratives that link specific locations and periods (e.g., desolate streets at night) with peril. Consequently, women are frequently conditioned to engage in cautious behaviors such as evading certain locations, dressing modestly, or restricting nighttime travel thus perpetuating gendered spatial disparities (Valentine 1989). This idea is especially pertinent for comprehending the experiences of solo female travelers, who must continually travel to unknown areas while addressing perceived threats associated with both location and gender. The Geography of Fear significantly enhances feminist geography by presenting a spatially informed analysis of how fear constrains women's mobility, autonomy, and travel experiences.

Wilson and Little's (2008) study, which examined the "geography of women's fear" in tourism contexts, was the first and most important research in this field. 'geography of women's fear,' highlights how cultural expectations and the design of public spaces can either alleviate or intensify feelings of vulnerability during female travel experiences (Wilson and Little 2008). Through qualitative interviews, they revealed that women who traveled alone often felt vulnerable because they might be harassed, the target of unwanted attention, or even attacked. According to the report, many women rely on their travel choices on security concerns, commonly avoiding particular locations, limiting their movement at night, or dressing cautiously to conform to local customs. The authors conclude that, in contrast to male travelers, women must continually balance perceived or actual risks with their freedom and mobility (Wilson and Little 2008). The Geography of Fear expands upon the work of Feminist Geographers to show how painful and frightening emotions are both uniquely personal and very contextualized within specific places and social groups. Valentine (1989) highlights how women restrict their movement in space due to their fear of being victims of public assault. The anxiety, mental weariness, and continual self-monitoring that accompany traversing male-dominated or unfamiliar environments are typically physical manifestations of the emotional

suffering that accompanies this anxiety. Fear is experienced "not merely in reaction to real events of violence, but via regular, normal encounters," Pain (1995) argues, becoming ingrained in the body and mind of women. For solo female travelers, particularly in culturally foreign locations like Nepal, this means that travel is not just a site of empowerment but also emotional work and vulnerability. Women's perception of space is shaped by their expectation of threat, their need for hypervigilance, and their internalized responsibility for their safety—all of which add to a kind of emotional and psychological suffering. Therefore, the Geography of Fear along with Pain's (1995) research on emotional geographies offers a complex perspective of the emotional impact of gendered fear in travel environments.

2.7 Research Gaps and Justification for the Study

Although solo female travel is a topic of growing interest in travel research, studies especially on the experiences of solo female travelers in Nepal are noticeably lacking. Most of the current research on travel to Nepal has focused on issues like sustainability, the financial influence of tourism, and instability in politics (Bhattarai, Conway, and Shrestha 2005). Even while these studies are helpful, they do not deal with the gendered aspects of travel, such as women's fears and experiences when traveling alone. Nepal is even more marginalized in this discussion because there has been an uptick in studies in this area in Southeast Asia and certain portions of India (Nguyen and Hsu 2022).

Secondly, there exists a methodological restriction in contemporary studies about solo female travel. A significant amount of research uses single-method strategies, namely surveys or content analysis of blogs (Yang, Khoo-Lattimore, and Arcodia 2018). Though these approaches can provide a fundamental understanding of travel behavior and reasons, they often ignore the emotional depth, context, and complexity of women's safety perceptions. Quantitative studies might not be able to look at how women manage culturally distinct threats, change their behavior, or experience anxiety. This underscores the necessity for more comprehensive qualitative approaches to investigate these intricate experiences.

Finally, only a few research studies specifically address the lived experiences of these women from a safety and gendered risk standpoint even in the larger literature on solo female travel. Many of the current studies either concentrate on sustainability or economic results above

gendered safety issues or generalize tourist experiences. As so, the voices and difficulties of single female visitors continue to be excluded (Karki 2023). Data is also not very triangulated across sources; for example, incorporating online tales can provide a more nuanced understanding of both actual and perceived hazards. This study mitigates these limitations by employing Risk Perception Theory (Korstanje 2009) and Feminist Theory (Aitchison 2005) to critically analyze how solo female travelers in Nepal perceive, experience, and navigate risks within a socio-cultural framework that frequently connects with gender norms and safety expectations.

By concentrating especially on the experiences of solo female travelers in Nepal, this study covers in-depth qualitative interviews along with netnographic analysis of user-generated content from travel blogs, forums, and social media, thereby bridging these gaps. This methodological triangulation not only increases the validity of the results but also catches the multifaceted character of safety and coping mechanisms among single female visitors in a culturally complex location like Nepal.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of philosophical assumptions, research design, and methodology employed to investigate the perceptions of safety and challenges faced by solo foreign female travelers in Nepal. This section outlines the details of the chosen research philosophy, research approach, research design, sampling strategy, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, and study limitations. This section begins by justifying the chosen philosophical approach, research design, and an explanation of the data collection method, followed by participant selection techniques, and data analysis methods. Additionally, at the end of the chapter, ethical considerations and study limitations are discussed to provide transparency and rigor in the research process.

The study relied on qualitative data due to the complexity of personnel safety experiences (Creswell and Poth 2016). The study employs two types of qualitative data collection methods: semi-structured email interviews with six solo female travelers as well as one physical interview with solo female travelers and digital ethnographic analysis (Netnography). Combining both methods observational data gathered from digital platforms with personal narratives obtained through interviews helps to examine the safety perceptions

and challenges faced by solo female travelers in Nepal more effectively (Creswell and Poth 2016).

3.1 Philosophy of Science

Crotty (1998) explains philosophy of science involves investigating the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions of academic research. This impacts the generation, validation, and interpretation of knowledge in scientific investigations (Crotty 1998). The study is based on interpretivism as its epistemological stance and social constructivism as its ontological approach. This study employs qualitative techniques, including semi-structured interviews and digital ethnographic content analysis, which will be presented and motivated further below. These viewpoints guide the study's investigation into how safe solo female tourists perceive Nepal as a travel destination.

Ontology: Social Constructivism

Crotty (1998) states that ontology is the study of the nature of reality, as well as what is known about it (Crotty 1998). A social constructivist perspective is adopted in this research, which posits that social interactions, discussions, and shared stories and narratives shape reality rather than being objective (Simpson, Berger, and Luckmann 1967) That is why personal experiences, cultural backgrounds, and collective narratives exchanged across travel communities influence perceptions of safety, which are not universal facts in the context of this research.

Prior studies on tourism have demonstrated that social and cultural elements significantly impact travelers' risk perceptions, as opposed to just objective indicators such as crime rates or political stability (Reisinger and Mavondo 2005). Female travelers who travel alone rely on their personal views of their environment, previous experiences, and the experiences and stories of other travelers, as well as those published on digital platforms and shared through word-of-mouth, to navigate safety (Wilson and Little 2008)

Through the application of social constructivist ontology, this study understands that safety is dynamic, specific to the situation and concept, and can be affected by continuous social interactions. Individual experiences, online discussions, and social interactions all help

travelers make sense of safety by developing a socially constructed perception of safety threats and ways to handle them.

Epistemology: Interpretivism

Epistemology studies focus on how people acquire and understand knowledge. This research is grounded in the interpretivism paradigm, which emphasizes understanding individuals' lived experiences and the subjective interpretations they attribute to them (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). Rich, contextualized information that arises from individual viewpoints and interactions is considered valuable by interpretivism, in contrast to positivist approaches that seek objective, quantitative truths (Denzin 1998).

In tourism studies, interpretivism has been frequently employed to investigate the perception and experiential aspects of travel, particularly about gendered travel experiences, safety concerns, and risk perception (Seow and Brown 2018). Since the safety perceptions of female solo travelers are extremely personal and influenced by cultural contexts, emotions, and online world narratives, an interpretive process is most suited to researching these complex, situation-specific experiences.

This study employs qualitative techniques to investigate how women traveling alone in Nepal perceive, discuss, and address safety concerns. A comprehensive examination of the narratives and themes that emerge from travelers' shared experiences has been made possible by the primary data-collection methods, which involve email interviews and digital ethnographic analysis of travel forums, YouTube comments, and social media discussions. This study aims to examine how individuals describe their experiences and how these opinions are negotiated, supported, or debated within online travel forums rather than evaluating safety perceptions.

The study is based on social constructivism, and interpretivism acknowledges that Individual and social narratives (ontology) impact safety perceptions, which are not long-term. Because social interactions and personal experiences shape our understanding of safety, qualitative research is the most suitable methodological approach.

Since these techniques enable the study to observe travelers' lived experiences, online discussions, and shifting perceptions of security risks and coping strategies, this approach supports the use of physical interviews, email interviews, and Netnographic content analysis.

3.2 Research design

This study employs exploratory, qualitative, and inductive research design to investigate the safety perception and challenges experienced by solo female travelers in Nepal. This framework was designed to generate rich, context-specific knowledge by allowing themes to emerge naturally from collected data. Safety opinions are highly subjective and depend on context-specific social and cultural aspects; therefore, a qualitative approach is preferable to numerical evaluation for thorough research.

A qualitative approach provides for a thorough investigation of personal experiences, feelings, and interpretations. For investigations that aim to understand human experiences, behaviors, and meanings within the natural world, qualitative research is an appropriate approach (Creswell and Poth 2016). Given the scarcity of existing research on this issue, an exploratory approach is especially effective for revealing fresh perspectives and discovering recurring patterns in travelers' stories (Stebbins 2001).

The research used an inductive approach, which develops themes and patterns from the data obtained rather than testing a predetermined theory (Saunders, Thornhill, and Lewis 2019). An inductive approach starts with the collection of data (via netnographic analysis and interviews) where statistics indicate themes and patterns and conclusions are drawn, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the security concerns faced by female travelers traveling alone. This approach is suitable because there has been little prior research that specifically analyzes the experiences of female travelers traveling alone to Nepal. Therefore, the objective of the study is to gather fresh insights from the participants' real-life stories rather than validate existing theories. This approach allows themes and patterns to emerge naturally from the data (Thomas 2006). It is an exploration in nature and an excellent research method for comprehending difficult-to-quantify topics like safety perceptions. The study confirms interpretivist epistemology, which focuses on personal perceptions and perspectives (Denzin and Lincoln 1994).

For data collection Interview, Netnography and secondary data collection was used to obtain a thorough understanding of the experience of solo female travelers. Email and physical Interviews help to get firsthand knowledge of solo female travelers' safety circumstances, whereas employing netnography (online data analysis), offers more perspective than only direct

interviews. For netnography analysis discussions on TripAdvisor, Reddit, Facebook groups, and YouTube comments were used. This study provides a comprehensive, deep examination of how solo female travelers perceive and interact with safety in Nepal by combining qualitative methodologies with inductive reasoning.

The study uses a variety of techniques to provide a complete picture. Semi-structured interviews offer an adaptable format that permits respondents to go into greater detail about their lived experiences while ensuring that important topics are always covered (Bryman 2012). Additionally, by facilitating the examination of debates on websites like Facebook, Reddit, TripAdvisor, and YouTube, netnography is an application of ethnographic methodology to online environments that broadens the scope of perspectives studied. To contextualize and validate the results, desktop research was obtained by analyzing reports, travel blogs, and current scholarly literature in addition to primary data sources. This approach combines primary and secondary data and is employed to enhance the validity and comprehensiveness of the study's findings, ensuring a thorough understanding of the safety concerns faced by female travelers journeying alone to Nepal (Denzin 1978).

3.3 Data collection method

This study used three types of qualitative data collection methods: primary data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Netnography data was collected through group discussion and comments on platforms like Tripadvisor, Reddit, and social media by analyzing the content, and secondary data was collected through desktop research from blogs, websites, journal articles, newspapers, and books.

For the thesis, it was required to find out travelers who visited solo in Nepal. To visit the field it was not possible for the researcher because of budget and time constraints. So Participants were identified through YouTube trip videos and TikTok videos and searched for contact details under their profile. Where links to TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram were found.

Primary data collection: Semi-structured interview

For primary data collection, the semi-structured interview was conducted with the solo female traveler who visited Nepal before. This method was chosen because it allows participants to

share their personal experiences and perceptions. Semi-structured interviews provide “a balance between consistency and flexibility” by ensuring main topics are included while providing opportunities for participants to express them freely (Bryman 2016).

Semi-structured interviews were performed with seven female travelers who had visited Nepal six via Email and one interview was conducted physically. The physical interview was recorded and transcribed. The email interviews used a semi-structured style with open-ended questions on the opinions of the respondents traveling independently in Nepal. Their narratives provided valuable qualitative insights, allowing for a thorough examination of how solo female travelers perceive safety risks in Nepal.

Sampling Strategy

Sampling is the essential aspect of qualitative research that determines the collected data's depth and relevance (Creswell and Creswell 2018). The study used a non-probability purposive sampling technique, known to be typical in qualitative research, to select individuals who possess special expertise or previous experience with the research issue (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2019). Participants were selected depending on their personal experience traveling solely in Nepal, as the study focuses on the safety perceptions of solo female travelers in Nepal. Purposive sampling was used in this study, which means that individuals were selected on purpose rather than at random. Purposive sampling is appropriate for qualitative research since it assures that the data acquired is relevant, rich, and meaningful (Etikan 2016).

Selection Criteria for Participants

This study is based on the solo female traveler's perception and the challenges they faced while traveling alone in Nepal. So, the participants are only females who have visited Nepal. They must have been traveling alone in Nepal, and those who could provide personal safety experiences and perceptions. This strategy ensured that participants understood the difficulties and safety issues encountered by solo female travelers in Nepal.

Recruitment Process

Initially, it was intended to collect data through in-person interviews in Thamel (a touristic destination in Nepal) through personal contact. However, several challenges emerged during fieldwork. Potential respondents often ignored or reacted with skepticism when approached in person. In some cases, guides even interfered with dissuading potential participants which made it difficult to attempt face-to-face interviews. Given these difficulties, researchers had to shift to digital data collection methods to find and recruit potential participants.

Researchers posted on Facebook and Reddit Forums to recruit participants asking for solo women who had traveled to Nepal to answer the interview questions if they felt interested. However, these groups declined the researcher's post because of the rules and regulations of the forum and group. This group does not allow posts that look like surveys and promotional activities.

Then Researchers searched for YouTube videos, travel blogs, and TikTok videos of solo female travelers who shared their experiences in those videos. Personal messages were sent on their Facebook, Instagram and TikTok messenger and asked for phone interviews by describing the purpose of the interview with all the details. Most of the receivers did not respond whereas some responded and stated that they would like to participate. 20 females were contacted through TikTok where 1 responded and participated, whereas 11 females were contacted via Instagram where 4 responded and participated, and five females were contacted through Facebook where 2 responded, but only one participated. They were asked for phone or video calls or Email interviews. But later it was difficult to arrange a phone interview because they were famous bloggers and had busy schedules as they were traveling person. So for their flexibility, the researchers provided the option of email interview. Among them, six participants were chosen for the email interview. The researchers wrote emails to the interviewee attaching the interview questions. For the physical interview, the researchers found the interviewee from personal contact and set the time as per their convenience and the interview was done in a library. Because of the use of online recruitment, there is a risk of self-selection bias, as only those who were willing and available answered.

For content analysis, online sources such as TripAdvisor, Reddit, and Facebook travel groups were selected for the purposive sampling to ensure the discussion analyzed was relevant to the study's focus on safety perception and challenges. However, by combining interviews and

publicly available online debates, the study was able to gather a wide spectrum of perspectives.

Sample size.

For primary data collection, where only seven solo female travelers participated in interviews. Netnographic data from online platforms such as TripAdvisor, Reddit, Facebook groups, and YouTube comments provided valuable insights from a diverse population of travelers. The limited sample size for interviews is consistent with qualitative research methodologies, which emphasize depth over breadth (Creswell and Poth 2016). Furthermore, using Netnography data helped in conclusions and improve the study's trustworthiness.

Overview of the participants

Participants	Nationality	Age	Source of interview
Participant 1	Belgium	35	Email
Participant 2	Indian	31	Email
Participant 3	Norwegian	25	Email
Participant 4	Indian	26	Email
Participant 5	French	28	Email
Participant 6	Canadian	29	Email
Participant 7	Danish	31	Physical

Netnography Data Collection

Netnography involves analyzing online group forum discussions, as well as comments on travel forums and social media platforms, to capture authentic, spontaneous, and collective travel experiences shared in digital spaces (Kozinets 2010). Physical and Email interviews provided direct insights from individual travelers, allowing for the collection of personal narratives and detailed accounts of their experiences (James and Busher 2016). Netnography allows researchers to investigate online networks by carefully observing and comprehending user-generated data. This technique was especially well-suited to documenting first-hand, in-the-moment tales from a variety of travelers, as these female travelers routinely share their experiences and safety concerns on social media. Online forums, social media platforms, and video-sharing websites all function as collaborative exchanges of information areas where travelers can address concerns, provide precautionary tips, and notify visitors about possible risks (Kozinets 2010). According to Mkono and Markwell (2014), Netnography offers genuine insights into travelers' perceptions of safety by allowing the capture of organically recurring conversations without the need for investigator assistance, in contrast to standard qualitative approaches (Mkono and Markwell 2014).

In this study, Netnography data was collected by thoroughly analyzing the discussions about safety issues and concerns about other challenges faced by solo woman travelers in social media and other online forums. This method was crucial to understanding real-time and unfiltered conversations. In these forums and on social media platforms, travelers usually share their concerns regarding safety, their own experiences, and safety-related advice to other travelers planning their trips. Data was collected using the following platforms: Reddit, TripAdvisor, Facebook, Tiktok and YouTube. On Reddit, travelers talk about scams, personal experiences, and safety issues in Nepal on forums like (r/travel, r/Nepal, r/solotravel). In the TripAdvisor forum, travelers frequently ask questions about safety and get answers from travelers who have already visited the country. In Facebook Travel Groups like (Backpackers and Travelers in Nepal, the Solo Female Traveler network, Travel Nepal group, Solo Female Travelers (the first fb group for women who travel solo), and Solo Travel Nepal. Travelers offer peer-to-peer guidance on backpacking and solo female travel. In YouTube videos, viewers frequently comment and participate in conversations sparked by travel vlogs, sharing personal stories and safety advice. Blogspots and websites always provide useful pieces of information to travelers.

Travelers open up about things like worries and personal experiences on the digital platform that they might not discuss in official interviews (Kozinets 2015).

The study was able to capture both positive and negative experiences and viewpoints of travelers by leveraging various platforms. Online conversations are real-time information as opposed to traditional interviews. Netnography considers the latest safety issues and changing travel patterns. The researchers conducted systematic searches for terms like "solo female traveler in Nepal," "solo female travel safety in Nepal," and "female traveler encounters in Nepal" to find relevant discussions. Posts and responses that were accessible to the public were chosen for their applicability to safety issues. Key topics included anticipated hazards, local connections, assault encounters, transit safety, and accommodation worries.

Desktop Research

Desktop research provided more valuable data by reviewing existing literature, reports, and travel blogs related to solo female traveler safety in Nepal. Researchers analyzed academic studies, Government reports, and articles from tourism websites to gain deep insight into the broader context of safety challenges and perceptions. Including three data collection methods helped to triangulate findings from interviews and Netnography analysis ensuring full understanding of the topic.

3.4 Data analysis

Thematic analysis is used in this study to examine the gathered data which is a popular technique for finding, examining, and interpreting patterns in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke 2006).his strategy was selected because it provides an adaptable yet methodical way of analyzing participant narratives and online conversations of travelers guaranteeing a thorough comprehension of the safety perceptions of solo female travelers in Nepal.

This study was based on data from different sources. Primary data consists of seven interviews sent with female visitors who visited Nepal alone. Netnography data sources include online conversations from YouTube, Facebook groups, Reddit, and TripAdvisor. Online discussions were screen-shot and categorized for further study, and all interview responses were transcribed and saved in a word processing document. Each participant and data source was given a unique

identification (e.g., Participant 1,2 and so on for Email and physical interview, User for online Comments) to guarantee methodical management.

The study was conducted using the six-step theme analysis process proposed by Braun and Clarke. Data Familiarization, Creating Initial Codes, Looking for Themes, Examining Themes, Defining and Naming Themes, and Writing the Report (Braun and Clarke 2006).

In the beginning, researchers started the process by getting familiar with the interview transcript, and online comments. Comments and transcripts were studied and reviewed several times and noted down. Important words, phrases, and recurrent themes were underlined and given codes, such as "positive local interactions," "avoiding nightlife," and "harassment in taxis". These codes were then put together into broader categories that align with the main themes of the study like motivations, challenges faced, and Coping Strategies. These themes were improved by determining how applicable they were to various data sources. The themes that overlapped were either combined or reinterpreted. To maintain uniformity, each topic was given a precise label and description. Findings were structured in a narrative format, with direct quotes from participants and online discussions used as supporting evidence.

3.4 The use of Generative AI (ChatGPT) in the Thesis process

In the creation of this thesis, researchers used OpenAI ChatGPT as a supplementary tool to organize ideas, refine the structure of the thesis, and improve academic language proficiency. AI was not used for data collection, data analysis and findings, and critical thinking. AI was used to polish the rough draft to express the point or to check if the structure made sense. The use of AI was done ethically and with academic integrity, as supporting writing assistance rather than content creation.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are essential in research because it involves human participation and publicly available data. That is why research should prioritize informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and protection of data (Bryman 2016). In this study, ethical considerations were followed to ensure sure well-being and rights of the participants. Participants must be provided

with full information on the objectives of the research, the risk and their right to withdraw at any time, and how their responses are going to be used (Creswell and Creswell 2018). In social research safeguarding the participant's identity is essential to reduce the potential harm (Babbie 2020). For the web-based data that is publicly available ethical considerations are crucial (Townsend and Wallace 2017). The researcher must minimize the harm such as emotional and physiological distress (Flick 2018).

This study follows ethical considerations by maintaining integrity, protecting participants' rights, anonymity, confidentiality, reducing potential hazards, voluntary participation, and appropriate data management. Participants were provided with full details of the objectives of the studies, methods, and expected results. Participants were requested to provide their express permission before beginning the interview through social media messenger to ensure they understood their rights to withdraw at any time without consequence. The study has maintained their identity by anonymizing to prevent their confidentiality. A numerical code was given to each participant, and all information collected was securely protected in the folders. Furthermore, data from websites like Reddit, TripAdvisor, Facebook, and YouTube were used anonymously, so no unique identities were associated with the analysis. Participants were not forced to participate they were recruited voluntarily as per their wishes. Since the study involves content analysis of Reddit, TripAdvisor, YouTube, and Facebook comments that are publicly available, only publicly accessible postings were used. Efforts were made to protect users' privacy by avoiding direct identification or quotation of private information that is sensitive. The study's goal is to minimize any potential harm to participants, including psychological pain. As the nature of the research was sensitive to revealing safety concerns, harassment, or cultural challenges, the interview questions were designed very carefully to avoid upsetting participants. They were also informed that they could leave any questions that make them uncomfortable and if they don't want to answer. All information collected, such as transcripts, and web content, were safely kept in password-protected folders. This data could only be accessible to the researchers and the authorized supervisors. To maintain confidentiality, data would be completely erased after finishing the study. To make sure it complies with academic and professional ethical norms, the study would, if necessary, receive ethical clearance from the appropriate academic institution.

This study examines the experiences of female travelers traveling alone in Nepal while maintaining participant safety, data integrity, and responsible academic practice by abiding by these ethical guidelines. By implementing these ethical considerations, this study follows the

ethical guidelines of qualitative research, ensuring the protection of participants' rights and the integrity of the research process. (The British Psychological Society, 2025). Although it provides useful details regarding the perceptions of safety and challenges encountered by solo female travelers who have traveled alone in Nepal. It also poses several limitations.

3.6 Limitations of the study

The Thesis on safety perception and challenges faced by foreign solo female travelers in Nepal has methodological constraints. For this thesis, it could be more effective if we were able to visit Nepal and find the participant physically in the tourist area of Nepal but due to time and financial constraints it was not possible for us. Most of the participants reached out through the help of different online platforms and one from personal contact. Even though many right candidates were approached, only a few responded. Most of the participants who responded were more comfortable with email interviews than phone or video calls except one participant. The primary data of this study was focused on only a small group of females which is limited for in-depth interviews. Which lacks the broader applicability of the findings for solo travelers in Nepal and might not be representative of other such travelers. The interview was done in English language so solo female travelers who could not communicate in English were excluded from the recruitment process. The interview was done through email, so the researchers were not able to capture the facial expressions and emotional behaviors of the interviewee. Additionally, the secondary data for Netnography was collected from open online forums which were posted online by different users and individuals' specific permission for their comments could not be obtained. Since personal interactions were not possible for Netnography data collection it was not possible to confirm interviewees' emotional information. Even though this study has some restrictions, the purposive sampling technique assures that the data obtained were rich, relevant, and related to the research objectives.

Although this research has numerous limitations however following improvements might be taken into consideration for future research. To obtain richer data, future research can be performed in-depth interviews over the phone or video. Boosting the number of participants includes tourists from different parts of the country and cultures. Another perspective on findings can be achieved by Consultation with local tourism authorities and non-governmental

organizations that focus on women's safety. Despite having several limitations, the study still addresses important issues for enhancing travel safety and makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the experiences of female travelers who travel alone in Nepal.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings from the thematic analysis of qualitative data collected from seven in-depth interviews with women who traveled alone to Nepal. The participants' ages, nationalities, and levels of travel experience were different. Some had extensive experience traveling alone, while for others, Nepal marked the beginning of their solo travel journey. The information cited was based on interviews conducted with solo female tourists who traveled to Nepal, providing valuable insights into their perspectives and the positive and negative experiences they encountered during their solo trips. The data collected through the semi-structured interview method and the analysis employed in this research utilize a thematic approach, guided by the framework outlined in the literature review and the interviews. The data was further strengthened by netnographic research conducted on online platforms like Reddit, Facebook travel communities, TripAdvisor, YouTube vlogs, travel websites, and blog posts. This method of research enabled the researchers to obtain real-time, authentically occurring conversations regarding travel experiences. Academic literature acknowledges the adoption of netnography as a supplementary strategy, recognizing its significance in obtaining legitimate, user-generated content relevant to tourism and tourist behavior (Kozinets, 2015).

This chapter aims to provide a complex and multifaceted picture of the stories of female travelers in Nepal who explored independently, analyzing their motivations for traveling solo, the challenges they faced (particularly in terms of safety), and the ways they overcame these obstacles. The current research centers on the question: What motivates foreign women to travel solo in Nepal? What constraints do solo female travelers face while traveling solo in Nepal? How do solo female travelers manage the constraints they encounter while traveling in Nepal? To solve this, the researchers used thematic analysis, which is based on the six-step approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method provides a rigorous framework that is adaptable and effective for finding patterns of meaning in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The chapter is organized around three general themes: what motivates women to travel alone, the challenges they experience, and tactics for managing risk. Every theme is divided into subsequent subthemes to convey the diversity and depth of the participants' experiences. The interview transcripts and netnographic data were closely reviewed, coded, and clustered to produce these themes inductively rather than predetermined. This analytical framework captures the participants' shared traits and the special qualities of their personal stories. The themes are shown through the significant use of direct quotes from participants, in keeping with a feminist qualitative research technique that aims to highlight women's voices and lived experiences (Pritchard and Morgan 2000). This chapter now presents, in brief, the motivations behind solo travel, the safety issues they faced, and the coping strategies they implemented.

4.1 Motivation for Traveling Solo

It is important to understand the factors influencing the experience and perceptions about the safety of single women traveling to Nepal. Motivation strongly affects travel and the risks the travelers wish to take (Yang, Liang, and Lin 2025). In this section, motivation will be discussed from the participants' perspectives, (interviews, netnography, and related literature from academic sources).

4.1.1 Freedom and Flexibility

The key motivating factor for solo female travel is Freedom and flexibility. Many participants mentioned that the primary motivation for them to travel was the freedom and flexibility it offered. As Participant 2 stated, *"I like to travel solo as it allows me to travel at my own pace and according to my own schedule. It also allows me to be spontaneous."* (Participant 2) These statements express the strong motivation for travel as a means of freedom and autonomy among solo female travelers. She enjoys the freedom to choose her own pace and make spontaneous decisions, indicating that solo travel offers a sense of control that is often lost in group travel. This reflects a larger trend among solo female travelers who prefer autonomy in itinerary

planning and making their own choices, leading to a more meaningful and self-directed vacation.

Similarly, Participant 4 expressed that. “*I wanted to experience the freedom of traveling on my own terms and to challenge myself. Solo travel allows me to immerse fully in the experience, without having to adjust to anyone else’s preferences.*” (Participant 4) Her motivation to travel on her own terms and push herself highlights the significance of autonomy as a key factor in motivating women who choose to travel alone. Her statement about not having pressure to adjust to anyone else's preferences suggests that solo travel is seen as a form of freedom from social restrictions, allowing for a deeper personal connection with the travel experience. These viewpoints demonstrate that for many women, traveling alone is more than just a practical decision, it is a deliberate act of asserting self-agency and incorporating the freedom to discover without restriction.

One user on the Reddit r/AskWoman group gives a similar statement of freedom for her motivating factors to travel alone.

“I don't like traveling with others. They want to get up too early or too late, they want to stay at places that are too nice or not nice enough. They want to spend too much or too little. They have moods, issues, and compromising gets old. I find it annoying, tiresome. Everyone travels differently and over time I was over it, I realized I preferred being alone and not dealing with others more than being with others and being annoyed by it.” (Reddit post 2 2023)

Another user from Reddit r/AskWoman group wrote her motivation for solo travel was

“I left a marriage at 43 and instantly booked a solo trip to Thailand to celebrate my freedom. I spent three days feeling really upset at the life I'd left behind but from then on, I've never looked back. I went back again to Thailand, then multiple times to Turkey, Egypt, Costa Rica and India. Now I'm a digital nomad and have just returned from three months in Greece. Being on your own is the ultimate in freedom – and the irony is, you meet way more people when you're solo. In a couple or friend group, you're closed off to the world”.(Reddit post 3 2023)

These two Reddit statements offer profound personal insights into the underlying motives for travel, including the pursuit of autonomy, release from compromise, and emotional independence. The initial quotation conveys dissatisfaction with the procedure of collective

travel. The user criticizes the perpetual necessity to conform to others' preferences such as waking times, accommodation standards, spending habits, and emotional states, and emphasizes how these concessions result in mental fatigue and discontent. Her expression, "compromising becomes old," effectively conveys an important turning point in her life: a move away from attempting to satisfy other people and toward putting her own needs first. She gradually realized that solo travel enabled her to evade interpersonal obligations and regain authority over her experience. This is not only about saving time but also about avoiding the emotional labor that, in group settings particularly for women, can be taxing. Her urge to be alone indicates that she is choosing independence and tranquility. The second quotation probes more and shows how inner development and healing are related to solo travel. This woman's solo trip began with a major life change her divorce at forty-three. Her early grief turned quickly into empowerment through travel. Her story moves from sensitivity to confidence, then culminates in her emergence as a digital nomad. This metamorphosis shows how solo travel may help one rediscover self-esteem and identity in addition to being a way of worldwide discovery. According to her, solo travel is "the essence of freedom," meaning that isolation provides not only autonomy but also an improved capacity to interact with the surroundings. Her claim that joining a marriage or friendship group makes one "locked off to the world" offers a major counter-narrative: rather than isolating women, solo travel may increase their social openness and receptivity. These quotes taken together support the idea that women's solo travel is both a very significant gesture and a rational choice.

Flexibility and freedom are the fundamental motivations for going on a solo trip among women. This supports the results of a recent Statista survey (2023), which demonstrated that 68% of solo travelers prioritize the autonomy to coordinate their plans, while 62% appreciate the flexibility of adjusting plans spontaneously during their journeys. These figures underscore the importance of autonomy as a pivotal element influencing solo travel choices (Statista 2023).

Travelling solo as a women is considered to increase resilience, identity formation, and personal empowerment (Yates et al. 2025). similarly, Elsrud (2001) emphasized that independent travel enables especially women, to challenge gender stereotypes and asserts independence. Such flexibility is one major factor why solo women usually aim to escape the restrictions of predetermined itineraries or travel companions preferences (Elsrud 2001). In this light, solo travel is an expression of individuality and a potent symbol of independence, evoking aspirations for a freer and more mindful future. Furthermore, "immerse totally in the experience" does not compromise anyone's tastes. This immersive participation allows

women to attend to their needs, curiosity, and rhythms, thus promoting an individual's dignity and self-worth. Solo travel becomes a space for enacting agency and implementing a sense of control, which are both necessary for women's empowerment in travel. This comment expresses a desire for self-determination and independence, which would be based on women's choices when going on a trip, being autonomous by the constraints of societal obligations or their partner's preference (Wilson and Harris 2006). In this sense, freedom transcends physicality to psychological and emotional independence. These ideas are consistent with the Self-Determination Theory, which considers autonomy as a basic human need and accounts for a major portion of one's motivation and the experience of well-being (Ryan and Deci 2000). All the quotes from the participants describe the desire to travel autonomously and not under social obligation. The freedom to explore at their own pace is empowering to the women and attaches them to the experience. The urge to travel "on my own terms" represents a need for personal autonomy, which many women find confined in their daily lives because of social duties. The participants stressed the need to take charge of their travel process instead of caving into the needs or restrictions of another person. Emphasizing the ability to "travel at my own pace," and be "spontaneous," the first quotation suggests a flexible and adaptive travel approach. In the same vein, the second quotation links freedom with developing a set of life skills since the traveler wishes to challenge herself by visiting "on my own terms" and without considering how her choices may affect others. Many solo travelers find great inspiration in this need for autonomy since it enables them to participate completely in the event on their own terms, therefore increasing their degree of happiness and their sense of personal empowerment. Not adjusting others' tastes grants space for more natural, real, and personal travel experiences. The major factors for traveling alone were the desire for freedom autonomy emotional stability.

4.1.2 Personal Growth

This sub-theme highlights that solo female travelers often undergo significant personal growth during their travels. Solo travel pushes individuals to rise above their comfort zones, enhance self-assurance, and build problem-solving skills. By independently navigating unfamiliar environments, many women uncover inner strength and enhanced self-reliance.

Participant 4 explained that. *“The most enjoyable part for me is the flexibility—deciding where to go and what to do- and the sense of personal growth it brings”*.(Participant 4) The quotes cover the concepts of personal development, self-discovery, and empowerment. The participant emphasizes that solo travel fosters personal growth, characterizing it as a learning experience that cultivates independence, self-sufficiency, and problem-solving skills. In this lense, more insight was provided by participant 1,

“Travelling alone is something I always wanted to try because it expands your comfort zone and you learn to rely on yourself, but I used to think it's something I would never be able to do. I was super nervous before heading to Nepal the first time, but it's that trip that made me realize that I absolutely LOVE travelling alone and that I can rely on myself. What I love about solo traveling is how much it makes you learn and grow. It makes you realize that you're capable of solving problems by yourself and that you can count on yourself.” (Participant 1)

This statement reflects initial anxiety and a lack of self-confidence and later growth and self-development. The above participant stressed the most significant motivational growth in challenging situations, she said that traveling alone helps to extend, one's comfort zone and makes one self-sufficient. The participant notes that recognizing one's ability to manage challenges independently promotes inner strength and becomes a revelation. This statement is a common narrative for solo female travelers: pushing oneself to overcome hurdles. This is consistent with the respondents who reported that being on one's own when traveling solo promoted learning, personal growth, and problem-solving skills. Motivation for Solo travel is often cited as a powerful tool for self-growth, particularly because it motivates individuals to go outside of their comfort zones and handle issues independently.

As explained on the travel blog, A Solo Woman Traveling, *“It also promotes self-confidence and personal growth as individuals navigate unfamiliar situations.”*(Byron 2024)

A similar statement was provided by one user on Reddit r/AskWomen group” *It gave me a lot of confidence and I enjoyed being able to do what I want at my own pace”* (Reddit post 4 2023). The quotations underline confidence and self-development as the main results and fundamental driving forces for solo female travel. Navigating unfamiliar surroundings on your own is constantly presented as a powerful exercise that develops resilience, flexibility, and self-trust. The blog comment from A Solo Woman Traveling emphasizes that more than just experiencing new places, solo travel is about personal growth. By themselves, the ability to overcome challenges and make decisions builds self-confidence, a necessary component of human

development. In foreign or culturally varied environments, where visitors must rely on their judgment and intuition skills may be less tested in group travel situations, this is especially important. In the same line, the Reddit user supports this topic by saying that solo travel provided her confidence and the ability to do things at her speed. This implies that solo travel helps one to develop emotionally and psychologically as it allows a strong feeling of freedom. Women who take full responsibility for their choices, experiences, and time management can better recognize their own needs and preferences, therefore fostering their development in self-awareness and confidence. Solo travel is considered in both cases not just as a kind of pleasure but also as a valuable practice of stretching outside one's comfort zone, facing uncertainty, and rising stronger. This comprehension fits academic viewpoints that link solo female travel to empowerment, self-discovery, and identity development.

This comment connects the two widespread themes identified: a concern for self-development and a concern for autonomy and individuality (Yates et al. 2025). Many solo female travelers said that their travels resulted in significant personal development and self-discovery that had positive impacts long term. Traveling independently helps one build up inner strength and independence, which are qualities that become, in fact, important in daily life. Solo travel can help improve confidence, strengthen capacity for problem-solving, and improve decision-making traits that are valuable not only during travel but also in business and personal life. As tourists pay attention to their own needs, the encounters they face also help to foster compassion and self-awareness. Solo travel thus becomes more than just a passing getaway; it may be an unforgettable experience that helps one to grow to feel more self-conscious and confident (Russell 2023).

Personal development emerged as a prominent subject among solo female travelers in Nepal. As they faced unusual barriers on their way, whether cultural, emotional, or logistical, participants developed self-reliance and self-assurance. Their journeys demonstrate how travel can be more than just a means of getting from one place to another; it can also be a mechanism for profound personal growth and discovery.

4.1.3 Cultural immersion and exploration

For lot of solo female travelers, a primary motivation for travel is the chance to fully engage with different cultures without the influence or distractions of others. Solo travel allows for a easier and deeper connection with local individuals, customs, and the environment. Adopting this travel of trend offers a significant opportunity to gain new perspectives and engage with the world and gain new insight world around you.. According to Participant 5, *“I appreciate traveling alone because it opens up possibilities of meeting new people.”* (interviewee 5) Similarly, Participant 1 marked a closer link to local culture, free from the distraction of a friend

“When I travel solo, I’m more focused on the country, the culture, and the people because I don’t have a travel companion to distract me and I think that makes you experience countries in a different/deeper way.” (Participant 1)

This participant's reflection demonstrates how traveling alone helps to gain deeper cultural interaction. Without having a travel companion, she becomes more aware of her environment and could be focused more on the culture of a particular country, people, environment, and culture and traditions which helps her to gain a more profound and unfiltered view of Nepal. This increased level of immersion promotes self-reflection, independent thinking, and emotional awareness. Such experiences correspond with the larger notion, that solo travel allows for self-discovery since travelers are free to explore on their terms without adjusting others' preferences. The absence of external distractions allows for a more thoughtful journey, demonstrating how solo travel can be both culturally enriching and personally transforming. Participant 7 specifically wanted to understand Nepal's religious traditions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, through taking the special course.

“My motivation was that I wanted to learn more about Buddhism and Hinduism. So, I took a religious course so I could learn more about religion. Also, I love traveling, you know, so for me, it was a new opportunity to go and explore religion, what Nepal is like, and experience the culture. Nepalese Culture.” (interviewee 7)

Participant 7 focused especially on learning about Nepal's religious traditions using solo travel, which allowed her to gain knowledge of Buddhism and Hinduism. Each of these points of view taken together illustrates the profound cultural and spiritual immersion that results from solo travel. One of the significant and predominant reasons for solo female travelers to visit Nepal

is for cultural discovery. Participants frequently valued the deeper cultural connection that might be achieved through autonomous travel, and they often voiced their desire to participate meaningfully with local traditions, people, and landscapes. For some, this also included spiritual interests, such as learning about Buddhism and Hinduism via immersive experiences. Most of the participants expressed a deep interest in solo travel for cultural exploration and extensive enthusiasm for learning about many cultures.

Netnography data also supports the idea that cultural exploration is a strong motivator for women traveling solo. According to one traveler's blog, "*This deeper cultural immersion enriches the travel experience. It offers insights and memories that are often missed when traveling in a group.*" (Belau 2024) According to another blog article, traveling alone has more advantages than group tours, which motivates solo female travelers. It enables you to "*meet more locals – versus sticking in your travel group bubble*" (Strutner 2024). From this viewpoint, It make sense that when traveling solo, it promotes genuine cultural exchanges that may be diluted in group settings. Similarly, according to another travel blog, Solo travel usually involves deeper interactions with different cultures. Despite having a companion, solo female travelers are more likely to connect with locals, discover their stories, and immerse themselves in their cultures and lifestyles. As a result, it provides a more realistic and authentic travel experience (Girlswanderlust 2024).

Cultural discovery is a major motive for many solo female travelers who want to participate in different cultures and communities in addition to experiencing entertainment. Solo travel generally provides more deeply engaging experiences than traditional mass tourism, which sometimes supports surface interactions. Many women find that knowing about and experiencing other cultures' traditions, languages, cuisines, and ways of life enriches their lives and provides valuable life lessons (Richards 2018). Solo travel allows individuals to discover culture on their terms, without commitment or interruption. This freedom lets tourists take it easier and become more involved in local life, whether through helping, staying with locals, or going to cultural events. Many people view these cross-cultural encounters as transforming, which allows them to question preconceptions and gain more general viewpoints. For women specifically, cultural inquiry can be connected to curiosity and a need for self-development and empathy building (Wilson and Harris 2006).

Netnographic data add value to these firsthand stories, as travel bloggers and online forum members regularly portray solo travel as a gateway to genuine cultural connections, increased social contact with locals, and a deeper understanding of various ways of living. Supported by

research, this sub-theme emphasizes how solo travel fosters cultural learning and enhances visitors' perspectives by providing significant and transforming events beyond basic tourism.

4.2 Safety Perception and Challenges Faced by Solo Female Travelers in Nepal

This section introduces the second theme of the analysis: Safety Perception and Challenges. While the previous section examined what motivates women to travel alone, this part examined how safety concerns before and during the trip shape the experience of solo female travelers in Nepal. Women who travel alone frequently face difficulties and have safety concerns (JORDAN and GIBSON 2005). The analysis is organized into three primary sub-themes: Pre-travel Safety Perception, On-the-ground Safety Challenges, and comparison between the perceived safety vs actual safety. This chapter integrates interview data with netnographic insights from online platforms such as Reddit, Facebook groups, YouTube, Tripadvisor, and travel blogs, and academic literature offering a nuanced comprehension of how solo female travelers perceive, experience, and manage safety while traveling in Nepal.

4.2.1 Pre-travel Safety Concerns

For many solo female travelers, the journey starts not when they reach their destination, but even before the actual travel. For them, the tourism experience begins well before the journey itself, with pre-trip planning, safety considerations, and emotional preparation which significantly influence their overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the destination (Abbasian 2018). In Nepal, these concerns are especially prominent due to its geographic and cultural unfamiliarity for most Western tourists, along with dominant gender stereotypes and narratives in the media that portray the Global South as hazardous territory for women traveling alone (Wilson and Little 2008). Most participants talked about how their opinions about safety were shaped long before they visited Nepal. For instance, digital content served as the main information source, particularly Facebook travel groups, Reddit posts, and YouTube vlogs. Before traveling to Nepal, all seven participants shared detailed reflections about their safety-

related concerns. These worries are often combined with general fears tied to being a woman traveling alone, with country-specific anxieties. Participant 1 openly stated,

“I think I was mainly scared of getting robbed, kidnapped, sexually harassed or raped. Not for Nepal specifically, but I think these are things that can happen to women in any country, unfortunately.” (participant 1)

The response reflects her internalization of global anxieties associated with gender-based violence, rather than risks specific to Nepal. Participant 2, by contrast, had a more positive outlook but still took safety seriously:

“Being a woman solo traveler, I make sure that the place I am travelling to is safe for women, and Nepal checks all the boxes in this regard”, although I was careful to be mindful of taking basic security precautions.”(participant 2)

Participant 3 highlighted concerns that shaped comparative experience, particularly coming from India:

“I came from traveling in India, so for me, Nepal felt much safer. But as always, my main concern is men. I know that gender roles are very different compared to Norway, so as a woman traveling alone, I need to keep that in mind. I was worried that men might touch me or do other things, but that was my only real concern.” (Participant 3)

Her reflection indicates that safety concerns are frequently relative and influenced by previous travel experiences and societal norms. Participant 6 also shared worries focused on theft and public safety.

“My main concern was whether I would be safe while walking alone, especially at night, and if public transportation would be secure. I was also worried for the possible scams and theft targeting tourists.” (Participant 6)

Although the majority of the conversation regarding safety for women traveling alone focused on individual dangers like harassment, fraud, or assault, participants 7 also voiced worries about environmental hazards.

“There are two things. One is you are female. So as a female, you will feel oh oh what if someone rapes me? What if someone kidnaps me? What if someone scams me? They will cheat us... second one is um earthquake because in Nepal, there will be a lot of earthquakes. Those two were my security concerns, actually” (participant 7).

Participant 7 addresses pre-trip concerns influenced by both environmental and gender-based threats. Her concerns are common to female travelers traveling alone: dangers of sexual violence, kidnapping, and fraud. These anxieties are frequently made worse by societal stereotypes about women's fragility. She also mentions natural disasters as a major worry, citing earthquakes in Nepal in particular. This mix of environmental hazards and personal safety concerns shows how women weigh several levels of danger before their departure, underscoring the nuanced nature of perceived risk in female solo travel. The response emphasizes how ideas of safety may go beyond people hazards to encompass structural and environmental weaknesses.

These narratives demonstrate a unique pattern of safety awareness influenced by gender and environmental concern with participants conveying a blend of nervousness, preparedness, and strategic caution usually shaped by intersectional elements like nationality, ethnicity, and prior travel experience (Seow and Brown 2018). Participants' perspectives indicate a type of anticipatory stress, where emotional suffering occurs not from real experiences but from imagined threats, such as kidnapping, harassment, theft, or disasters like earthquakes (Fuchs and Reichel 2011). This emotional labor reflects what Wilson and Harris (2006) characterize as the "psychological work" women perform to negotiate the desire for autonomy with the cultural and physical difficulties of solo travel (Wilson and Harris 2006). Although Nepal is generally perceived as peaceful and spiritual, participants' mental readiness was sometimes overshadowed by overall narratives of risk, especially those related to the Global South (Pritchard and Morgan 2000b). Even though Nepal is generally seen as peaceful and spiritual, these border perceptions, including fear of natural disasters like earthquakes also influenced how participants mentally prepared for their trip.

Netnographic research demonstrates how online communities exchange stories around safety. Online travel forums have emerged as key platforms for solo female travelers to critically assess and navigate perceived safety hazards before visiting countries such as Nepal. An examination of digital information from platforms like Reddit, Facebook travel groups, TripAdvisor, and YouTube indicates that many women actively pursue peer validation, assurance, and firsthand accounts to assess the safety of Nepal as a destination for solo travel. In Facebook groups like

"The Solo Female Travelers Network", "Travel Nepal Group", and "Solo Female Travelers (FIRST FB group for women who travel solo!)", frequently appears as a discussion topic among women planning their first trip to Asia or South Asia. Posts typically begin with questions such as: "How safe is Nepal for a solo female traveler?", followed by detailed crowd-sourced responses. While many users comment that they felt "welcomed" and "respected" in Nepal, nearly all posts emphasize the need for caution, particularly regarding transportation, walking alone at night, and being aware of scams.

One highly responded comment in a 2024 post on the Facebook traveler group (The solo traveler network) was, *"Hello hello! Need some advice before heading to Nepal ❤️ I'm about to go on my first solo trip and I'm so excited but also kinda nervous😓."* (Facebook post 2 2023)

The quote shows the mixed feelings of excitement and nervousness that many solo female travelers experience. While the traveler is excited, at the same time, has anxiety and asks for a lot of advice, it reveals that the woman is scared to travel and needs some reassurance.

The anxiousness is not from experience, but it is from the perceived risk, which is more fuelled by the online stories we read and see in online forums and the unfamiliarities of Nepal. It is consistent with risk perception theory, which posits that subjectively experienced feelings frequently influence how travelers judge safety (Slovic 2013). Asking for advice online also demonstrates the value of peer support and virtual communities in emotionally and practically preparing for travel. YouTube additionally significantly impacts how people perceive safety before a trip. Popular and frequently viewed videos by single female travelers have titles like "Is Nepal safe for solo female travelers?" "My experience as a woman alone in Nepal," or "Tips for solo girls in Kathmandu." One user commented on a YouTube video, "Why I Traveled to Nepal Alone," asking for suggestions for hiring a guide

"I love your video, thank you. I am about to travel to Nepal on my own next week! I will be there for 1 month and I am so excited but very nervous as my first solo trip in Asia. I have one question - what guide or company did you use for your trekking in the Annapurnas. :)" (Youtube post 1 2025)

The writer expresses excitement for the forthcoming adventure while acknowledging her considerable anxiety, especially as it marks her first solo journey in Asia. This underscores a significant pre-travel safety issue: uncertainty stemming from unfamiliarity with the cultural and geographical setting. Her inquiry regarding "Which guide or company did you utilize for your trekking in the Annapurnas" demonstrates a strong intention to ensure safety by seeking

reliable local providers, a prevalent tactic among female tourists to mitigate perceived risks. This demonstrates a proactive stance on safety and dependence on peer recommendations via social media. The comment exemplifies the coexistence of enthusiasm and caution during the pre-travel phase, particularly for female travelers visiting destinations such as Nepal for the first time.

One user in the Reddit r/Nepal group wrote about her concern before visiting Nepal.

“I'm quite a cautious person, so I just want to make sure I understand how to be safe” (Reddit post 5 2025) She added that “In general, I consider Nepal to be safe for women, but just want to make sure this assumption is correct” (Reddit post 5 2025).

The post on Reddit demonstrates a proactive strategy for travel safety, and the traveler's self-identification as "cautious" reflects an ingrained awareness of vulnerability, frequently amplified among single tourists. Her aspiration to "comprehend how to ensure safety" before departure indicates a proactive apprehension regarding risk management, which is characteristic of pre-travel preparation. This corresponds with risk avoidance behavior and demonstrates how safety apprehensions affect information-seeking tendencies, particularly in new cultural settings such as Nepal. It underscores the necessity for clear and accessible safety information specifically designed for female passengers. The following statement highlights an essential aspect of pre-travel uncertainty. Although the traveler holds a predominantly favorable view of Nepal's safety, her desire to validate this belief illustrates how female travelers frequently seek affirmation from friends or direct sources before entirely relying on their assessment, indicating a precautionary mentality grounded in recognizing that safety depends on context and is influenced by gender. This also corresponds with Risk Perception Theory, wherein even ostensibly safe locations are rigorously assessed from the perspective of female experience (Reisinger and Mavondo 2005). Her dependence on internet forums highlights the significance of peer-validated knowledge in the planning phase.

From above, three trends are appearing across various platforms. Cautious advice is widely accepted and shared. Often, users post safety advice that other people follow. Nepal is frequently presented as "relatively safe," especially in contrast to its neighboring nations, but it does have its specific issues. Safety narratives are co-authored, with each piece contributing to a more comprehensive, reassuring, and mindful view of Nepal. These netnographic observations illustrate how online environments serve as unofficial yet effective safety planning sources. They support the view that women must prepare for traveling alone, but they also

provide group assistance and knowledge exchange that makes women feel better prepared. These online communities become crucial spaces for risk negotiation and mental preparedness when there are no official safety resources specifically designed for female travelers. The pre-trip safety concerns expressed by participants reflect the complicated connection between gender and culture and the digital convenience of travel. Reisinger and Mavondo (2005) contend that perceived risk can be affected not only by objective hazards but also by opinions that are impacted by cultural and psychological elements (Reisinger and Mavondo 2005). For solo female travelers to Nepal, these perceptions are shaped mainly by secondary digital sources, emotional expectations, and particular gender safety narratives sources, emotional expectations, and particular gender safety narratives.

Peer-to-peer communication sites such as Facebook, Reddit, and YouTube function as informal guidebooks, where safety is not simply addressed but cooperatively produced through shared experiences. The increasing number of inquiries regarding modest attire, scam navigation, and street harassment suggests that female visitors utilize these forums for both factual information and emotional support, and even for strategic preparation (O'Reilly 2006). Floyd et al. (2004) characterize this phenomenon as "anticipatory conformity," wherein conduct is altered actively in response to perceived social expectations or threats. For example, following local clothing requirements or avoiding nighttime travel were common habits driven by cultural sensitivity and safety considerations. (Floyd et al. 2004). These pre-travel security precautions represent a component of a more extensive gendered risk negotiation procedure. Women adopt self-regulation strategies such as avoiding eye contact, selecting particular accommodations, or remaining within tourist zones not alone for security but also to conform to expected gender norms in host communities (Wilson and Little 2008). The continued existence of earlier safety narratives on platforms such as TripAdvisor indicates that issues of visibility, modesty, and safety remain recurrent worries for women traveling to unfamiliar cultural contexts. Furthermore, Nepal's geographic unfamiliarity intensified these concerns. Numerous interviewees cited South Asia's prominence for gender-based violence or harassment, making similarities with neighboring nations such as India. This illustrates the notion of "imagined geographies," where the comparison of particular areas influences visitors' mental mapping of risk and safety (Sibley 2002). Nepal serves not just as a destination but as a symbolic landscape for representing and managing gendered anxieties. In conclusion, the interplay of emotional labor, cultural assumptions, and digital storytelling creates a nuanced comprehension of safety for single female travelers. Pre-travel safety apprehensions are not solely pragmatic factors, but

psychological mechanisms influenced by overarching narratives of gender, danger, and global disparity. This analysis confirms that safety is both a subjective social construct and an objective reality, significantly shaped by the interplay of media, gender, and mobility.

4.2.2 On the ground safety challenges

Solo female tourists frequently arrive in Nepal with a blend of excitement and anxiety. Although numerous individuals had favorable pre-travel safety impressions, their actual experiences upon arrival in the nation are complex, influenced by instances of uncertainty, discomfort, and alertness. Interviews with seven solo female travelers revealed a recurrent theme traveling in Nepal independently as a woman involves navigating and responding to various gender-specific obstacles in real-time. One of the dominant themes across all interviews was the perception of Nepal as a relatively safe destination for solo female travelers. Many participants expressed feelings of comfort and safety, especially during the daytime and in public or touristic areas. Participant 1 emphasized, *"Super safe! Nepal is actually one of the countries I feel the safest in. I've walked alone in the evening without problems."* (participant 1)

Participant 2 supported this perspective, stating, that *"I felt completely safe travelling and walking alone in Nepal during the day time and generally avoided going to deserted places during the night time.."* (participant 2) These statements highlight a perception of Nepal as a welcoming destination for solo female travelers. These accounts align with previous research (JORDAN and GIBSON 2005) that suggests women often seek destinations perceived as non-threatening and culturally respectful toward solo female travelers. However, these general perceptions were nuanced by more complex, sometimes contradictory, experiences on the ground. While several women acknowledged daytime safety, nighttime navigation told a different story. Women who travel alone often take precautions, such as staying away from isolated places at night, not because they are directly threatened but rather to feel in control of their surroundings (Wilson & Little 2008). This theory corresponds with the geography of fear theory, which illustrates that women's ability to move around can frequently be impacted or limited by societal fears and cultural opinions about where women should and should not be—for example, in public vs private settings (Valentine 1989).

Similarly, Participant 7 said, *"In the day or the daytime, I feel safe. The night time I was immediately back to hotel. I would not go out in the nighttime."* (participant 7) These reflections

suggest that while daytime activities felt secure on the ground nighttime presented heightened concerns.

Participant 3 articulated this emotional labor vividly. Instances of harassment and discomfort were also reported. Participant 3 shared,

“It didn’t feel completely safe at night. I had a few encounters where men followed me, which I found really creepy and scary. I also had one man try to kiss me, which made me extremely uncomfortable. All of this happened in Kathmandu—everywhere else I went, I had no issues. During the daytime, I felt completely safe. Everyone was so friendly, always smiling, and the energy all around was amazing.” (participant 3)

This narrative illustrates a significant difference in safety perceptions between day and night, emphasizing Kathmandu as a focal point for unwelcome male attention. The traveler depicts a hospitable and secure atmosphere during the day; nonetheless, her nighttime encounters reveal an overwhelming feeling of vulnerability, especially about sexual harassment and infringement on personal space. The uninvited attempt to kiss her and the experience of being pursued by males provoke feelings of anxiety and discomfort, indicating that urban settings such as Kathmandu may provide increased safety risks for single female visitors after dark. This dual perception of safety conditioned by time and place reflects what feminist geographers like Pain (1995), where the same location may feel either liberating or threatening depending on temporal and social context (Pain 1995). Participant 5 recounted a notably unsettling incident

“On one occasion at dawn, a tuk tuk-like vehicle passed by me. The driver stopped, stared at me, and began touching himself under his pants. I decided to ignore him and continued walking to the opposite side of the road. The street wasn’t empty; he was just being incredibly inappropriate, I guess. That experience didn’t shock me or make me unable to continue enjoying my trip, I personally think this type of behavior in crazy men could happen everywhere. On another occasion, a guy tried to scam me by following me through the streets of Thamel. He insisted on being my friend and claimed he wanted to show me his artistic paintings in his studio and get my opinion..etc. One last thing to note: when I arrived at the airport, some taxis had two drivers in the car, trying to get me to ride with them. I negotiated and insisted on having only one driver”. (participant 5)

Participant 5's experience demonstrates the variety of on-the-ground safety challenges that solo female travelers may face in Nepal. Her experiences include sexual harassment, repeated fraud, and troubling encounters with transportation providers. The first event, in which a guy exposed

himself in public, exemplifies the unsettling reality of sexualized harassment in public areas, even though places are not isolated. This is consistent with general worries among solo female travelers about the unpredictable nature of male conduct in unfamiliar locations. Despite the seriousness of the act, the participant's response to ignore the offender and continue walk away demonstrates a type of emotional resilience and sensitization and indicates that some women accept these experiences as normal travel hazards, perhaps as a result of past exposure or a strong resolve to avoid letting such incidents spoil their trip. The second event, when a man follows her and tries to take her to his "workshop," brings to light the problem of manipulating and scamming, where a traveler's confidence may be gained by pleasant or creative presumptions. Because solo travelers frequently find themselves questioning the motives of others, this fosters a sense of discomfort and continual alertness. Finally, her encounter with questionable taxi arrangements at the airport with two drivers in one car raises questions about transportation safety and negotiating in new urban environments. She actively manages perceived hazards and maintains control over her safety by insisting on traveling with just one driver. When taken as a whole, these events highlight how independent women travelers must constantly negotiate unpredictably changing situations, frequently depending on intuition, cautiousness, and assertiveness to stay safe. Even experienced visitors may find such difficulties emotionally draining and they highlight the gendered aspects of safety that female tourists encounter in public and semi-public areas.

These interactions are not singular; they exemplify broader trends recorded in Academia. Solo female travelers frequently navigate safety considerations through a gendered perspective, particularly in new or male-dominated settings. The anxiety of being pursued or physically contacted without permission corresponds with the conclusions of Wilson and Little (2008), who assert that the dangers of male violence or sexualized encounters often restrict women's movement in tourism contexts. Such instances affect women's perceived safety and their decisions about navigation and interaction within various environments, specifically, avoiding certain places at night or staying indoors (Jordan and Aitchison 2008). Feminist Geography delivers a valuable theoretical perspective in this context. Public space is not uniformly accessible; it is gendered through unremarkable encounters (Pain 1995). This participant's view of Kathmandu as hospitable during the day and frightening at night illustrates how urban settings can transition from inclusive to exclusive based on context and gender dynamics. Her ease in other regions of Nepal indicates that the issue is not inherent in Nepal itself, but rather with the anonymity and population density of specific urban environments that may facilitate harassment (Valentine 1989).

Participant 7's reflection on going to the cinema reveals a layered experience of both cultural immersion and gender discomfort: *"When I went to the cinema then I feel a lot of boys they were looking in a different way... I feel a little bit weird."* (participant 7) The interviews present a nuanced picture of solo female travel in Nepal. Participants shared overwhelmingly positive sentiments about the country, yet simultaneously detailed experiences of harassment, discomfort, and constant vigilance. These contradictory experiences reveal how solo female travelers manage a dual reality: enjoying exploration and cultural immersion while continuously scanning for risk. This illustrates how public leisure spaces can simultaneously offer cultural insight and reinforce gender boundaries.

A participant in the Reddit discussion r/Nepal – What is the safety for a female solo traveler? A Reddit post from 2025 presented a complex viewpoint on safety in Nepal, asserting: *"Relatively safe during the day, but unsafe at night, particularly in areas frequented by bars and clubs"* (Reddit post 6 2025). This remark illustrates a contextual understanding of safety. Daylight expeditions are perceived as low risk, whereas nighttime settings, especially nightlife areas, are regarded as potentially hazardous for solo female visitors. Such contrasts are prevalent in female travel narratives, where safety is seen as a factor dependent on time and context. The apprehension over nightlife in bars and clubs highlights an increased perception of vulnerability in male-dominated or alcohol-influenced environments, reflecting global trends in the safety concerns of solo female travelers. Although Nepal is generally considered safe, this statement indicates that specific urban areas are approached cautiously, suggesting that actual safety experiences might vary within a destination based on behavior, location, and timing.

In a YouTube interview addressing the query "Is Nepal safe for female tourists?", a single female traveler employed in a hospital recounted her safety experiences. She first conveyed a sense of "very safe" in Nepal. Subsequently, she recalled receiving warnings from medical personnel regarding Kalanki, a non-touristic district of Kathmandu, which they characterized as unsafe after dark. While working night shifts, she became increasingly aware of the dangers present in a specific area after dusk. (Youtube Post 2 2022). This example illustrates how perceptions of safety can differ based on local knowledge and specific locations. While tourists typically feel a sense of safety, non-touristic areas such as Kalanki may pose increased risks, particularly for women walking alone after dark. The traveler's experience underscores the significance of situational awareness and local guidance when navigating new urban settings. This aligns with feminist geography viewpoints, which highlight the varying experiences of

gendered safety across different times and geographic settings (Rose 1993) and agrees with the conclusions of (Wilson and Little 2008), who assert that solo female travelers modify their conduct in response to perceived environmental hazards. Yet, these incidents did not universally erode perceptions of Nepal as a "safe" country. Instead, they were often described as isolated or "manageable." This paradox suggests a high threshold for what female travelers are willing to accept as "normal" or "expected" during solo travel, a finding that aligns with (Seow and Brown 2018) observation that women often internalize discomfort as part of the cost of solo adventure. Travelers frequently receive advice or warnings from individuals with firsthand experience in Nepal. These informal comments can profoundly influence solo female travelers' perceptions of safety.

A comment on a Reddit post about whether a teen girl can experience solo travel in the group r/Nepal *"Been on solo hike seen lot of incidents be careful I don't recommend like for your safety but have someone trust worthy person by your side be on ground reality you know how it is in Nepal."*(Reddit post 7 2024) The statement reflects both concern and personal experience. It underlines the necessity for realistic expectations ("be grounded in reality") and advocates for caution based on direct observations of safety-related occurrences. Such remarks function as informal safety recommendations and contribute to a wider conversation portraying Nepal as a location that necessitates caution and readiness, particularly for solo female tourists.

4.2.3 Safety Perception versus Actual Safety for Solo Female Travelers in Nepal

Travel preferences and expectations are significantly shaped by the safety impressions of solo female visitors before reaching a destination. Various elements shape these impressions, which include media stories, societal factors, and personal stories from other visitors. (Williams and Baláž 2015). Understanding women's travel experiences depends much on the difference between perceived and actual safety. Although outside stories usually predominate in pre-travel impressions, the genuine on-the-ground experiences of solo female travelers generally expose a considerably less hazardous reality. Many visitors, for instance, pointed out that Nepal's family-centered and community-oriented culture helped to foster increased confidence and safety. This difference between perceived and actual safety highlights the significance of first-hand information in altering risk perceptions. It implies that even though the media and society's

narratives may influence first impressions of the risks women encounter when traveling, real experiences on the ground often contradict these inflated anxieties. Using interview data, netnographic observations, and the current scholarly literature, this part investigates the disparities in the perceived and real safety of solo female travelers in Nepal. Many solo female visitors to Nepal showed significant worries about possible safety hazards, including harassment, sexual assault, and other crimes, which they linked to media representations and the socio-cultural setting of Nepal before they traveled. External narratives, like sensationalized media coverage on gender-based violence in South Asia and experiences told by other visitors, greatly affected these impressions (Beirman 2020).

Participant 1 said, for instance, *"I was super nervous before heading to Nepal the first time, but it's that trip that made me realize that I LOVE travelling."* (participant 1) The quote reflects the pre-travel fear and anxiety among solo travelers and transforms it into a new sense of what safety and comfort mean after they return. At first, her anxiety came from the perceived fears of traveling alone in such a foreign country and immersing herself in a different culture. But as she explored and learned how to travel in Nepal on her terms, she developed a new sense of confidence in herself.

One user on Facebook explained in Facebook Reel (2025), reflecting on the contrast between her initial fears and the reality of traveling in Nepal. *"As a first-time solo female traveler, I was nervous about making a South Asian country my first solo travel experience. However, Nepal exceeded all my expectations"* (Facebook reel 1 2025). The post shows the disparity between predicted risk and experience. The initial concern illustrates prevalent pre-trip safety beliefs, particularly concerning travel in South Asia, where cultural stereotypes and media representations can amplify anxieties for solo female travelers. "Nepal exceeded all my expectations" indicates that the experience was significantly more favorable than anticipated. This transition from fear to contentment demonstrates that perceived safety concerns do not consistently correspond with real safety results. This corresponds with Risk Perception Theory, which posits that perceptions of peril are frequently influenced more by emotions and social factors than by empirical evidence.

In a broader perspective, Nepal ranked in 76th position out of 163 countries on the Global Peace Index (2019), in terms of peacefulness. This places Nepal as the third safest nation ahead of Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan in South Asia (Pandey 2025). These numbers imply that, despite initial concerns or negative assessments about safety especially among first-time solo

female visitors the real situation in Nepal is relatively consistent and safe. It is clear from combining such statistical data with personal travel records that the supposed hazards sometimes do not match the reality on the ground. The comparison emphasizes the need to distinguish actual safety from impression to assess travel destinations.

Another Facebook user highlighted the disparity between her initial apprehensions and the favorable reality of visiting Nepal through a Facebook Reel (2025),

“As a solo female traveler, I initially felt a bit nervous entering Nepal from the China border at Gyirong, with countless questions running through my mind. However, from the moment I met the Nepali people, my concerns were alleviated. Their warm smiles and genuine curiosity, often expressed through the question, “What do you like about Nepal?” “U look like nepali mam” “do you like nepali food?”, made me feel safe and welcomed. Most importantly, I experienced a profound sense of respect as a woman throughout my journey”.(Facebook reel 2 2025)

She exhibited anxiety when entering Nepal from the China border, not aware of what to anticipate a clear manifestation of preexisting safety worries. This indicates widespread concerns that numerous solo female travelers have over foreign cultural contexts, particularly in South Asia. However, her apprehensions were swiftly alleviated by the kindness and warmth of the people of Nepal, whose harmony was conveyed through expressions such as “You resemble a Nepali, ma'am” and “Do you enjoy Nepali cuisine?” These quotidian interactions fostered a sense of visibility, respect, and safety, directly countering her previous fears. This shift from worry to comfort illustrates the disparity between perceived and actual safety. Risk Perception Theory posits that humans frequently overrate threats in unfamiliar environments due to insufficient direct experience. Her example substantiates that affirmative interpersonal interactions and cultural reverence can profoundly alter travel safety perceptions. Understanding women's travel experiences depends much on the difference between perceived and absolute safety. Although outside stories usually predominate in pre-travel impressions, the genuine on-the-ground experiences of single female travelers generally expose a considerably less perilous reality. Many visitors, for instance, pointed out that Nepal's family-centered and community-oriented culture helped to foster increased confidence and safety. This difference between perceived and absolute safety highlights the significance of first-hand information in altering risk perceptions. It implies that even though the media and society's narratives may

influence first impressions of the risks women encounter when traveling, real experiences on the ground often contradict these inflated anxieties.

Valentine contends that cultural and social conventions define women's views of public space by implying that public places, especially in foreign or unfamiliar environments, are naturally dangerous for women. These gender stereotypes help to explain the anxiety and worry many single female tourists have when thinking about foreign travel (Valentine 1989). Once solo female travelers arrived in Nepal, several reported having quite different safety experiences than they had anticipated before coming. However, first, they were worried; most discovered that their interactions in urban and rural environments were significantly less dangerous than expected. Nepal has demonstrated to many that it is a friendly and safe place. Feminist Geography provides a valuable lens through which one may see how these encounters might change safety ideas. "In day-to-day life, we develop patterns and coping mechanisms to negotiate the social, cultural and gendered constraints and boundaries of our public environments. It has been argued that when people have strong social, spatial and community ties to the area in which they reside, they develop increased confidence to deal with strangers and unfamiliar locales, and know where to seek help if feeling fearful or under threat can you interpret "

Direct interaction with the local culture helps women rethink their public space experiences, especially in foreign settings. Women's early impressions of risk generally fade when they can confidently negotiate foreign environments .

Risk Perception Theory also helps to explain the change in viewpoint that comes once visitors are settled in their location. The risk is reduced, and initially, concerns are typically reinterpreted as visitors get more knowledge about the surroundings and their first experience. This method emphasizes how visitors' perceived dangers seem to drop with increasing experience and context. Risk Perception Theory helps to clarify the foundation of this increased anxiety. This hypothesis holds that people who are affected by outside sources, including media coverage, often overstate hazards. Under such circumstances, risk amplification takes place, and people start to view locations as more dangerous than they are in fact (Slovic 2013). Feminist Geography holds that direct interaction with new surroundings might change how women see their vulnerability. Women who use public areas in Nepal develop confidence and agency as they go through and interact with them, therefore reducing their sense of fear (Wilson and Little 2008). This dynamic also fits Risk Perception Theory, which emphasizes how direct experience and more information assist in recalibrating risk perception, so frequently resulting in a more realistic knowledge of the hazards. (Slovic 2013).

To sum up, solo female travellers in Nepal have a notable difference in their perceived and real safety level. Although media narratives and gender stereotypes greatly affect first safety impressions, actual ground-based tourist experiences are usually far more favorable. Many single female visitors felt secure and supported, particularly in rural and community-oriented regions. The difference between perceived and real safety shows how empowering first-hand experience is in changing ideas of danger. Travelers' first concerns are generally reduced as they learn more and interact directly with their surroundings, as the reality is far more controllable. The hazards in Nepal are often exaggerated.

4.3 Coping and Risk Management Strategies

When women travel alone, they may encounter several safety-related issues. To tackle such situations, they often utilize different solutions and risk management tactics to minimize the risk. Such adjustments are usually influenced by local sociocultural norms that are based on gender roles as well as on more pragmatic concerns. This section examines three principal sub-themes that arose from the data: Adapting Behavior and Dress, which emphasizes how travelers alter their appearance and conduct to conform to local customs, Seeking Local Support and Digital Information, which illustrates endeavors to establish connections and obtain reliable guidance; and Problem-Solving and Internal Resilience, which demonstrates how travelers leverage personal strength and adaptability to navigate challenges and sustain confidence throughout their journey.

4.3.1 Adapting Behavior and Dress

Solo female travelers frequently utilize diverse coping mechanisms to mitigate vulnerability and boost their sense of security when traversing foreign cultural and physical surroundings. An often-reported strategy is modifying personal behavior and clothing in reaction to perceived or anticipated threats. This type of self-regulation is widespread in locations where gender norms and cultural expectations diverge from travelers' home countries (Wilson & Little, 2008). Cultural Navigation and Identity Management. A significant coping mechanism for participants was cultural adaptation through dress and behavior.

Participant 3 shared, *"I mostly wore clothes that covered my body to avoid attracting unwanted attention,"* while Participant 6 emphasized, *"Dressing modestly definitely helped me... to blend in and avoid unwanted attention."* (Participant 6) These strategies not only reflect an awareness of local gender norms but also a form of risk mitigation, allowing travelers to preempt potential discomfort or confrontation. This kind of "precautionary behavior," as Wilson and Little(2008) note, becomes second nature for women traveling alone. Interestingly, participants from South

Asian or culturally proximate backgrounds reported a smoother adaptation process. Participant 2 (Indian) said,

“ Being from India, I found a lot of similarities in the Indian and Nepalese cultural norms, from the dresses that the women wore to the cooking style practiced in Nepal. I found out that we also celebrate a lot of the same festivals but with a twist of tradition. Be mindful of the customs and culture of the people in Nepal especially when travelling in smaller cities... it is important to be careful of your attire at temples and other religious locations.”(Participant 2)

Such familiarity seemed to foster a sense of cultural alignment and reduce feelings of foreignness. Participants in the interviews repeatedly stated conduct and attire as key factors in controlling safety. These comments show a knowledge that clothing not only satisfies a practical purpose in safety- that of avoiding attention but also expresses respect for local standards.

Participant 7 gave a particularly striking description of how she changed her look and behavior to fit into Nepalese society: *“I always wear like proper kurta pajamas... I will wear Bindi and Jhumka and bangles... because over there I will look very Indian. So they won't think, 'oh, we can take advantage'...”* (Participant 7) Participant 7's strategy implies that presenting oneself as local, or at least culturally compatible, might help avoid risk. Her acts show a calculated attempt to avoid attention by avoiding an openly "foreign" identity—what anthropologist Erving Goffman may call impression management (Goffman 2023). Participants also noted the need for behavioral caution, including the avoidance of crowded or unfamiliar locations, particularly during nighttime.

According to Participant 3 *“ women only hostel rooms which is something I always prefer.”* (participant 3) One of the most common behavioral adaptations solo female travelers make is the preference for staying in women-only accommodations. This choice reflects a desire to create a safe and comfortable micro-environment within an otherwise unpredictable or unfamiliar setting. The selection of all-female dorms is both a risk management strategy and a psychological coping mechanism that allows travelers to let their guard down without fear of gendered surveillance or harassment. Many solo female travelers employ practical strategies to enhance their sense of control and readiness during their journeys.

A user in a Reddit post provides a recommendation for solo Female travelers. *"If you're travelling solo then I suggest you to carry pepper spray with you at all times. Kinda pessimistic*

I know but you can never be too much careful. Welcome and have fun :)"(Reddit post 8 2022)

This remark reflects a combined attitude of precaution and inspiration, prevalent in peer-to-peer travel recommendations. While recognizing the possibility of risk, it also enables travelers to assume accountability for their safety. Possessing self-defense items such as pepper spray shows a risk management strategy that embodies an individual responsibility towards safety, frequently undertaken in reaction to actual and imagined dangers in unfamiliar cultural or physical contexts. Another comment on Reddit on the post How safe is it to be a female solo traveller? One user commented that Nepali communities are welcoming and sensitive to guests' needs, especially during periods of difficulty. Local social dynamics significantly influence perceptions of safety.

"Kathmandu is generally safe for female solo travelers, but it's good to take precautions. Stay in reputable areas like Thamel, use ride-hailing apps for transport (Pathao/Indrive), and avoid walking alone at night in quiet areas. Dressing modestly helps blend in, and keeping your belongings secure prevents petty theft. Locals are friendly and helpful (Nepalese people are generally very welcoming and helpful towards tourists!), and you can always contact the tourist Police if needed (Reddit post 10 2025)

This demonstrates that the concept of guest hospitality, profoundly embedded in Nepali society, functions as a ceremonial practice and a practical protection. The expectation that locals will intervene or provide assistance in challenging circumstances incorporates an informal community safety mechanism, offering security to solo female travelers despite the inherent risks. Solo female travelers frequently modify their conduct and appearance to mitigate hazards and conform to local customs.

(Wilson and Little 2008) assert that solo female travelers frequently employ "situational avoidance and self-regulation strategies" to mitigate risk. Adopting modest attire and exercising caution are effective strategies to reduce undesired attention. (Wilson and Little 2008). This corresponds with the overarching structure of Risk Perception Theory, which clarifies how individuals evaluate and react to possible dangers depending on personal experience and cultural context (Renn 1998). Feminist Geography asserts that perceived gendered hazards significantly shape women's spatial behavior (Valentine 1989). This combination of gender, place, and power is reflected in the interviewees' hesitancy to go into busy areas or stroll alone at night. According to this perspective, dressing traditionally may also be seen as a negotiation of spatial belonging and a safety measure. Hottola (2004) proposed the idea of the balance

between freedom and caution, in which female travelers keep a close eye on the dangers of their surroundings even as they look for freedom. (Hottola 2004). This notion is clearly shown in Empirical data from interviews and online groups indicate that modifying attire and conduct is a key coping strategy for solo female travelers in Nepal. These strategies, encompassing modest attire, route optimization, and technology-assisted safety, exemplify a deliberate endeavor to mitigate risk in a culturally sensitive manner. Rooted in the theories of risk perception and feminist spatiality, these adaptive measures illustrate intervention and constraint: women actively influence their safety experiences, albeit frequently within limits imposed by cultural norms and possible dangers.

4.3.2. Navigating safety through local and digital support

One of the most important coping mechanisms for many female solo travelers in Nepal is to look for local assistance and digital support and maintain relationships with reliable people and resources. Building a formal and informal support system gives solo travelers a sense of security and comfort in new situations. Many interviewees emphasized being proactive in communicating their vacation intentions to both locals and their loved ones or families back home.

Participant 4 stated *“I also made sure to keep in touch with my accommodation staff about my whereabouts for extra safety.”* (participant 4) As a proactive safety measure, participant 4's initiative of informing the lodging staff of her location is typical among female travelers traveling alone. Travelers can establish an informal monitoring or support system by staying in touch with reliable local contacts, including hotel or guesthouse workers. In addition to improving personal safety and ensuring that someone is aware of where they are in the event of an emergency, this activity may also discourage potential risks by letting them know they are not completely alone or unaccounted for. This method demonstrates how women traveling alone manage perceived hazards by creating situational protections in their immediate surroundings. It also shows a conscious attempt to lessen loneliness when traveling alone, particularly in strange places, and an awareness of possible hazards. Participant 5 highlighted the profound advantages of social and digital engagement:

“I do good research of the city before traveling alone, places to go or where to avoid. I pin every location in my google maps (my accommodations, trains or specific hotspots, and also tend to watch some youtube videos or tiktoks of other solo travelers to see what to expect of it. Being proactive in socializing with both fellow travelers and locals can really enhance

your experience... It also helps you pick up on the local insecurities or nuances that might not be immediately obvious.” (participant 5)

The participant's focus on destination research, marking important spots on Google Maps, and viewing videos of other solo travelers emphasizes how women use online communities and digital technologies to improve their safety. These behaviors are an example of digital support, where location-tracking applications and social media material are crucial for risk assessment and safe route planning. Solo female travelers can reduce their exposure to risky circumstances and handle unfamiliar places with greater confidence if they prepare well in advance of their journey. This method also supports local support tactics, such as asking locals for help or checking in with the lodging staff. These local and digital tools work together to create a multi-layered safety network that assists visitors in making wise choices and handling obstacles on the ground. She also points out that proactively connecting with other travelers and residents can improve both the trip experience and safety. Solo female travelers who interact with others might gain information regarding local risks or cultural differences that may not be readily apparent. This technique demonstrates an achievable coping strategy: use social interactions to stay informed and make more confident decisions in unfamiliar circumstances.

A Google search for terms such as 'solo female traveler' increased by 131 percent in 2024, and a statistical trend analysis from Virtuoso indicates that 71% of its solo clients are female, underscoring the rising trend of independent travel among women (Tannenberg 2025). The rise has been enabled by the growth of digital resources that enhance connectivity, with the impact of social media, which supplies essential information for women to travel alone and with confidence (Villa-Clarke 2024).

Several solo female tourists hired local guides for navigation and safety purposes. A user on TripAdvisor commented on the post 10 days of solo travel as a female in Nepal.

"Originally I was thinking that I wouldn't use a guide for a trek but now I've booked someone recommended via this forum, more as a way to learn more as I walk and also in case of emergency." (Tripadvisor post 1 2024)

The statement illustrates a tactical approach to risk management when travelers modify their itineraries in response to perceived or expected obstacles. Employing a guide is perceived not just as a safeguard in crises but also as a means of enriching the vacation experience through

cultural and geographic knowledge. This corresponds with interview findings in which individuals simultaneously indicated that a reliable local companion offered reassurance, particularly in remote or less-frequented regions. Numerous travelers regard local Nepali communities as welcoming and sensitive to guests' needs, especially during periods of difficulty. Local social dynamics significantly influence the Perception of safety.

The expectation that locals will intervene or provide assistance in challenging circumstances incorporates an informal community safety mechanism, offering security to solo female travelers despite the inherent uncertainty of individual dangers. According to the literature, information sharing and friendship building are essential coping mechanisms for women who travel alone. (Wilson and Little 2008) argue that establishing supportive networks with locals and fellow travelers helps female tourists mitigate the perceived hazards of solo travel. These social connections offer practical protection and emotional support, particularly in strange settings. (Wilson and Little 2008). Fennell (2006) underscores the need to establish "ethical space" in tourism, where mutual respect and comprehension between passengers and hosts mitigate vulnerabilities. (Fennell 2017). Similarly, Seow and Brown (2018) assert that regular encounters with locals enable women to comprehend local norms, recognize safe behaviors, and react more adeptly to threats. (Seow and Brown 2020). Wilson and Little (2008) examine the influence of gendered safety concerns on the configuration of tourism venues, proposing that local actors, particularly in cultures seen as patriarchal, may function as either danger factors or defenders. Choosing competent guides and staying in suggested lodgings is particularly crucial in these situations (Wilson and Little 2008).

4.3.3 Problem-Solving and Internal Resilience

Solo female travelers frequently develop internal coping mechanisms and self-reliant solutions to overcome the uncertainties and obstacles that emerge throughout their trips. In light of worries about their safety, unforeseen occurrences, and cultural differences, this section investigates how the study' participants showed resilience, resourcefulness, and problem-solving skills while traveling alone in Nepal.

According to participant 3 *"Yes, my bag was stolen, therefore I had to file a police complaint..."* (participant 3) It was a significant occurrence that tested Respondent 3's problem-solving skills. She further added *"I would simply walk away if males stared or catcalled me; I have no need for that sort of treatment"* . (participant 3) Her bravery and self-control are displayed in her choice to report to the police and emotionally distance herself from unwanted attention. Many

participants stated coping mechanisms rooted in internal resilience and problem-solving. Participant 7 highlighted the importance of being constantly prepared:

"I think I was just sure that my passport and my phone was very close to me because in case I'm getting lost, that only will save me. So having having access to internet, I was making sure like I bought I bought a SIM card in Nepal Sim card. So I had access to internet all the time. and then uh if anything went wrong."(participant 7)

The above quote demonstrates internal resilience combined with pragmatic problem-solving. It clarifies how solo female travelers in Nepal establish a psychological cushion using planning, technology, and an enduring feeling of self-reliance. These strategies enable them to negotiate complex and unfamiliar surroundings with heightened confidence and control.

Participant 7 Mental readiness for crises was another skill that participants honed. *"I always have all the paperwork prepared," continued. When I feel the need for a safety app, I download it. Along with that, I will make a note of the phone numbers of the local police and hospitals.* By taking these measures, she demonstrated a remarkable degree of independence and readiness, guaranteeing that she would have the means to deal with any unexpected dangers. To avoid being duped or called into businesses, participant 1 occasionally strolled about with headphones on. *"I walked around with headphones sometimes to avoid this".* (Participant 1) Taking this little but intentional step shows that you are aware of your surroundings and have a plan to limit unwanted contacts. While some travelers prioritized having fun, others made sure to be secure. Participant 3 stated

"I never tell people where I'm heading next. I make friends along the way, both because it's nice, and also because it creates a safety network. I make sure to stay fit, just in case something were to happen—I would always try to fight back. I do stay in hostels because there are more people there, and it's kind of a way to look out for each other".(Participant 3)

Participant 3's approach demonstrates an intense sense of independence and creative thinking. She exhibits proactive problem-solving abilities and personal resilience by deciding not to reveal her travel intentions, lodging in communal settings like hostels, and being physically fit. Her choices demonstrate a worldview focused on anticipating risks and protecting oneself, while simultaneously appreciating the importance of building strong social networks for further security. This harmony between independence and resourcefulness demonstrates how female

travelers who travel alone create their safety plans and become both physically and psychologically ready to handle unforeseen obstacles.

The internal resilience and problem-solving abilities of solo female travelers have been well-recognized in tourism studies. Female travelers strategically navigate public settings utilizing diverse adaptation techniques, such as cognitive reappraisal and avoidance strategies, to address gendered vulnerabilities (Jordan and Aitchison 2008). Solo female travelers often utilize "mental rehearsals" to foresee perilous situations and practice their replies, indicating substantial agency and personal effectiveness (Wilson and Little 2008). Tourist situations are seen via gendered perspectives, necessitating that women continually evaluate their safety. This "micro-management of dread" integrates into the embodied travel experience, where emotional work merges with intellectual preparation. The participants in this study demonstrated these tendencies by consistently balancing their feelings of autonomy with strategic caution (Pritchard and Morgan 2000a). Moreover, risk management in tourism is not just exterior but profoundly psychological. Perceived control and readiness substantially affect travelers' perception of safety, particularly in new environments. Female travelers in Nepal demonstrated perceived control by downloading critical applications, maintaining access to emergency numbers, and altering their behavior, so alleviating tension and enhancing psychological comfort throughout their journeys (Reisinger and Mavondo 2005). Adaptation tactics, including assimilating into local culture via attire and conduct, exemplify the notion of "cultural intelligence" (Ang et al., 2007), wherein visitors acquire and implement culturally suitable behaviors to prevent drawing attention to themselves. This approach to problem-solving assists solo travelers in alleviating cultural misconceptions and diminishing perceived threats (Ang et al. 2007). Finally, personal resilience is intrinsically connected to emotional fortitude and constructive interpretation. Wilson and Harris (2006) assert that independent travel offers women a unique context for self-discovery and empowerment, wherein overcoming challenges often leads to enhanced resilience, self-confidence, and a deeper sense of personal growth (Wilson and Harris 2006).

The results indicate that internal resilience and problem-solving provide a vital basis for the coping mechanisms employed by solo female travelers in Nepal. By anticipating challenges, regulating emotional reactions, and innovatively adjusting to their surroundings, these women adeptly navigate through both actual and imagined hazards with significant personal autonomy. Although infrastructure and exterior safety measures are crucial, it is mostly the internal readiness and decision-making abilities that determine their experiences and outcomes. This

concept emphasizes the necessity of recognizing and facilitating the cognitive and emotional efforts that are fundamental to ensuring safe solo travel for women.

Chapter 5. Discussion

The key insight emerging from the data is the conditional nature of freedom among the women traveling alone. Although solo travel is frequently linked to autonomy and empowerment, the findings of this study reveal that for women, this autonomy is contingent and intricately connected to continuous risk evaluation and self-regulatory behavior. The participants in this study were mostly driven by aspirations for autonomy, self-discovery, and cultural engagement. Nepal has been recently a popular tourist destination due to its spiritual allure, abundance of trekking trails, and kind friendliness. However, the desire for liberation was tempered by constant caution. The desire to interact with diverse cultures and achieve personal growth was often mediated through the layers of caution, strategy, and behavioral adjustment. This supports previous research indicating that female tourists perceive tourism environments distinctively due to worries regarding vulnerability (Wilson and Little 2008).

Feminist geography offers a critical perspective for analyzing these experiences, emphasizing that the place is inherently gendered and politicized, rather than neutral. Participants in the study often avoided leaving alone after at night, cut their use of public transit during specific hours, or chose a women-only hostel. These choices were expressions of perceived safety concerns as much as personal preferences. The "fear of geography" (Wilson and Little 2008) was apparent in the manner individuals altered their spatial conduct to stay out of male-dominated or poorly lighted regions. This spatial negotiation illustrates that the liberty to investigate is frequently limited by the necessity to reduce vulnerability to potential risk.

In other cases, the anticipation of discomfort, harassment, or judgment influenced travellers' risk perspective in addition to the obvious danger of damage. Risk Perception Theory clarifies this by showing that psychological, emotional, and social factors often shape the perception of risk differently than statistical likelihood (Yang and Nair 2015). The majority of participants said they did a lot of research on safe neighborhoods, learned about cultural norms, and planned their transit routes before coming to Nepal. These preliminary measures, though reasonable, highlight the psychological effort demanded of solo female travelers, setting their experiences apart from those of their male counterparts.

The tremendous sense of personal accountability that women felt for their own protection was a recurrent topic. The responsibility for security was entirely assigned to the travelers, rather than to society or tourism infrastructure. Participants recounted experiences of dressing modestly, immersing in local culture, and avoiding situations that may attract unwelcome attention. These self-regulatory measures demonstrate that the responsibility for risk reduction is excessively placed on women, hence continuing wider patterns of gender inequality. Elsrud (2001) contended that narratives of adventurous female travelers are frequently focused on proper behavior, in contrast to the male travel stories, which usually emphasize complete freedom.

One participant expressed concerns with environmental hazards, particularly earthquakes, when traveling in remote regions. Though this concern is not widely echoed by other participants it still shows that threats in Nepal are complex. Natural catastrophes and other perceived environmental threats might aggravate already existing worries for human safety, especially in newly developed surroundings. This corresponds with other studies indicating that the hazards associated with natural disasters might profoundly influence tourist behavior (Neumayer and Plümper 2007). Nonetheless, for most individuals, gendered risk continued to be the primary concern above environmental threats.

Cultural background has a significant impact on risk perception and coping mechanisms. Those from culturally similar areas or with prior South Asian experience showed greater confidence in negotiating challenges. Those who spoke Indian or Nepali, for example, found it easier to understand social cues, negotiate prices, and handle unwanted attention. This best captures how intersectionality works, and how racial, linguistic, and cultural elements regulate the freedom and risk women experience. Being local or culturally familiar seems to shield some women from explicit targeting, suggesting that emotions of safety are somewhat situational. Participants exhibited remarkable determination. Their coping strategies ranged from confident strolling despite insecurity to making relations with guest house staff, to using offline maps to avoid looking lost, to consulting other female travelers online. Netnographic data from websites like Facebook and Reddit showed similar themes: women regularly offered safety advice, hotel recommendations, and cultural insights in female travel forums. These internet sites offer psychological assistance as well as practical knowledge. They developed into unofficial support systems helping to offset the absence of institutional safety measures.

The data suggest that solo travel for women involves an ongoing trade-off between autonomy and vulnerability. Apart from being an explorer, a solo female traveler in Nepal additionally acts as a careful planner, risk manager, and expert in complex social interactions. She is

empowered, yet systematic inequalities and gender stereotypes limit her. Although the ladies in this research perceived their experiences as enriching, the emotional labor and adaptation methods they utilized indicate persistent constraints on complete freedom in travel.

This study contributes to the academic literature by offering a regional and gender-sensitive perspective on female travel. It illustrates that empowerment through travel is not a universal phenomenon, but rather is influenced by risk perception, spatial awareness, and cultural navigation. The thesis integrates interview data with netnographic insights, connecting the online and offline aspects of modern tourism. Feminist Geography and Risk Perception Theory help to enable a thorough investigation of personal safety as a shared concern, within a larger socio-cultural setting that determines the circumstances of movement and related expenses.

One interesting finding from the netnographic data was the prevalence of obsolete safety-related conversations on established sites like TripAdvisor. Many of the most well-known strands on solo female travel safety in Nepal date back to eleven to thirteen years, which raises questions regarding their ongoing relevance. In this context, the silence on some older platforms becomes more critical not because safety issues have disappeared but rather because the conversation has shifted. As Reisinger and Mavondo (2005) contend, social stories and indirect experiences shape perceived risk (Reisinger and Mavondo 2005). These days, the discussion has shifted to younger and more dynamic platforms, such as Facebook groups and Reddit threads, which have become central to community-based knowledge exchange. The decline in current safety discourse on older platforms may reflect a broader shift in how female travelers perceive and communicate risk. Nepal may now be seen as a relatively safe country for experienced solo female travelers, one that no longer causes great degrees of anxiety or calls for the same volume of risk-based communication. This change affects how countries like Nepal present safety information. Engaging in modern digital environments where current debates are unfolding and updating official communication strategies to reflect shifting safety narratives will benefit tourism authorities and stakeholders. Nepal's tourism industry needs to adopt gender-sensitive initiatives, including training for local guides, developing female-friendly accommodations, and providing clear safety information for solo travelers. Projects that aim to challenge local gender stereotypes and promote well-mannered cultural interactions can improve women's travel experiences.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study examined the experiences of solo female travelers in Nepal, focusing on their motivations, perceptions of safety, challenges, and coping strategies, and addressed key research questions. Like, how do foreign solo female travelers perceive and experience safety and challenges during their travels in Nepal, and what methods do they adopt to manage these challenges? With three sub-questions, such as what motivates foreign women to travel solo in Nepal? What constraints do solo female travelers face while traveling solo in Nepal? How do solo female travelers manage the constraints they encounter while traveling in Nepal?

This study offers a comprehensive examination of how women navigate the complex landscape of solo travel in Nepal's culturally diverse and often challenging environment, drawing on themes from interviews with travelers, netnographic data, and academic literature. The research identified three primary themes: Motivation, Safety Perception and Challenges, and Coping and Risk Management Strategies. Solo female travelers in Nepal are primarily driven by aspirations for freedom and flexibility, personal growth, and cultural exploration. Numerous individuals expressed a sense of independence and personal development that could only be achieved through solo travel. Nonetheless, these motives are moderated by an increased consciousness of safety issues. Women tourists sometimes encounter vulnerability to gender-based harassment and cultural misinterpretations, particularly in urban areas. The perception of risk is reinforced by the lack of women-focused infrastructure, such as appropriate accommodations and safe transportation options, which further influences travel decisions.

The coping techniques utilized by these women, including behavioral and wardrobe adaptations, seeking women-only accommodations, and depending on local support networks, illustrate a complex interaction of agency and restriction. These tactics enabled travelers to maintain a sense of security while engaging with the culture and autonomy inherent in solo travel. Nonetheless, these adjustments underscore the constraints and inconsistencies of solo female travel. The necessity to adjust one's conduct to conform to local gender standards frequently constrains spontaneity and the genuine experiences that several vacationers desire.

This study employs feminist geography and Risk Perception Theory to examine the experiences of female travelers. Feminist Geography offered a perspective for analyzing the influence of gender on women's movements, both physically and symbolically, in Nepal. The results

validate Rose's (1993) claim that women's movements are shaped by cultural norms and power relations that define the public and private spheres. By modifying their attire and conduct, they navigate these limits, aiming to establish their presence while reducing vulnerability to gender-specific hazards. Subjective assessments of risk often prevail over actual risk factors. This was particularly evident in the pre-travel safety concerns expressed by participants, which frequently mirrored worldwide discourses about the hazards faced by women travelers rather than experiences specific to Nepal. These assumptions prompted several individuals to adopt proactive actions such as residing in women-only dormitories or avoiding particular locations based on perceived rather than actual challenges. This corresponds with the theoretical assertion that risk encompasses not only objective probability but is profoundly shaped by personal and communal experiences, cultural narratives, and societal conventions.

This thesis concludes by demonstrating that solo female travelers are driven by independence, self-development, and cultural curiosity, yet must also contend with a complex landscape of gendered hazards. Their experiences are shaped by both the Nepalese context and global patterns of inequality that affect women's mobility. Coping techniques including changes in clothing, behavior, and reliance on virtual networks showcase the ingenuity of these visitors as well as the effort required to guarantee safety. Later research might look at how these mechanisms evolve in response to changing travel trends or vary in various settings. Currently, it is evident that solo female travel, while fulfilling, transcends mere exploration; it also involves navigating a society that continues to be disparate and inequitable in its treatment of women.

This study's findings have considerable implications for Nepal's tourism sector, especially for enterprises aiming to serve the expanding market of single female visitors. Increasing women-only lodgings, assuring secure transportation alternatives, and providing culturally appropriate travel assistance can improve the safety and comfort of female visitors. Additionally, educating local service providers about the distinct requirements of single female travelers, encompassing privacy and gender sensitivity, might cultivate a more hospitable atmosphere for women.

Furthermore, Nepal's tourist industry might gain from the enhancement of gender-focused tourism offerings, including female guides, women-exclusive group excursions, and customized travel packages. These activities not only mitigate safety concerns but also provide a feeling of community for female tourists, enabling them to experience Nepal with assurance and enhanced protection.

This study offers significant insights, however, it has limits. The sample size of seven individuals, while abundant in qualitative data, may not adequately reflect the varied experiences of solo female travelers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Future studies may incorporate a bigger, more varied sample to investigate the intersectionality of race, class, and nationality in influencing the experiences of solo female travelers. Moreover, subsequent research might examine the enduring effects of these coping methods on women's views of their autonomy and independence following the trip.

A further domain for future investigation is the influence of social media on the views and experiences of single female travelers. Utilizing social platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to get information and exchange experiences has become a crucial component of the pre-travel process for some women. Comprehending the impact of social media on risk perception and travel decisions may yield significant insights into how digital communities affect travel behavior.

Solo female travel in Nepal is a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon necessitating a balance between curiosity and safety. For women, solo travel can be both inspiring and laden with obstacles. Nepal offers numerous opportunities for personal development, cultural engagement, and adventure; nonetheless, the necessity for women to remain vigilant and adaptable arises from the challenges of navigating a gendered and occasionally perilous environment. This research highlights the resilience and autonomy of single female travelers, who navigate potentially hazardous environments with astute adjustments. Their stories illustrate a worldwide trend of women claiming their right to travel autonomously, even when it necessitates navigating safety, comfort, and authenticity. This study's findings contribute to the existing literature on solo female travel, highlighting the need to establish inclusive, safe, and empowering travel conditions for women worldwide.

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Appendix

Interview question

Participant 1 (Email Interview)

1. What is your nationality?

Belgian

2. How old are you?

35

3. Is this your first time in Nepal? If not, how many times have you visited?

I visited Nepal 2 times, in 2018 and in 2022.

4. What places did you visit in Nepal?

Kathmandu, Patan, Bhaktapur, Pokhara, Annapurna Base Camp & Chitwan.

5. What motivated you to travel alone? What do you enjoy most about travelling alone?

Nepal is actually the first country I travelled to solo outside of Europe. Travelling alone is something I always wanted to try because it expands your comfort zone and you learn to rely on yourself, but I used to think it's something I would never be able to do. I was super nervous before heading to Nepal the first time, but it's that trip that made me realise that I absolutely LOVE travelling alone and that I can rely on myself. It was really eye-opening. What I love about solo travel is how much it makes you learn and grow. It makes you realise that you're capable of solving problems by yourself and that you can count on yourself. I also love the freedom, you don't need to look at anyone but can just do your thing. Also, when I travel solo, I'm more focused on the country, the culture and the people because I don't have a travel companion to distract me and I think that makes you experience countries in a different/deeper way.

6. What were your main concerns regarding safety as a solo female traveler before arriving in

Nepal?

I think I was mainly scared of getting robbed, kidnapped, sexually harassed or raped. Not for Nepal specifically, but I think these are things that can happen to women in any country, unfortunately.

7. How safe do you feel walking alone in Nepal in daytime as well as in nighttime?

Super safe! Nepal is actually one of the countries I feel the safest in. I've walked alone in the evening without problems, but I avoid walking alone later at night in any country.

8. Did you encounter any safety-related issue such as harassment or discomfort, catcalling, unwanted attention, unsafe transport, pickpocketing, etc? If yes, how did you handle them?

I have in many countries but never in Nepal, actually! I don't know if this falls under "unwanted attention" but what happens a lot in Kathmandu is that people start talking to you because they "want to practice their English", but in the end, they just want to get you to their shop or scam you. I walked around with headphones sometimes to avoid this.

9. How do you compare Nepal's safety for solo female travelers with other countries you have visited?

I felt safer in Nepal compared to many other countries I've visited!

10. In what ways do you think Nepalese cultural norms and behaviors toward women have affected your travel experience?

They never affected me in a negative way and, to me, Nepal didn't feel as patriarchal as India. But I did spend 10 months in India and about 6 weeks in Nepal, so maybe I am biased.

11. Could you describe your interaction with locals, tourist guides, taxi drivers, hotel employees and shopkeepers? Were there any cultural differences that influenced these interactions, either positively or negatively?

I think people are more open and helpful in Nepal compared to European countries. People were always willing to help and during my first visit to Kathmandu, I stayed with a lovely family who taught me a lot about Tibetan Buddhism, showed me their family album and invited me to their village. That was an amazing experience! When it comes to negative cultural differences - the haggling and inflated tourist prices. Or people trying to get me in their shop.

12: How do you feel about transportation availability safety (taxis, buses, walking routes)?

Excellent, I never had problems getting around Nepal. I did find it challenging to take the local bus in Kathmandu, but people were super helpful.

13. Have you experienced any initiatives or resources that have made you feel safer in Nepal, such as women-only hostels, safe lodging, safety applications, or women's travel groups?

No, but I didn't look for them either.

14. What strategies or precautions did you take to ensure your safety while traveling alone?

I don't walk around alone late at night, am always aware of my surroundings, always keep an eye on my belongings, dress modestly and follow my instincts.


15. Are there any specific safety tips that you always follow when traveling solo?

All of the above :)

16. What suggestion would you provide to other solo female travelers who are planning to visit Nepal?

Go, Nepal is amazing!

17. Would you recommend Nepal as a destination for solo female travelers and what improvements do you think Nepal could make to enhance safety for solo female travelers?

YES, absolutely! I think Nepal is a safe destination for solo females (although no destination is completely safe) with plenty of beautiful sights and friendly locals. 

18. What is one key piece of advice you would like to provide other solo female travelers who are planning to visit Nepal? Don't walk around alone at night, always be aware of your surroundings, always keep an eye on your belongings, dress modestly, look as you know where you're going and follow your Instincts.

Participant 2 (Email Interview)

1. What is your nationality?

Indian

2. How old are you?

31

3. Is this your first time in Nepal? If not, how many times have you visited?

Yes, I have visited Nepal once. It was the first country I visited as a solo traveler.

4. What places did you visit in Nepal ?

I visited Kathmandu, Pokhara, Biratnagar, Itahari and Dharan.

5. What motivated you to travel alone. What do you enjoy most about travelling alone?

I like to solo travel as it allows me to travel at my own pace and according to my own schedule. It also allows me to be spontaneous. I can also experience new places and contemplate about them in peace and quiet.

6. What were your main concerns regarding safety as a solo female traveler before arriving in Nepal?

Being a woman solo traveler, I make sure that the place I am travelling to is safe for women and Nepal checks all the boxes in this regard. The people were welcoming and helpful. I felt safe moving about alone in Nepal, although I was careful to be mindful of taking basic security precautions.

7. How safe do you feel walking alone in Nepal in daytime as well as in nighttime?

I felt completely safe travelling and walking alone in Nepal during the day time and generally avoided going to deserted places during the night time.

8. Did you encounter any safety related issue such as harassment or discomfort, catcalling, unwanted attention, unsafe transport, pick pocket etc)? If yes, how did you handle them?

Yes! Nepal is one of the safest countries I've ever visited and there hasn't been a moment that I didn't feel safe there. Nepali people are very welcoming and there are a lot of solo travelers in Nepal. This is one of these countries where women travelling alone will be respected and even protected.

This being said, there can always be exceptions and it speaks for itself that you should always use your common sense, especially if you're travelling alone. It's important to know that robberies and other crimes can occur, even though they are not that common.

9. How do you compare Nepal's safety for solo female travelers with other countries you have visited?

Nepal was the first country that I solo travelled to followed by many European countries, and I couldn't have wished for a better introduction to solo travel! The infrastructure in Nepal compared to Europe is still being developed, however, it is a very budget friendly country to visit as a solo traveler. One can easily hire cabs to travel in the country which are very safe. The buses were also very safe to travel in. I did walk about during the night without any incident, however, I generally avoided going out at night as the places and roads would sometimes be deserted.

10. In what ways do you think Nepalese cultural norms and behaviors toward women have affected your travel experience? Being from India I found a lot of similarities in the Indian and Nepalese cultural norms from the dresses that the women wore to the cooking style practiced in Nepal. I found out that we also celebrate a lot of the same festivals but with a twist of tradition.

11. Could you describe your interaction with locals, tourist guides, taxi drivers, hotel employees and shopkeepers? Were there any cultural differences that influenced these interactions, either positively or negatively?

All locals including the tourist guides, taxi drivers, hotel employees and shopkeepers were very helpful. I am from India and the locals were very welcoming and forthcoming with information

about which restaurants served the best local cuisine, and how I could plan and hire the best transport to visit different places in Nepal. Many people spoke and understood both English and Hindi.

12: How do you feel about transportation availability safety (taxis, buses, walking routes)?

The buses, taxis and RTV vehicles felt safe to travel in. However, a lot of the infrastructure needs to be developed further.

13. Have you experienced any initiatives or resources that have made you feel safer in Nepal, such as women-only hostels, safe lodging, safety applications, or women's travel groups?

I did not feel particularly unsafe during my visit to Nepal and did not think about looking up these resources.

14. What strategies or precautions did you take to ensure your safety while traveling alone?

I ensured that I had shared my hotel's contact number with my parents and given my tour guide's details to my hotel and parents. I also made sure to remember the emergency contact number for Nepalese police i.e. 100. I also made sure to share my daily itinerary with my hotel.

15. Are there any specific safety tips that you always follow when traveling solo?

I make it a routine to call my parents everyday on schedule when traveling solo. I also inform the hotel about my daily itinerary and let them know when I will be back and share the number of the tour guide with the hotel and my parents.

16. What suggestion would you provide to other solo female travelers who are planning to visit Nepal?

Nepal is a beautiful place to visit. It was exhilarating for me to dip in the culture and flavours of Nepal. The temples, scenic places, restaurants and people made it a very enriching experience. I would recommend visiting the mesmerizing lakes in Pokhara and the Pashupati Nath temple in Kathmandu as well and staying at least 10-15 days in Nepal to experience the richness of the whole country. I would also advise to also be mindful of the local customs and follow basic security precautions.

17. Would you recommend Nepal as a destination for solo female travelers and What improvements do you think Nepal could make to enhance safety for solo female travelers? I would definitely recommend Nepal as a solo travel destination for women travelers. I think the transport system could improve with a centralized cab system and more cabs for apps. I also hope that more public buses ply on the roads.

18. What is one key piece of advice you would like to provide other solo female travelers who are planning to visit Nepal? One key piece of advice that I would give to solo female travelers is to be mindful of the customs and culture of the people in Nepal especially when travelling in smaller cities. Though Nepali women are liberal in terms of the choice of clothes they wear, it is important to be careful of your attire at temples and other religious locations. It is also important to be aware about surroundings when travelling and following basic security precautions.

Participant 3 (Email Interview)

1. What is your nationality?

Norwegian

2. How old are you?

25 years old

3. Is this your first time in Nepal? If not, how many times have you visited?

It was my first time in Nepal.

4. What places did you visit in Nepal ?

I went to Chitwan National Park, Pokhara and Kathmandu.

5. What motivated you to travel alone. What do you enjoy most about travelling alone?

My biggest motivation to do it is—why not? Why not just go and explore, why not try, and why not take risks? The reason I started traveling alone was that all my friends began studying, but I was too eager to explore the world. If no one will come with you, just go alone. Now that I've been doing it for the last five years, I'd say the best part has definitely been the freedom to do what I want and the way it pushes me to meet new people.

6. What were your main concerns regarding safety as a solo female traveler before arriving in Nepal?

I came from traveling in India, so for me, Nepal felt much safer. But as always, my main concern is men. I know that gender roles are very different compared to Norway, so as a woman traveling alone, I need to keep that in mind. I was worried that men might touch me or do other things, but that was my only real concern.

7. How safe do you feel walking alone in Nepal in daytime as well as in nighttime? It didn't feel completely safe at night. I had a few encounters where men followed me, which I found really creepy and scary. I also had one man try to kiss me, which made me extremely uncomfortable. All of this happened in Kathmandu—everywhere else I went, I had no issues. During the daytime, I felt completely safe. Everyone was so friendly, always smiling, and the energy all around was amazing.

8. Did you encounter any safety related issue such as harassment or discomfort, catcalling, unwanted attention, unsafe transport, pick pocket etc)? If yes, how did you handle them?

Yes, my bag was stolen, so I had to file a police report. Transportation was good, so no issues there. If men stared or catcalled, I would just walk away—no need for that kind of attention. I also mostly wore clothes that covered my body to avoid attracting unwanted attention.

9. How do you compare Nepal's safety for solo female travelers with other countries you have visited?

Overall, it wasn't too bad, but definitely not the safest. Honestly, getting around could be a bit difficult at times, so it wasn't ideal, but not terrible either. I think if you go hiking, it would be amazing—next time, that's what I'll do!

10. In what ways do you think Nepalese cultural norms and behaviors toward women have affected your travel experience?

I only had good experiences. I got to see them cook, process coffee beans, and dance, and overall, it was very respectful. It didn't affect me in a bad way at all.

11. Could you describe your interaction with locals, tourist guides, taxi drivers, hotel employees and shopkeepers? Were there any cultural differences that influenced these interactions, either positively or negatively?

I had such good interactions with everybody—I really loved that about Nepal. The friendliness is amazing. Although not all of them spoke English, it was still so much fun. I got a haircut in Pokhara, and the experience was so nice. They were really open, and at the same time, they definitely respect my boundaries and didn't push me to buy anything or do anything I didn't want to.

12: How do you feel about transportation availability safety (taxis, buses, walking routes)?

I used a van to get around from the starting point to the end, so I only had my driver. The roads were so bumpy, haha—I thought it was funny, but my back definitely felt it!

13. Have you experienced any initiatives or resources that have made you feel safer in Nepal, such as women-only hostels, safe lodging, safety applications, or women's travel groups?

Yes, women only hostel rooms which is somI never tell people where I'm heading next. I make friends along the way, both because it's nice, but also because it creates a safety network. I make sure to stay fit, just in case something were to happen—I would always try to fight back. I do stay in hostels because there are more people there, and it's kind of a way to look out for each other.

ething I always prefer but nothing more than that.

14. What strategies or precautions did you take to ensure your safety while traveling alone?

I never tell people where I'm heading next. I make friends along the way, both because it's nice, but also because it creates a safety network. I make sure to stay fit, just in case something were to happen—I would always try to fight back. I do stay in hostels because there are more people there, and it's kind of a way to look out for each other.

15. Are there any specific safety tips that you always follow when traveling solo?

Same as in Q14, but I also don't drink alcohol. I might taste a beer or two, but never more. Don't get me wrong, I still go out and party, but to stay safe, I choose not to get drunk or even tipsy.

16. What suggestion would you provide to other solo female travelers who are planning to visit Nepal?

Same as Q 14 and Q 15 and also to follow your guts!! If it feels wrong or scary, listen to your body.

17. Would you recommend Nepal as a destination for solo female travelers and What improvements do you think Nepal could make to enhance safety for solo female travelers?

Yes, I would recommend it. I'm not sure what could be improved, as much of the unsafe aspect is part of the culture. However, to make it safer, I think it's important for women traveling to be aware of this, so they can adjust their behavior according to the local culture.

18. What is one key piece of advice you would like to provide other solo female travelers who are planning to visit Nepal?

I think it's important for women traveling to be aware of the culture, so they can adjust their behavior according to the local culture.

Participant 4 (Email Interview)

1. What is your nationality?

I am Indian.

2. How old are you?

I am 26 years old.

3. Is this your first time in Nepal? If not, how many times have you visited?

No, it wasn't my first time. I visited Nepal once when I was 21.

4. What places did you visit in Nepal?

During my visit, I explored Kathmandu, Pokhara, and Lumbini. I especially enjoyed the peaceful surroundings of Pokhara and the spiritual atmosphere of Lumbini.

5. What motivated you to travel alone? What do you enjoy most about traveling alone?

I wanted to experience the freedom of traveling on my own terms and to challenge myself. Solo travel allows me to immerse fully in the experience, without having to adjust to anyone else's preferences. The most enjoyable part for me is the flexibility—deciding where to go and what to do, and also the sense of personal growth it brings.

6. What were your main concerns regarding safety as a solo female traveler before arriving in Nepal?

Before arriving, my main concerns were related to the typical safety issues that solo female travelers face—such as navigating unfamiliar places, being in new surroundings at night, and ensuring that I stay safe in busy, crowded areas.

7. How safe do you feel walking alone in Nepal in daytime as well as in nighttime?

I felt relatively safe walking alone during the daytime, especially in popular areas. The environment felt friendly, and there were always people around. At night, I was more cautious, preferring to take taxis or other forms of transportation rather than walking alone in poorly lit areas.

8. Did you encounter any safety-related issues such as harassment or discomfort, unsafe transport, pickpocketing, etc.? If yes, how did you handle them?

I did not encounter any serious safety-related issues during my time in Nepal. However, I was cautious about my belongings, especially in crowded places like markets or on public

transport, to avoid any potential pickpocketing. I also made sure to keep in touch with my accommodation staff about my whereabouts for extra safety.

9. How do you compare Nepal's safety for solo female travelers with other countries you have visited?

Compared to other countries I've visited, I felt Nepal was relatively safe for solo female travelers. The locals were respectful and friendly, and I didn't feel overwhelmed by harassment. However, like in any other destination, staying alert is key to ensuring safety.

10. In what ways do you think Nepalese cultural norms and behaviors toward women have affected your travel experience?

Nepalese culture places importance on respect for women, and I found that people were generally polite and considerate. In more rural areas, I was mindful of local customs, such as dressing modestly, particularly when visiting religious sites. These cultural norms helped shape my experience in a positive way, as I was able to engage respectfully with locals.

11. Could you describe your interaction with locals, tourist guides, taxi drivers, hotel employees, and shopkeepers? Were there any cultural differences that influenced these interactions, either positively or negatively?

My interactions with locals and service providers were mostly positive. The people in Nepal are very welcoming, though I noticed some cultural differences, particularly in terms of communication. For example, in rural areas, people were more reserved, but in tourist areas, the interactions were more relaxed and casual. The cultural norms around politeness were generally observed, and I found people to be willing to help when needed.

12. How do you feel about transportation availability and safety (taxis, buses, walking routes)?

Transportation in Nepal was decent, especially in Kathmandu and Pokhara. Taxis were the most convenient for me, though it's important to confirm the fare in advance. Public buses were a bit more crowded and harder to navigate, but overall, I felt safe using them during the day. Walking routes in popular areas were mostly safe, but I always remained cautious when walking alone, particularly in less busy streets.

13. Have you experienced any initiatives or resources that have made you feel safer in Nepal, such as women-only hostels, safe lodging, safety applications, or women's travel groups?

Yes, I stayed in a women-only hostel during my visit, and it was a great experience. It provided a sense of security and community with other solo female travelers. I also made use of safety apps to keep track of my location and share it with family, which helped me feel more comfortable and connected.

14. What strategies or precautions did you take to ensure your safety while traveling alone?

I made sure to always have a fully charged phone and kept emergency contacts handy. I also preferred to use well-known taxi services and avoided going to unfamiliar areas after dark. Staying in established accommodations and keeping my travel plans shared with friends or family was another precaution I followed.

15. Are there any specific safety tips that you always follow when traveling solo?

I always stay aware of my surroundings and avoid engaging in risky situations. I try to blend in by dressing modestly and respecting local customs. I also keep my belongings close, especially in busy areas, and use trusted transportation options.

16. What suggestions would you provide to other solo female travelers who are planning to visit Nepal?

I'd recommend that solo female travelers research and understand the local culture beforehand. It's helpful to dress modestly, especially when visiting religious sites or rural areas, and to always stay alert. It's also important to have access to local contact numbers, especially for emergencies, and to make use of local safety networks or women's groups.

17. Would you recommend Nepal as a destination for solo female travelers, and what improvements do you think Nepal could make to enhance safety for solo female travelers?

Yes, I would definitely recommend Nepal as a solo female traveler destination. The country offers unique experiences and a rich culture. To enhance safety, I think it would be helpful for more women-only spaces (like hostels or travel groups) to be available. Additionally,

improving street lighting in some areas and offering more female-focused travel resources could further enhance the safety and comfort of solo female travelers.

18. What is one key piece of advice you would like to provide other solo female travelers who are planning to visit Nepal?

My key piece of advice would be to stay connected and trust your instincts. Whether it's about finding reliable transport or choosing where to go, always prioritize your comfort and safety. Nepal is an amazing destination, but taking small precautions will ensure a smooth experience.

Participant 5 (Email Interview)

Interview question

1. What is your nationality?

French

2. How old are you?

28

3. Is this your first time in Nepal? If not, how many times have you visited?

It was my first time, yes.

4. What places did you visit in Nepal?

I just did Kathmandu and the surroundings

5. What motivated you to travel alone? What do you enjoy most about traveling alone?

I appreciate traveling alone because it opens up possibilities of meeting new people, of knowing myself, and having control of my itinerary, as well as developing my skills on problem solvings because I can only rely on myself. I think it's also a way of immersing myself in the culture, as I'm not biased by any "comfort company" that reminds me of home.

6. What were your main concerns regarding safety as a solo female traveler before arriving in Nepal?

As my first solo trip in Asia being Nepal, I was pretty concerned about the safety in those countries, so different from my home continent. But I did my research on possible scams beforehand, and decided to rely on my awareness and common sense.

7. How safe do you feel walking alone in Nepal in daytime as well as in nighttime?

At daytime I felt very secure, maybe sometimes a bit too stared because I stand out as a caucasian but nothing concerning. During the night for my own safety I wouldn't be alone too long, or I would be with people I met on my travel.

8. Did you encounter any safety related issue such as harassment or discomfort, catcalling, unwanted attention, unsafe transport, pick pocket etc? If yes, how did you handle them?

On one occasion at dawn, a tuk tuk-like vehicle passed by me. The driver stopped, stared at me, and began touching himself under his pants. I decided to ignore him and continued walking to the opposite side of the road. The street wasn't empty; he was just being incredibly inappropriate, I guess. That experience didn't shock me or make me unable to continue enjoying my trip, I personally think this type of behavior in crazy men could happen everywhere. On another occasion, a guy tried to scam me by following me through the streets of Thamel. He insisted on being my friend and claimed he wanted to show me his artistic paintings in his studio and get my opinion..etc. I immediately noticed what was happening and played dumb, politely telling him that I had to be somewhere else and didn't have the time. One last thing to note: when I arrived at the airport, some taxis had two drivers in the car, trying to get me to ride with them. I negotiated and insisted on having only one driver. Firstly, because of the power dynamic—being alone against two men—and secondly, because it seemed unnecessary and felt like a potential scam, where they might convince you to stop by their trekking shop. That said, I felt very safe on my way to my accommodation, and my taxi driver was very nice!! I guess they just try to make money in different ways

9. How do you compare Nepal's safety for solo female travelers with other countries you have visited?

I felt very safe in Nepal, of course as caucasians we can stand out a bit more, and get stared at, which is part of the cultural differences, and the shocking scene for some of these individuals

who have not traveled abroad. So I respect that and understand. Some other countries had me more concerned in terms of safety, and overall I always feel safer in Asia than in Western countries at night.

10. In what ways do you think Nepalese cultural norms and behaviors toward women have affected your travel experience?

There were moments where I felt people were being overly persistent, like when a taxi tried to get me to ride with two drivers or when a guy in Thamel followed me and tried to pull me into his art shop. I think these things happen because of certain power dynamics, but I also noticed that many locals were genuinely kind and respectful. It's clear there's a balance of both traditional attitudes and modern influences, which can sometimes lead to uncomfortable situations. But overall, I felt safe and learned how to handle those moments by staying aware and trusting my instincts.

11. Could you describe your interaction with locals, tourist guides, taxi drivers, hotel employees and shopkeepers? Were there any cultural differences that influenced these interactions, either positively or negatively?

I had a lot of interactions with locals, and many of them turned into long-lasting friendships. Overall, all of these interactions were very positive, and I always felt very welcome. It was heartwarming to see how open and friendly people were and I remember how some children would stop me in the street just to practice their English, which was so sweet and a nice way for them to engage with tourists. I also had a wonderful experience at a yoga retreat in the mountains, where I connected with local people, learned about their culture, and experienced a slower, more peaceful way of life. These moments really showed me the warmth and hospitality of Nepalese people. The cultural differences only enriched my experience, as they gave me the chance to learn more about the country and its customs.

12: How do you feel about transportation availability safety (taxis, buses, walking routes)?

I personally only used taxis and walking routes during my time there. I'm pretty comfortable with chaotic cities and know how to navigate through busy streets, so I felt safe overall. I'm used to crossing streets in places where traffic isn't as predictable, but I can definitely see how some tourists might feel overwhelmed by the noise, congestion, and the way traffic flows in a more chaotic manner. Taxis were generally fine, but as always, it's good to stay alert and make

sure you're clear on the fare beforehand. For me, walking around was the best way to explore, even if it meant dodging traffic or crowds now and then.

13. Have you experienced any initiatives or resources that have made you feel safer in Nepal, such as women-only hostels, safe lodging, safety applications, or women's travel groups?

Not Really.

14. What strategies or precautions did you take to ensure your safety while traveling alone?

I do good research of the city before traveling alone, places to go or where to avoid. I pin every location in my google maps (my accomodations, trains or specific hotspots, and also tend to watch some youtube videos or tiktoks of other solo travelers to see what to expect of it.

15. Are there any specific safety tips that you always follow when traveling solo?

I'll always try to read what type of cultural differences there might be, so I can prepare myself to avoid doing anything wrong in that country and blend smoothly into the culture without offending. And as I said before, I also try to read what possible scams are used in the locations I go.

16. What suggestion would you provide to other solo female travelers who are planning to visit Nepal?

As a solo traveler, I think the key is to stay open to understanding others and their culture. Being proactive in socializing with both fellow travelers and locals can really enhance your experience, making you feel less isolated and more connected to the place. It also helps you pick up on the local insecurities or nuances that might not be immediately obvious. My biggest suggestion would be to not be alarmed or in fear, but always stay highly aware of your surroundings. Trust your instincts and use common sense, especially when people offer you things or try to pull you into certain situations. Nepal is beautiful, and most people are genuinely kind, but like anywhere else, it's important to be cautious and keep your safety in mind.

17. Would you recommend Nepal as a destination for solo female travelers and What improvements do you think Nepal could make to enhance safety for solo female travelers?

Yes, I would definitely recommend Nepal for solo female travelers! The country offers beautiful experiences, and most people are welcoming and kind. To improve safety, maybe

better education on respectful behavior and more female-friendly spaces could help enhance the experience for solo women traveling there. And a suggestion could be starting by the first impression: the airport (and try to avoid scams there) .

18. What is one key piece of advice you would like to provide other solo female travelers who are planning to visit Nepal?

Stay open-minded but cautious. Nepalese people are incredibly friendly, and you will likely meet many helpful locals, but it's important to trust your instincts and set personal boundaries when needed. Plan your transportation ahead of time, especially if moving between cities, and always keep emergency contacts handy. Most importantly, enjoy the experience without fear — Nepal is a wonderful place for solo travelers.

Participant 6 (Email Interview)

1. What is your Nationality?

Canadian

2. How old are you?

29

3. Is this your First time in Nepal? If not, how many times have you visited ?

Yes, this was my first visit to Nepal.

4. What Places did you visit in Nepal?

Kathmandu, Nagarkot, Bhaktapur, Pokhara, and a short trek to Ghorepani Poon Hill.

5. What motivated you to travel alone? What do you enjoy most about travelling alone?

I've always been interested in experiencing new cultures firsthand, and traveling alone allows me to set my own schedule without compromising. Solo travel challenges me outside of my comfort zone and gives me confidence building power. Because of its natural beauty and cultural diversity, Nepal was on my bucket list and seemed like a great spot for me to keep traveling alone.

6. What were your main concerns regarding safety as a solo female traveler before arriving in Nepal?

My main concern was whether I would be safe while walking alone especially at night, and if public transportation would be secure. I was also worried for the possible scams and theft targeting tourists.

7. How safe do you feel walking alone in Nepal in Nepal (daytime and nighttime):

I felt very safe during the day. In the evening, especially in evening when its get draker , I preferred to stay in my accommodation unless I was with a group I met during the trek or from my hotel.

8. Did you encounter any safety-related issues such as harassment or discomfort, unsafe transport, pickpocketing, etc? If yes, how did you handel them?

I didn't experience any harassment or major discomfort. A few taxi drivers tried to overcharge me at the\airport but it was manageable by agreeing on a price beforehand.

9. How do you compare Nepal's safety for solo female travelers with other countries you have visited?

I found Nepal much safer than some other countries I've visited alone like India . People are genuinely friendly and wlcoming, and there's a strong sense of community.

10. In what ways do you think Nepalese cultural norms and behaviors toward women have

affected your travel experience?

Nepalese culture is very respectful, especially towards guests and towards women. I felt that as a foreign woman, people were extra courteous. Dressing modestly definitely helped me a lot blend in with local and avoid unwanted attention.

11. Could you describe your interaction with locals, tourist guides, taxi drivers, hotel employees, and shopkeepers? Were there any cultural differences that influenced these interactions, either positively or negatively?

Almost all my interactions were positive. Locals were helpful and friendly. Some shopkeepers did try to persuade me to buy more, it was little uncomfortable for me but it wasn't aggressive. My guides and hotel members were very professional.

12. How do you feel about transportation availability and safety (taxis, buses, walking routes)? Public buses were a bit crowded. Taxis and tourist buses felt safe. I mostly used hotel-recommended taxis and pre-booked tourist buses between cities.

13. Have you experienced any initiatives or resources that have made you feel safer in Nepal, such as women-only hostels, safe lodging, safety applications, or women's travel groups?

I stayed in a women-friendly guesthouse in Kathmandu, but beyond that, I didn't specifically use women-only services or apps. I relied mainly on common sense and advice from women who travel alone in the internet.

14. What strategies or precautions did you take to ensure your safety while traveling alone?

I always shared my daily plans with my family and friends backhome, kept my phone fully charged, and dressed modestly (long pants, loose tops). I also avoided walking in deserted streets at night.

15. Are there any specific safety tips that you always follow when traveling solo?

Trusting my instincts, avoiding restricted areas at night, and keeping my valuables items secured.

16. What suggestion would you provide to other solo female travelers who are planning to visit Nepal?

Definitely go! Nepal is beautiful and welcoming place to visit. Just be prepared with basic safety practices and try to learn a few Nepali phrases like namaste and dhanyebad — it helps in building trust with locals.

17. Would you recommend Nepal as a destination for solo female travelers and what improvements do you think Nepal could make to enhance safety for solo female travelers?

Yes, I would highly recommend Nepal. To enhance safety, I think better street lighting in some areas CCTV in crowded place of Kathmandu would make a big difference, as well as more reliable taxi-meter usages.

18. What is one key piece of advice you would like to provide other solo female travelers who are planning to visit Nepal?

Try to blend with culture in as much as you can — dress modestly, act confidently, be cautious and always be polite but assertive when dealing with services or transportation.

Participant 7 (physical interview)

Hello, and thank you for taking the time to speak with me today.

My name is Babina Gautam, and my friend Shanta Subedi and I are going to conduct a master's thesis on the topic of safety perception and travel experiences of solo female travelers who have visited to Nepal. So the purpose of our conversation is to better understand your

experience, motivation and perspectives regarding solo travel in Nepal and so before we begin, we would like to explain that your response will be kept confidential and you have the right to escape an equation or disturb the interview at any time, and your sides are very valuable to these research and I truly appreciate your willing this to share your experience. So um... we have a different section in this question. We have a total of 18 questions. So, we will start with the basic information.

1. What is your nationality?

I am Danish, I am from Denmark.

2. How old are you?

Soon 32

3. Are you traveling for the first time, or how many times have you visited Nepal?

I visited Nepal one time in 2014.

Okay, so it's the first time?

yeah.

4. What place did you visit in Nepal?

I visited only Kathmandu.

5. What motivated you to travel alone? What do you enjoy most about travelling alone?

So my motivation was that I wanted to learn more about Buddhism and Hinduism. So I took a religious course, so I could learn more about religion and also I love traveling, you know, so for me, it was a new opportunity to go and explore about religion and what is Nepal like and um experiencing the culture. Nepalese Culture.

Okay, so the culture, yeah.

And also, I have traveled alone a lot so for me, so I wanted to try Nepal. So I traveled alone to New Zealand and I've lived there for six months and I worked there so I thought okay why not go to uh Nepal and after Nepal I went to India. So that's what motivated me. Actually, I enjoy traveling alone. Okay.

6. So what were your main concern regarding safety as a solo female travel before arriving in Nepal?

There are two things. One is you are female. So as a female, you will feel oh oh what is someone rapes me? What if someone kidnaps me? What if someone scams me? They will cheat us. Oh, there's a hotel here and they will cheat us. A second one is um earth earthquake because in Nepal, there will be a lot of earthquake. Those two were my security concerns, actually.

7. How safe do you feel working alone in Nepal in daytime as well as at night? For me, I feel safe. I didn't feel like uh, you know, uh someone will come and kidnap me immediately. Nothing like that. But uh it was okay only when I went to cinema then I feel a lot of boys they were looking in a different way. That when I experienced but otherwise a cinema and uh some restaurants or something like that, I feel a little bit, you know, a little bit weird. But otherwise, because I went to course and I came back also and I will walk in the inside city around the temples. There, I felt okay safe. So in the day or the daytime, I feel safe the night time I was immediately back to hotel. I would not go out in the nighttime.

8. Did you encounter any safety related issues such as harassment or discomfort or catcalling unwanted attention on unsafe transport, or peak pocket, etc., if yes, how did you handle them?

So I didn't experience any of that. Only I had discomfort with the cinema trip because men are looking at you, the way they look at you, it will feel uncomfortable But otherwise I didn't have any issues like that.

9. And how do you compare Nepal's safety for solo female travelers with other countries you have visited before?

Then, for example, if you just for comparison, if you compare Nepal with India. then, of course, there's a big difference. Nepal is safer. I feel like that. But in India, you have to be more uh, you know concerned. You have to think more about where you even in daytime I will feel unsafe in India. But in Nepal, I didn't feel like that throughout the day; I felt safe. If I if I go to Sri Lanka, I will also feel unsafe, because in Sri Lanka they are very they are decent and in daytime daytime nighttime I won't have issues, but in night time and also in Sri Lanka like the small small cities, I will feel unsafe, because men are men can be like uh, you know, waiting for an opportunity to harass you to take advantage of you. Okay. So in the comparison, Nepal is safer than I feel like that, yeah.

10. In what ways do you think Nepalese cultural norms and behavior towards women have affected your travel experience?

I don't know about that. Also because I was really in 2014 and I spent 10 years ago. So I can't remember exactly how it was, but I couldn't see any difference between India and Nepal. I feel like it was the same culture, same social norms, same however, women have to be, the same in India in Sri Lanka. So a little bit of the same things I saw. Yeah, like complete Asian South Asian like that.

11. So could you describe your interaction with local tourist guides, taxi drivers, local employees and so on and were there any cultural differences that influenced these interactions, either positively or negatively? A positively there is a lot because Nepal I feel they're very sweet, very friendly, they will come and help you immediately. So if you ask something, they will come. But in my hotel, they were not so friendly. They were just like take very slow. They didn't take so much care about you. And uh yes, and there was a boy um stuff in the hotel and he used to look at me in very different way. So I think he wanted to see if I was like a cheap girl or something like that that I didn't like at all. So other than that, everyone else was nice. I would go to stitching uh Taylor stitching get my dressesas and they will do. They will stitch all my kurtas and kurtis. Everything they will do. And that I felt safe. And they also they're very friendly when you're speaking and explaining to them, they also understand and everything.

12. How do you feel about transportation availability, like safety (taxis, buses, walking routes)?

That could be better. Again, after ten years, maybe many things might have changed. But at that time, I felt like it could have been better with autos and um taxis and uh walking streets also could have been better. Actually, I don't remember so much anymore, but at that time I was walking a lot. So I feel like it could have been better like that yeah.

13. Have you experienced any initiatives or resources that have made you feel safer in Nepal, such as women-only hostels, safe lodging, safety applications, or any travel groups?

Interviewee: I didn't experience this.

Interviewer: You have traveled solo without anything?

Interviewee: Uh without any resources

14. What strategies and precautions did you take to ensure your safety while traveling alone?

Safety precautions, I think I was just sure that my passport and my phone was very close to me because in case I'm getting lost, that only will save me. So having having access to internet, I was making sure like I bought I bought a SIM card in Nepal Sim card. So I had access to internet all the time. and then uh if anything went wrong and then I will not go where there was big big groups If there was some few, few people I will be there, but so many crowds and so many groups, I will avoid because there you never know what will happen and pick pocketing and all that. So those things I will carry in mind, but otherwise than that, and dress also, because I'm a Danish girl, uh here I can wear like a short dress and but in Nepal and India, I never wore like that. I always wear like proper kutta pajamas. So I look like an Indian. I look like in Nepal, I don't know I look like an Indian person I will wear Bindi and Jumpka and bangles everything because over there I will look very Indian. But here I look danish. in that way, I will try to be as local as possible. So they won't think, oh, we can take advantage of like that, I will think.

15. Are there any specific safety tips that you always follow when traveling solo?

Maybe Just make sure you have all the documents ready so in case something happens to you, you know who to contact uh what organization will come and help you in that country and what is the local police number and uh ways the closest hospital, all these things in my mind, I will try to quickly organize and I will write it down, or else I will make download the apps if there's any necessary apps that I think is very important. I will download the apps in my phone and then if any emergency quickly, I will use that. But other than that, just trying to blend in with the culture. So whenever I travel solo, it has been to the Middle East or Asia or Australia and New Zealand, like that I traveled along. But uh so I I don't know exactly it's been so many years ago. Yeah. Okay.

16. What suggestions would you provide to another solo female traveler who is planning to visit Nepal?

It's a beautiful country, but take security measurements for earthquakes. What will you do in earthquake situation? What will you do if you someone is harassing you, someone is big pocketing you, you need to have safety of you have to think about each and everything, but it's a beautiful country and it's a country that nobody should miss. It's very beautiful the culture,

the uh the food, the landscape, the temples, everything is very beautiful. So everyone should go but take security precautions.

17. Would you recommend Nepal as a destination for solo female traveler and what improvement do you think, Nepal could make to enhance safety for solo female traveler?

Okay, so definitely one should go, but at the same time, the security what I just told, uh can I just say what is one key piece of address you would like to provide? other or this one?

Okay. And what improvement do I think about the world. So again, it has been 10 years, so I can't I don't know what has developed. But if there should be anything developed, there should be like uh maybe there's already this woman, uh, you know, a woman police. Sometimes as a woman, if you go to men's police, they won't understand your feelings and they will they also will harass you sometimes. But if this woman to woman empowering, uh people who are willing to help like groups and there's like a group chat, high, I landed in Naple, I would like to join this group. If you also free this evening in this group or we can meet or you can also meet new people. So you know that you have you have made a contact and they are also solo, you are also solo. So you want a group or the so and uh then they could also meet up or if you just want to be hundred percent solo, but some kind of network that makes you feel safe. And in case your loss in case something goes very wrong, then you know that if I contact this person or this organization or this group, I will be in safe hands, like some sort of that kind of thing. Then it will be nice. So okay, yeah, thank you. But something made from the government, then it would be very nice.

18. What is one key piece of advice you would like to provide another sort of email travelers who are planning to visit Nepal?

Umm, Stitch a lot of Kurtis than where could this and respect the culture and go and explore Nepal and uh download all the necessary apps and just be safe and um get some kind of contact. Get to know what is where, where is the hospital? Where does the police get the local numbers? So you are ready when you're going just for your own safety. That's it.

This one is the end of the interview, and thank you so much for sharing your experience and inside, yeah, and uh, your perspective on travels, safety, and culture interaction in Nepal. It is incredibly helpful for our research, yeah. And before we conclude, I would like to ask if there is anything else you feel is important that we haven't covered, or if you have any final thoughts you would like to add, if you are welcome to do so. No, I don't have anything else to say. So,

thank you very much. Thank you. If you need anything, after our research, we would appreciate your feedback on everything. You are welcome. And we'll send you a message, or we'll contact you after our thesis, or we'll send you an email, or something like that. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for today, yeah.