

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

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EMILIE BUREL

EUROPEAN MASTER IN TOURISM MANAGEMENT
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN DENMARK
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
FACULTY OF TOURISM, UNIVERSITY OF GIRONA

MASTER'S THESIS

**ANALYSIS ON SELECTED PSYCHOLOGICAL AND
SOCIOCULTURAL RISKS PERCEPTION AMONG SOLO
TRAVELLERS**

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EMILIE BUREL

AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

The undersigned Emilie Burel, a student at the University of Ljubljana, School of Economics and Business, (hereafter: SEB LU), author of this written final work of studies with the title Analysis on selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers, prepared under supervision of Ljubica Knežević.

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Author's signature:

EMILIE
BUREL -
DNI
Z1285834R
Digitally signed
by EMILIE BUREL
- DNI Z1285834R
Date: 2024.07.14
19:42:18 +0200

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1. Abstract

The increasing popularity of solo travel in today's world has prompted a critical examination of the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks that solo travellers feel. Driven by the growing trend of solo travel and the requirement to comprehend the subtle aspects of risk, this study adds to the body of knowledge by exploring the individual experiences of solo travellers.

A number of fifteen semi-structured interviews were performed using a qualitative methodology with a broad sample of independent travellers representing various age groups and nationalities. Exploratory research concepts underpinned thematic analysis, which was the main method used to find recurring themes and insights in the data that was gathered.

The results demonstrate the complex nature of selected Psychological risks, highlighting the impact of past Disruptive Experiences, Health Conditions, and Cultural Knowledge on the sense of risk among solo travellers. Furthermore, Sociocultural risks including Individualism vs. Collectivism, Political Stability and Governance, and Safety Infrastructure considerations are important in determining how risk is perceived by solo travellers.

The discussion assessed through the study emphasises similarities between patterns recognition and themes discovered through the analysis process. It has shown different risks' perception between the group participants. The current study has proven the lack of actual data and information on the subject. Through gender, age and nationalities the data can be used for further research such as comparison between female and male solo travellers and also getting over the traditional way of perceiving risks as negative, while seeking for positive risks perception, with resilience and an experimental manner approach.

Keywords: risk, perception, factor, solo traveller, psychological, sociocultural, travel

2. Introduction

The rationale of this study is to explore the depths of risk perceptions among solo travellers in order to identify patterns and themes that advance a thorough knowledge of the difficulties encountered when travelling alone. Addressing the underlying motives and concerns of people who travel alone is becoming increasingly important as the number of solo travellers' worldwide rises. By examining the complex facets of risk perception and concentrating on a selection of certain Psychological and Sociocultural risks, this study aims to fill in gaps in the body of previous literature research.

This thesis is focused on the following research question: *To what extent do selected psychological and sociocultural factors influence risk perception among solo travellers?*

The research aims to investigate this question by analysing risk perceptions, identifying common themes and patterns related to the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks among solo travellers.

To fully capture the complex and varied experiences of solo travellers, a qualitative method will be used. The main technique of gathering data will be semi-structured interviews, which provide a thorough examination of participants' perspectives. The obtained data will be subjected to thematic analysis, which is based on exploratory research methods, in order to find common themes and patterns of the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks, and new insights. The analysis will be held under a conceptual map to help get details about different themes and patterns.

The thesis will be structured as follows, with chapters including a thorough literature review detailing the risks, the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks. Therefore, an in-depth methodology chapter will be presented, outlining participant selection, ethical considerations and data collection processes. Moreover, an explanation of the interviews process and the participants, and an exhaustive analysis of the data collected. Finally, a comprehensive overview of the findings will be provided in the final chapters, which will also include the results and discussions.

3. Literature Review

The following literature review contributes to give a valuable understanding of the existing academic papers in the field of risk perception among solo travellers. The focus will be held on the selected Psychological and Sociocultural factors.

The chapter starts with an explanation of risks and solo travellers to have a better insight before carrying on with the exploration of different Psychological and Sociocultural risks that were selected. It will show how risks are identified by researchers. The literature review synthesises the data from plenty of studies, helping identify common themes and patterns, and gaps in the current research papers. All the information can be used for next chapters. The literature review ends with the description of hypotheses that will be answered in the results chapter.

This synthesis will not only emphasise the significance of understanding risks perception, but will also show the need for future study in this area. This chapter attempts to give an adequate theoretical basis for the future research on qualitative data acquired from solo travellers, contributing to a better understanding of the psychological and sociocultural risks they experience.

3.1. Risks perception

There is not a common definition of risk, and it is in general defined slightly differently depending on the research field and issue. According to social science research, risk is described as *“uncertainty about and severity of consequences or outcomes of an activity with respect to something that humans value”* (Aven & Renn in Lo et al., 2011, p. 242).

As stated by Reisinger & Mavondo (2006), risk is defined by consumer researchers as the unpredictability of purchasing a good or service, unfavourable outcomes from an interaction, dissatisfaction and financial damage. Within a wider context, risk can also be described as an opportunity, hazard, or potential harm or loss and a *“probability of an event occurring, combined with the magnitude of the losses or gains that would be entailed”* (Douglas, 1992, p.23). As we can see with both definitions ahead, risks can be perceived as a human or material damage. There is not only one definition, but each of them can adapt to a specific sector.

Furthermore, risks can also be perceived during travel and not only for good and service. As a matter of fact, Park & Reisinger (2010, p.2-3) interpret travel risk as *“the possibility of experiencing a danger while engaging in travel”* and *“the consciousness of security and knowledge of the likelihood of damage during travel”*. From the author’s research, risk is not only observed during travel but also during the purchasing and consuming practices (Park & Reisinger, 2010, p.2-3). From his belief, perceived travel risk refers to the unfavourable and unclear implications of choosing to travel (Park & Reisinger, 2010, p.2-3). It is close to the way of thinking of another researcher. Furedi (2005), regardless of the precise definition, has stated

that risk is normally and more commonly perceived as something negative, except in relation with chance and risk-taking.

The decision to travel always involves risk since, in addition to tourist products and services containing established features of services, travelling also requires visiting foreign areas and new social contexts corporeally (Yang et al., 2017).

In modern society, where the chance of a person being a victim of a health hazard, natural disaster, terrorism, or international conflict is higher than ever before, the tourism sector must comprehend tourists' risk perception (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2006). Besides, tourists' risk perception influences their current and future choices regarding travel, emphasising the need for greater comprehension of tourists' attitudes toward their approach on risks (Yang & Nair, 2014).

Therefore, risk production has evolved as a dominant process in contemporary society, and risk consciousness is gradually expanding. Travelling being a common usage in today's culture shows that involvement in travel entails rising danger, and that risk perceptions are an unavoidable component of the tourism experience (Valaja, 2018).

Risks related to travel have different perspectives and as Yang & Nair (2014) mentioned, tourism-related research concerning risk and safety have been expanding since the 1970s, and notably following the terrorist assault of 9/11, the term "risk" began to be used frequently in the tourism field.

Since then, regional and worldwide occurrences such as the SARS outbreak, Asian tsunami, and Arab Spring movement, to name a few, have extended the research connected to the various dimensions of risk in tourism (Yang et al., 2017; Yang & Nair, 2014).

The basis for previous research on tourism has been the risks found in consumer behaviour literature. It has been discovered that the risks associated with pleasure travel are primarily financial, psychological, satisfaction, and time-related, whereas some academics declare that functional, physical, financial, social, and psychological risks are related to tourism (Yang & Nair, 2014).

Based on the analysis of risk in tourism literature from Yang & Nair (2014), risk, security, and safety definitions might overlap and be unclear. While safety threats are more closely associated with disasters, health hazards, natural catastrophes, and other events that are not caused by humans, security concerns tend to be related to political stability and national security (Yang & Nair, 2014). Regardless of whether the risks are security or safety-related, their importance appears to be growing in travel studies.

Research on risk in tourism most frequently focuses on two topics: risk factors and the effects of risk perception on travel behaviour and intention. Several studies have also been conducted to attempt to define risk and risk perception aspects (Yang & Nair, 2014).

Information search has also become a more important topic in the literature on tourist risk as social media and other contemporary communication methods become more prevalent (Yang & Nair, 2014).

Human risks are also to be taken into account and can be based on gender in between the difference of male and female. In fact, women's socially constructed inferior gender status has led some authors to claim that women perceive risk more than males do, which heightens their dread of physical assault when travelling (Yang et al., 2017).

Other variables have also been researched to affect tourists' perceptions of risk in addition to gender. In effect, Reisinger & Mavondo (2006) intended to find out if travellers' perceptions of risk, levels of anxiety, and travel plans varied depending on their nationality. Based on the findings, travellers from the USA and UK were the least concerned about health concerns, while visitors from Hong Kong, Canada, and Australia thought there were more cultural dangers than other travellers. Given the consequences of the SARS outbreak, it is not surprising that Hong Kong tourists were most concerned about health risks. Compared to tourists of other countries, Americans did not believe that there were many physical risks associated with travel; instead, they were more worried about the possibility of terrorism and going abroad (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2006). This is probably because of what happened on 9/11, which demonstrated how significantly large-scale events like SARS and 9/11 impact travellers' perceptions of risk.

It is interesting to see in these previous researches that risks can be perceived differently within different countries and nationalities.

Park and Reisinger (2010) observed that other characteristics also affect how tourists perceive risk. Particularly, they discovered that tourists with lower incomes perceive the impact of natural disasters more than those with higher incomes, and that tourists with lower educational backgrounds are more concerned about social risk. Additionally, they contend that travellers who travel alone report higher social and psychological hazards than those who travel in pairs.

Finally, Lepp & Gibson (2003) investigated the ways in which various tourist occupations impact perceptions of risk and discovered notable distinctions among mass tourists, explorers, and drifters. Researchers found that travellers who were looking for novelty saw less risk than those who were looking for familiarity. In general, adventurers and drifters thought that travel risks were lower than those of mass tourists. According to study results, less risk is perceived by more seasoned travellers, particularly when it comes to health and criminality. It follows that prior studies on travellers' perceptions of risk have identified notable disparities in risk perception among travellers with respect to different attributes (Lepp & Gibson, 2003).

3.2. Solo travellers

The concept of solo travel remains largely unexplored in the domains of events, hospitality, and tourism. In light of the COVID-19 epidemic, it has become imperative to revisit the previously gained knowledge. Furthermore, further research is required to comprehend the connection between gender and tourism, according to the 2030 Agenda (Otegui-Carles et al., 2022). Due to these conditions, a bibliometric and content analysis review of the body of scientific literature on solo travel that has been published in the last five years through Scopus, ProQuest, and the Web of Science was conducted, with a focus on the gender perspective applied to these investigations, in order to analyse the advancements and gaps in academic papers on solo travel in recent years (Otegui-Carles et al., 2022).

Before, during, and across spatial boundaries, travellers must make a number of decisions about their travels, most of which are heterogeneous. A multistage choice process is formed by several decisions, which are frequently independent but interrelated. One of these travel choices is the choosing of the travel party, and one option within this choice is the decision to solo travel (Wu, Zhang & Fujiwara, 2011).

As stated by Bianchi (2016) and Laesser et al. (2009), the number of travellers going solo is constantly increasing, which is due to shifting demographics. In fact, individuals' travel choices and needs are being impacted by changes in lifestyle, such as people getting married later in life, remaining single for extended periods of time, and an elderly population that is becoming more active (Laesser et al., 2009).

As reported by Bianchi (2016), there is an increasing tendency of people opting to be alone during consuming activities, such as travelling, and the development in individuality, lack of connectedness, and growing consumerism is to explain the popularity of solo travelling (Laesser et al., 2009). Therefore, it follows that academics studying tourism have become increasingly interested in solo travel in recent years.

The majority of research defines a solo traveller according to their status upon arrival, and studies on solo travel heavily emphasise gender. For instance, a lot of research has been done on female solo travellers, but primarily from the standpoint of their travel limits and motives (Bianchi, 2016).

Moreover, solo travel has been extensively researched within particular tourism categories, such as adventure and backpacker travel, which frequently leads to the stereotype of solo travellers as youthful, intrepid people (Laesser et al., 2009). However, as previously said, the number of elderly singles is increasing, implying that more research on more mature solo travellers is relevant and necessary to compare data.

In terms of their personal traits, solo travellers are more expressive, sensitive, and creative than group travellers, according to a study by Laesser et al. (2009). The same study also showed modest professional positions and lower levels of education among the majority of solo travellers. Not all researchers have found the same data and it is controversial in some studies. In fact, based on Mehmetoglu's (2003) research, most solo travellers had a university degree. In line with earlier studies, the same author found that solo travellers are often younger and that extroverts prefer to travel alone. Another study that refers to the saying of this previous researcher is the one by Wu et al. (2011). He studied dependencies between travel groups and destination preferences and found that younger generations are more likely to do solo travel rather than the older generations. Furthermore, solo travellers appear to possess more features such as being individualistic, energetic, and regard travel as a significant part of their lives (Mehmetoglu, 2003).

Based on prior study, personal and social variables are likely to be the main drivers of solo traveller motivations, particularly the desire to explore new destinations and make new friends (Laesser et al., 2009; Mehmetoglu, 2003). Similar elements were discovered in the study made by Bianchi (2016) to foster contentment among solo travellers. Bianchi (2016) also discovered personal motivating aspects, including a sense of independence, personal development, relaxation, and self-discovery. Mehmetoglu's (2003) findings corroborate also the existence of these personal motivations.

Laing & Crouch (2009) assert that although prior studies have shown that elements such as stress recovery, regeneration, and self-determination are significant for travellers seeking solitude, personal motives are mainly present among these travellers. Additional travel motivations for solo travellers include freedom from other people, peace, spirituality, and the opportunity to overcome difficulties while being on their own. Therefore, the social reasons for travelling alone that were previously described are not the same for every solo traveller; for others, travelling alone is a way to avoid interacting with people (Laing & Crouch, 2009).

Most studies show that the research about solo travellers is still in development. Researchers are arguing around different data while some others have similar findings based on multiple criteria as characteristics, gender, age, etc. There is no specific definition of a solo traveller but several types are generally stated and regrouped; solo travellers are mostly coming from younger generations.

3.3. Psychological risks

Psychological risk refers to the chance that a trip may not align with the traveller's personality or self-image (Roehl & Fesenmaier, 1992), as well as the danger of embarrassment and self-esteem loss (Boksberger, Bieger, & Laesser, 2007).

Therefore, an introduction at the beginning of each subchapter of the selected psychological risks was made using OpenAI (2023, December) to obtain ideas and describe the definition and effect of each risk factor.

3.3.1. Experience and Past Disruptive Situations

The Experience and Past Disruptive Situations factor is related to prior travels and exposures with frustrating occurrences. It is the effect of individuals who have experienced traumatic events in the past that may have elevated risk perceptions for future travel, which could impact their total risk assessment (OpenAI, 2023, December).

As mentioned in the definition of risks, tourists' risk perception influences their current and future choices regarding travel, emphasising the need for greater comprehension of tourists' attitudes toward their approach on risks (Yang & Nair, 2014). In case of disruptive past situations, travellers will be impacted in their future trip choices.

As a contrary, according to earlier research prior travel experiences have an impact on how dangerous a trip is considered to be. Studies reveal that when prior travel experience rises, risk perception falls (Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Sharifpour, Walters, & Ritchie, 2014; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998b).

Comparing less experienced foreign travellers to more experienced ones, Lepp and Gibson (2003) discovered that those with less experience felt greater danger in terms of food, terrorism, and health. Likewise, Sharifpour et al. (2014) discovered that past travelling abroad experience is highly connected to perceived risk aspects. Their findings indicate that beginner travellers estimate physical, destination-related, and overall dangers as higher than those of more experienced travellers.

Qi et al. (2009), nevertheless, did not discover any connection between the degree of perceived risks and past travel experience. Considering these divergent results, more research is still required to determine how past travel experiences affect an individual's perceptions of risk. This concern is addressed in the following study.

In the study made by Perpiña et al. (2017, p. 121), the analysis with Pearson correlations demonstrated the wide variation in risk estimates based on past travel experience. In general, those who have been to more countries and on more continents perceive less risk when they

travel abroad. As a result, those with less travel experience than those with more experience tend to perceive higher levels of risk when travelling abroad. More experienced travellers perceived a lower danger for physical risks than less experienced travellers (Perpiña et al., 2017, p. 121). It shows that even with prior disruptive events, solo travellers with more experience show less risk perception in general.

An additional objective of this study was to examine the impact of sociodemographic factors and prior travel experiences on the five risk perception dimensions stated earlier. The results show that perceptions of risk when travelling abroad differ depending on factors including gender, age, education level, and prior travel experience (Perpiña et al., 2017, p. 126).

The only element that varies by gender is physical risk, where women perceive risk at higher levels than males, which is consistent with the findings of Reichel et al. (2007). Although for the other four risk factors, there were no gender-specific variations that were statistically significant, supporting earlier research findings (Moreira, 2008; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998a).

In terms of age, the findings of this study corroborate prior research (Gibson & Yiannakis, 2002), which found that risk perception for foreign travel declines with age.

Consistent with Sönmez and Graefe (1998b), the results also showed that the degree of perceived hazards reduced with increased levels of education. Experienced travellers and less experienced travellers were also shown to perceive risk differently, and this was influenced by the number of prior travels and countries visited. This last argument complements prior research that shows that risk perception reduces as previous travel experience increases (Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Sharifpour, Walters, & Ritchie, 2014; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998b).

Perpiña et al. research (2017, p. 127) indicates the importance of a person's background in determining how they perceive risk. The perception of risk associated with overseas travel declines with age, education level, and prior travel experience. As a result, younger people with less education and less prior travel experience typically exhibit higher levels of perceived risk associated with travelling abroad. Destination managers ought to take into account the perceptions of risk that are unique to their location. According to the conclusions of this study, if a place is viewed as risky or highly unsafe, they should try to attract more experienced travellers, who have lower levels of risk perception while travelling internationally (Perpiña et al., 2017, p. 127)

Finally, lack of data shows that few studies were made for this risk factor. More research must be done in regard to Experience and Past Disruptive Situations related to travel perception. It can help to analyse travellers in general and pre-recognised certain themes and patterns.

3.3.2. Health Condition and Susceptibility

The Health Condition and Susceptibility factor is based on the traveller's state of bodily and mental wellbeing. In fact, travellers who already have health issues or diseases may perceive more risk than others, especially when visiting places with foreign healthcare systems (OpenAI, 2023, December).

Studies have been conducted on the factors that limit solo traveller behaviour in addition to their motivations. Research suggests that people are more inclined to worry about their health and safety when they travel alone (Bianchi, 2016). A 2003 study by Mehmetoglu also showed that when solo travellers were choosing their destinations, they gave careful consideration to the safety of their location.

An analysis was made based on Valaja's (2018, p. 51) research stating that risks associated with health or dying due to health-related difficulties were considered significant in the narratives discussing physical danger, in addition to risks related to accidents. A number of health-related risk perceptions were found in the collected narratives, including those for conditions like sunburn, dengue fever, stomach problems, appendicitis, altitude sickness, and food poisoning. The aforementioned risk perceptions were extracted from passages discussing the value of insurance in averting financial difficulties and from accounts summarising instances of falling ill or staying well despite predictions that they would. Health problems were depicted as something probable when travelling, as well as something that can result in major bodily and financial implications (Valaja, 2018, p. 51).

Health concerns and even death were considered as potential outcomes of visiting specific locations and engaging in specific tourism activities, in addition to illnesses (Valaja, 2018, p. 51-52). These perceptions were mostly concerned with the dangers posed to people by animals or the risks associated with harmful actions.

Health, terrorism, war, and four other issues were determined to be the primary risk factors by Lepp and Gibson (2003) after analysing the perceptions of risks of 290 university students who were born in the United States.

Another study made by Neuburger et al. (2021, p. 1011) shows that over the course of two weeks, the risk perception of COVID-19, travel risk perception, and propensity to amend or cancel trip plans all increased dramatically. Perceptions of increased travel danger during COVID-19 are in line with prior research regarding infectious disease outbreaks (Cahyanto et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2012; Leggat et al., 2010; Pine & McKercher, 2004).

Besides, a higher perception of health concerns during travel and a higher risk perception of developing a disease can lead to any form of avoidance behaviour and therefore, a larger possibility of changing and avoiding travel (Cahyanto et al., 2016; Pennington-Gray et al., 2011).

Results in Neuburger et al. (2021, p. 1012) research demonstrates how the sense of travel risk can quickly cause anxiety related to travel. This is consistent with the results of other studies, which show that the impression of health hazards is negatively associated with the perception of safety of a destination and can influence travellers' travel inclinations (Liu et al., 2016; Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005).

Then, significant variations were discovered in this study for gender, age, and frequency of travel. Although the impression of travel risk increases with age, it dropped with frequency of travel, which is in line with other research (Neuburger et al., 2021). Furthermore, the impact of gender on female risk perceptions was consistent with prior research findings (Floyd & Pennington-Gray, 2004; Lepp & Gibson, 2003).

3.3.3. Cultural Knowledge and Ignorance

The Cultural Knowledge and Ignorance factor is affiliated to the extent to which a visitor is conversant or not with the subtle cultural aspects of a place. It is an effect of when, in environments, people are familiar with the culture. Travellers may feel more at ease and perceive fewer risks; in contrast, unfamiliar cultures may cause increased anxiety and heightened perception of risk due to uncertainty (OpenAI, 2023, December).

As reported by Bianchi (2016), solo travellers are less confined in their travel decisions, feel free to travel at their own speed, and are not bound by specific travel timetables. A research authored by Radojevic, Stanasic, & Stanic (2015) presents a few more intriguing findings about the features of solo travel. According to their findings, location and free Wi-Fi are crucial factors when selecting a place to stay, and cultural differences have no detrimental effects on solo travellers. Brands are also less significant for solo travellers than for couples and children (Radojevic, Stanasic, & Stanic, 2015).

Mary Douglas, a well-known cultural anthropologist for her contributions to risk sociocultural analyses and "cultural/symbolic" viewpoints have done various researches. The results predicted were based on the idea that culture plays a significant role in the development of risk because it fosters an overall awareness of risk and helps travellers to comprehend it (Lupton, 1999). The concept of communal risk highlights how a community makes use of its collective, accumulated experiences to ascertain which losses that are reasonably predictable are most likely to occur, which losses are likely to be particularly damaging, and which harms can be avoidable (Douglas in Lupton, 1999, p. 38).

Douglas further notes that within a culture, various groups may have varying opinions on what constitutes a risk and how bearable a particular risk is seen to be. She maintains that risk is the "*socially constructed interpretation and response to a "real danger"*", despite the fact that her method places a strong emphasis on the value of culture (Lupton, 1999, p. 39). Additionally,

Lupton (1999) highlights Douglas' theory that certain risks are purposefully chosen and categorised as such by society for reasons that make sense to that culture's shared values and worries. This claim is reinforced by a research by Reisinger & Mavondo (2006), which discovered that individuals from particular cultures had a tendency to view particular risks as higher based on their personal experiences with large-scale catastrophes. Travellers from the USA, for instance, were found to be more anxious about terrorism, probably as a result of the 9/11 assault, while visitors from Hong Kong were found to be more worried about health concerns, maybe as a result of the severity of the SARS outbreak in Asia.

Only twice were risks associated with culture shock detected in the entire dataset. A blogger shared that, being alone and in an unfamiliar place, she was anxious, afraid, and wondered if she should go to the impoverished neighbourhood at all before visiting (Valaja, 2018, p. 61). When she did finally travel to the region, she was struck with a severe case of culture shock that left her crying and thinking critically about her own comfortable lifestyle. Another blogger claimed that the quantity of trash and filth in Vietnam caused her to go through a serious case of culture shock. The same story disclosed that the blogger saw the risk of culture shock as a possibility in the future while travelling to harsh countries such as Vietnam (Valaja, 2018, p. 61).

Finally, international tourists are concerned about cultural and linguistic challenges. Cultural, religious, and linguistic distinctions are travel motivators in and of themselves, but they are also frequently seen as problematic and serve as barriers to travel (Basala & Klenosky, 2001).

3.4. Sociocultural risks

Sociocultural elements are what define and set societies apart. These defining characteristics function as social and cultural forces that affect how particular groups feel, behave, interact, and hold values. Social growth and functioning are significantly shaped by sociocultural influences (Forsyth, n.d.). They are interchangeable with the customs, behaviours, and values particular to a community or other group of people. In order to maintain robust economies and efficient administration, it is critical to comprehend these sociocultural variables. Decision-making in every given society is influenced by these factors (Forsyth, n.d.).

Individuals react and behave differently based on their sociocultural background in various situations, places, brands, and policies. These factors have an impact on how people see and understand the outside world as well as other people and risks' perception. Distinct communities, regions, and demographic groups are typified by a variety of sociocultural elements. In certain societies, norms are regarded as immoral or abnormal, while in others they are considered normal (Forsyth, n.d.).

Therefore, an introduction at the beginning of each subchapter of the selected sociocultural risks was made using OpenAI (2023, December) to obtain ideas and describe the definition and effect of each risk factor.

3.4.1. Individualism vs. Collectivism

Individualism vs. Collectivism factor is designed as the extent to which a society prioritises individual liberty over group cohesiveness and interdependence. While travellers from individualistic societies might concentrate more on personal risk assessments, those from collectivist societies might prioritise group safety and possibly perceive higher risks in situations that could impact the collective (OpenAI, 2023, December).

Research that has already been conducted suggests that solo travellers have social incentives for doing so, such as wanting to interact with other travellers and locals (Bianchi, 2016; Laesser et al., 2009; Osman et al., 2019). Backpackers frequently meet and travel with others for brief periods of time since the hostel environment promotes social interactions and travelling alone makes meeting others simpler (Murphy, 2001). This is related to collectivism in a destination. Likewise, plenty of individuals are doing solo travel to enjoy their time alone but also to do collective activities with strangers they meet during the trip. This is one motivation to travel solo.

There have been reports of solo travellers having a similar motivation. According to the concept of *“solo but not alone”* (Osman et al., 2019, p. 257), social interactions—such as making connections with fellow travellers, striking up conversations with locals, and experiencing compassion from strangers—are important factors that encourage and profit from solo travel. Travellers travelling alone may find great satisfaction in social engagement, according to Bianchi (2016), who also suggested that travel agencies offer socially conscious activities to such individuals.

Still, other research highlighted the fact that some people travel alone for privacy and that not all of them are drawn to social situations (Goodwin & Lockshin, 1992; Laing & Crouch, 2009; Yang et al., 2019). A lack of company may be a reason for solo travel (Terziyska, 2021; Mehmetoglu et al., 2001), however many of the individuals who travel alone do have someone to travel with. Therefore, travelling alone is a choice of their own (Hamid et al., 2021; Yang, 2020); even if they have people to go on a trip with, they may opt and prefer to travel alone (Bianchi, 2016). Some people would rather travel alone than with others who have different interests or societal beliefs (Ganguly, 2018); some even choose to travel alone because they *“hate people”* (Terziyska, 2021). Some travellers are more individualistic than others. And this is the second motivation for doing solo travel. This is not mandatory to socialise during solo trips; a lot of individuals prefer to go on their own. Based on Terziyska (2021) research, some individuals also travel alone *“by default”* for the first time because they don’t have any travelling companions, but they later choose to go alone.

Other authors perceived Individualism vs. Collectivism as social barriers for travellers. As a matter of fact, the perceived risk can cause trouble for the traveller, such as social barriers that make it difficult to communicate with foreigners or understand other cultures (Lepp, Gibson,

& Lane, 2011; Reisinger & Mavondo, 2005; Sharifpour, Walters, Ritchie, & Winter, 2014; Sharifpour, Walters, & Ritchie, 2014).

Laesser et al. (2009) classified solo travellers into four categories: travellers who live alone and travel by themselves; individuals who live alone and join a group or an arranged journey; persons who do not live alone and travel on their own; and those who do not live alone and travel on their own yet join a group or an arranged journey.

Depending on whether the person is an experienced solo traveller or if this is their first time travelling alone, these reasons might change (Bianchi, 2021). According to academic publications thus far, women who want to travel alone often have an experience in mind rather than the trip itself (Pereira et al., 2018), which enables them to step outside of their comfort zone and feel more independent and self-sufficient (Bianchi, 2016; Pereira et al., 2018; Hosseini et al., 2022; Nikjoo et al. 2021). Along with unfavourable views from locals, stigmas, or less amiable treatment than those who travel with companions (Bianchi, 2021; Hosseini et al., 2022), both genders may have feelings of loneliness (Yang, 2020; Yang et al., 2022), even monotony (Malik, 2018), and other issues as well.

Thus, based on the research conducted by Laing & Crouch (2009), one interviewee described quiet as particularly unsettling, but other aspects of travelling alone and the experiences that came with it were generally seen as favourable. Solo travel is made by different choices; it just depends on what the traveller is seeking during the trip.

3.4.2. Governance and Political Stability

Governance and Political Stability factor is associated with the destination's political system's efficacy and stability. In effect, travellers' perceptions of safety can be influenced by political stability, with places experiencing political unrest frequently being viewed as riskier (OpenAI, 2023, December).

As stated by Valaja (2018, p. 65-66), risk perceptions among female solo travellers were found to be influenced by political and religious disputes, wars, persecutions, and revolutions. These expressions demonstrate that political/ religious risk perceptions resulted in feelings of uncertainty, dread, and doubt about previously planned travel, as well as influencing decisions about which areas and countries to visit. Perceptions of political and religious risk were also brought up in relation to the anxiety of getting into trouble for holding "incorrect" opinions about the political and religious circumstances that exist at a destination. These excerpts from the gathered narratives demonstrate how political and religious risks can shape perceptions of risk in terms of safety as well as dangers related to speaking and acting in ways that conform to social, political, and religious norms (Valaja, 2018, p. 65-66).

In accordance to a research by Sharifpour, Walters, Ritchie, et al. (2014), terrorist attacks and instability in politics have a greater impact on factors in the Middle East than becoming a victim

of crime. Similarly, Adam (2015) found that backpackers visiting Ghana are more worried about accidents and terrorism than they are about crime. This straightforward explanation shows that perceived dangers vary depending on the travel environment, the type of tourists, or the specific location under study. Consequently, depending on the circumstances, some of the perceived hazards may be more well-known than others (Perpiña et al., 2017, p. 126).

According to Norton (1994), terrorism is the biggest threat to international travel and has a far worse impact on the travel and tourism sector than any other human-caused or natural disaster (such as hurricanes, earthquakes, or floods) (Cavlek, 2002). There is a chance that many tourists will become victims of terrorist acts. The frequency and severity of terrorist attacks have alarmingly increased in recent years. Several locations across the world have experienced terrorist strikes.

Political unrest and war can discourage travellers. For example, 11,500 visitors were forced to postpone their 1989 trips to Beijing due to the slaughter that occurred in Tiananmen Square, China (Gartner & Shen, 1992). International tourism is at risk due to criminal activity. Occasionally, robberies and other crimes result in the deaths of tourists. For instance, decreases in foreign travel to Brazil, Papua New Guinea, and the Republic of South Africa were brought on by crimes against travellers (Pizam et al., 1997).

3.4.3. Considered Safety Infrastructure

The Considered Safety Infrastructure factor is correlated to the infrastructure and safety measures at a destination that are thought to be of high quality and dependability. Well-developed safety infrastructure may make travellers feel more secure and reduce perceived risks, whereas insufficient safety precautions may make them perceive risks more highly (OpenAI, 2023, December).

According to Mehmetoglu (2003), solo travellers considered destination safety to be a key consideration when choosing their itinerary. Furthermore, challenges with inadequate infrastructure, having to handle issues on one's own, and being ill were thought to be contributing factors to unsatisfactory feelings among lone travellers (Bianchi, 2016).

Unspecified safety risks were associated with unsafe accommodation such as Couchsurfing and hostels, driving a car instead of taking a bus, travelling to a destination perceived to be very busy and crazy, using taxis, and visiting dangerous areas (Valaja, 2018, p. 62). Thus, according to the narratives, solo female travellers' risk perceptions influence their decision-making processes, particularly when it comes to destination selection and the utilisation of multiple tourist services. Based on the author's analysis, a significant number of the bloggers perceived greater risk throughout the night and in the dark (Valaja, 2018, p. 62).

It is evident that perceived safety concerns may restrict travellers' movements around destinations and keep them from visiting particular locations, particularly at night. This is true even though the hazards in question are not further described in these narratives.

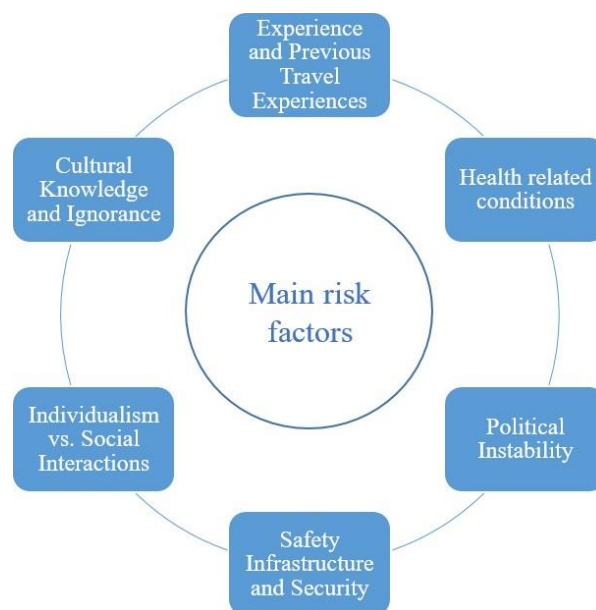
Furthermore, other authors have conducted studies on risks in hospitality and travel. As an illustration, Chen and Gursoy (2001) found that safety and cleanliness of a place rank among the most crucial considerations for travellers when they conducted a study on tourists' destination loyalty and preferences with Korean outbound travellers. Additionally, Baloglu and Uysal (1996) identified the perceived standard of hygiene and personal safety as two significant pull factors for travelling to a destination based on the responses from 1212 German respondents.

After analysing a number of travel-related factors in malls, Ibrahim (2002) revealed that one of the most important factors is safety of travel.

When media links a certain destination with a negative event or an increased risk of incidents, tourists are more likely to change their travel plans to avoid the perceived "unsafe" destination and seek a safer alternative (Sönmez & Graefe, 1998a). Tourists are more likely to avoid destinations with an increased safety risk (Pizam & Fleischer, 2002; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009).

Bringing up the literature review findings, an overall summary can be reviewed in figure 1 below of the main risks encountered previously.

Figure 1. Overview of the main risk factors



Source: Own work

3.5 Hypotheses

Considering the fundamental data obtained from qualitative findings, we go from the nuanced insights gathered in the prior qualitative research phase and develop particular hypotheses for each risk. These hypotheses were developed as quantitative ones and then redefined with the help of ChatGPT for the formulation, to create qualitative hypotheses. This change enables a thorough analysis and quantifies the differences between patterns and themes related to the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks that solo travellers perceive. These themes and patterns cover topics including Experience and Past Disruptive Situations, Health Condition and Susceptibility, Cultural Knowledge and Ignorance, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Governance and Political Stability, and Considered Safety Infrastructure, considering account variables such as nationality, gender, and age.

Using the existing knowledge, we proceed to analyse the merit of the following hypothesis:

H1: Experience and Past Disruptive Situations risk

How do solo travellers perceive and react to experiencing negative situations in a destination?

This hypothesis suggests that there may be a variation between solo travellers and their reaction to face Experience and Past Disruptive Situations. It means that when an individual is going for solo travel, if he experienced a disruptive event, he may or may not have the same reaction as other solo travellers.

Past travel experiences influence the perceived level of danger associated with a trip, according to previous studies. Research indicates that risk perception decreases with increasing past travel experience (Lepp & Gibson, 2003; Sharifpour, Walters, & Ritchie, 2014; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998b).

Similarly, Sharifpour et al. (2014) found a strong correlation between perceived risk factors and prior international travel experience. According to their research, inexperienced travellers place a higher value on general, destination-related, and physical risks than do experienced travellers. Moreover, Perpiña et al. (2017, p. 121) found significant heterogeneity in risk estimates based on past travel experience by using Pearson correlations analysis.

Given the empirical background, it is important to reconsider the formulated hypothesis:

H2: Health Condition and Susceptibility risk

What are the health-related considerations and the role of insurance in the decision-making process of solo travellers when choosing a destination?

This hypothesis explores the potential link between all solo travellers' related health conditions in a destination. Indeed, most solo travellers, young to old, are seeking for a secure health-

related condition destination when travelling. They will be less interested in a destination with undeveloped health medications.

According to Bianchi (2016), individuals are more inclined to worry about their health and safety when they travel alone. As a matter of fact, Valaja (2018, p. 51-52) mentioned that health concerns and even death are considered as potential outcomes of visiting specific locations and engaging in specific tourism activities, in addition to illnesses. These perceptions were especially concerned with the dangers posed to people by animals or the risks associated with harmful actions.

This leads us to the beginning of our third hypothesis:

H3: Cultural Knowledge and Ignorance risk

How important is cultural knowledge to young solo travellers when selecting a solo travel destination?

This hypothesis aims to determine if young solo travellers are seeing the cultural knowledge of a destination as importantly as older solo travellers.

The study conducted by Radojevic, Stanisic, & Stanic (2015) shows some intriguing findings about the features of solo travel. According to their data, location and free Wi-Fi are crucial factors when selecting a place to stay, and cultural differences have no detrimental effects on solo travellers. From this insight, it means solo travellers in general don't see cultural knowledge as a primary risk factor within the destination.

Considering the findings outlined, it is pertinent to explore the stated hypothesis:

H4: Individualism vs. Collectivism risk

How do solo travellers perceive the social aspects of their travels?

This hypothesis explores the idea of social interactions while doing solo travel. Is it easier to socialise alone than when travelling in groups, with friends or family? Somehow, it can get easier to create bonds with others when you are alone rather than when you are with people you know. Because you will be less tempted to socialise as you are already gathered by relatives.

Based on the findings derived from Murphy (2001) study, since the atmosphere of hostels encourages social interactions and travelling alone makes meeting people easier, backpackers often meet and travel with others for short stays.

Furthermore, some reports show the concept of solo travellers as “*solo but not alone*” (Osman et al., 2019, p. 257), as with social interactions, making connections with other travellers, locals and meeting strangers. This concept combines important factors that encourage solo travellers.

Plus, as stated by Bianchi (2016), solo travellers may find great satisfaction in social engagement.

Given the data mentioned, it is pertinent to investigate the stated hypothesis:

H5: Governance and Political Stability risk

How does the experience of political and governance instability influence solo travellers' willingness to visit politically unsteady countries?

This hypothesis examines whether the government of a destination can impact solo travellers or not. In fact, most of the solo travellers that have seen or lived in a complicated and dangerous political country don't seek this instability and avoid partially or totally the specific country related to this risk.

Another study from Valaja (2018, p. 65-66) shows that risk perceptions among female solo travellers were found to be influenced by political and religious disputes, wars, persecutions, and revolutions. It was not only demonstrated by female solo travellers but also male solo travellers that felt the uncertainty of the destination, resulting in anxiety and fear.

It illustrates how perceptions of risk, both safety-related and associated with speaking and acting in ways that comply with social, political, and religious norms, can be influenced by political and religious risks.

Based on the information presented, we can determine the validity of this hypothesis:

H6: Considered Safety Infrastructure risk

How do female solo travellers' perceptions of safety-related risks vary from male solo travellers' ones?

This hypothesis explores the fact that female solo travellers can have different safety perceptions than male solo travellers. They can be more aware of risks and choose the safety of their destination with more precautionary measures.

Based on page 62 of Valaja's (2018) study, solo female travellers' risk perceptions influence their decision-making processes, particularly when it comes to destination selection and the utilisation of multiple tourist services. The author analysed a significant number of bloggers that perceived greater risk throughout the night and in the dark (Valaja, 2018, p. 62).

This contributes to the making of the final hypothesis:

H7: Risk perception between generations

How do risk perceptions differ from older and younger solo travellers?

This hypothesis tackles the idea of differences between the way old and young individuals approach solo travel. Younger generation can be more excited by the idea of travelling that they forget about the risks associated within any destination. With more experiences, older solo travellers learned from their previous solo travels' mistakes and are more aware of danger related to risk perception. Thus, they will choose a destination according to their perception of risks.

Although, it could be the opposite. With their knowledge of risks, older solo travellers can be less afraid because they already experienced difficult situations. Therefore, they can easily go back to a destination where they experienced risks. Conversely, young solo travellers without experiences of the destination, will be less tempted to go to a location where they have preconceived ideas, to avoid any risks.

The purpose of the performed literature review was to provide an overview of earlier studies on risk in tourism, solo travellers and the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks perceived by solo travellers. According to the literature review, the bulk of studies on solo travel have focused on personal features of solo travellers, their motives and restrictions for travelling, and the characteristics of solo travel. This existing narrow study focus suggests that further research on solo travel is required, from modern and diverse viewpoints.

It has also been demonstrated that there hasn't been much research done on the subject of risk in regard to female travellers who travel alone, indicating the necessity for more study in that field. There is also too little data about specific risks as the ones selected for the analysis of the Psychological and Sociocultural factors. The study provided in this thesis seeks to fill these gaps or show the need for further research. During the analysis section, the findings from earlier studies can be compared and discussed with the findings from the current study.

The results' differences and similarities can shed light on how people perceive travel risks and suggest which kinds of risks are thought to have increased and decreased in comparison to earlier studies. These kinds of results can also point to shifts in the tourist sector and society, which is why it is important to compare earlier and current research.

4. Methodology

The methodology chapter summarises the study approach, data gathering procedures, and data analysis techniques used to look into solo travellers' perception of the selected psychological and sociocultural risks. The objective of this section is to guarantee the validity and reliability of the study by offering a thorough and lucid description of the research procedure.

By discussing the methodology, this chapter seeks to provide a clear and thorough basis for comprehending how the study was conducted out, hence supporting the credibility and dependability of the conclusions reported in later chapters.

4.1. Population and sampling method description

4.1.1. Sample selection

The sample was made up of fifteen individuals from various nationalities and ethnic origins. This deliberate diversity intended to capture a wide range of opinions, adding depth to the findings. Purposive sampling was used to choose the participants, taking into account variables including age, nationality, and solo travel. This methodology guarantees a representative sample, hence facilitating the derivation of significant inferences regarding the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks associated with solo travelling.

4.1.2. Ethical considerations

Prior to conducting the interviews, ethical considerations were crucial. Every participant gave their informed consent, highlighting the voluntary nature of their participation. Confidentiality and anonymity in reporting were guaranteed to participants, and the goal of the study, the interview procedure, and the use of audio recording were well explained. All participant privacy and well-being were protected by adherence to ethical rules in the study.

4.2. Data collection process

4.2.1. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were carried out to provide flexibility and guarantee covering of important themes concerning the perceptions of the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks among solo travellers. Open-ended questions were part of the interview protocol since they were meant to elicit in-depth answers and encourage participants to speak openly.

The interview questions were divided into several categories, including; Introduction –to learn about the participants' backgrounds and motivations of solo travels; Psychological and Sociocultural risks –to learn about their prior knowledge and perceptions; Cross cutting

questions –to be more general as we asked a lot about specific topics and to conclude the session. The interviews were conducted to ask different generations.

The use of audio recording made it easier to accurately document comments while yet allowing for a natural flow of discourse. Participants' responses reached a point of redundancy as a result of data saturation, brought about by the organised framework of the interviews. The varied sample and the interview questions' thorough and targeted format made it easier to obtain substantial and nuanced data. The participants were reached out through social network platforms and solo travelling applications, to minimise bias. Therefore, the interviews were conducted face to face and online, when it was not possible to meet the participants.

4.2.2. Interviews process

Before starting with the interviews, a sample of 3 pre testing interviews was made. Ensuring the consistency of the questions without any overlap or similarities. After conducting these pre testing, a rearrangement of questions was done to start promptly.

Within each interview session, an introduction was made to clarify each step. After that, participants were asked to discuss their experiences of the risks perception associated with solo travelling, and their impressions on the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks, to see how they face them. Each participant selected the interview area based on convenience, as it provided a more trustful and cosy environment that promoted honest conversation. However, most of the interviews were also made via online platforms, such as Zoom call and Google Meets. It was sometimes not possible to meet in person participants from different nationalities, as they were not in the same country. The interviews were designed to be both fluid and structured, allowing participants to freely express their perspectives while still ensuring efficiency. The last parts of the questions were about self-perception risks, decision-making and information seeking to close the interview session. All the interview sessions lasted about 7-20 minutes per participant.

4.3. Data analysis process: qualitative data collection

4.3.1 Thematic Analysis

The qualitative data obtained through in-depth interviews with solo travellers will be subjected to a detailed thematic analysis, using a deductive approach due to the organised nature of the interview questions. This method seeks to identify common themes and patterns, and significant differences in participants' replies in order to provide a comprehensive research of the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks among solo travellers.

In accordance with the deductive approach, the analysis will be driven by established themes generated from the conceptual framework and prior literature. These planned categories will be

utilised systematically throughout the coding process, giving a formal framework for organising and categorising the substantial information gathered throughout the interviews.

The thematic analysis attempts to capture the key elements of solo travellers' experiences and views of the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks. Beyond superficial outcomes, the objective is to identify further aspects that contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how these factors influence risks perceptions among solo travellers.

Thematic analysis categories and codes serve as a visual direction, to allow the gathering of essential data. Analysing the data methodically should highlight both similarities and differences in how participants perceive and manage the risks they choose to take when solo travelling. This effective research is important to determine the different and specific effects of the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks among solo travellers' risks perceptions.

Through this efficient methodology, we hope to provide deep and contextually grounded insights into the numerous ways in which the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks impact solo travellers' risk perceptions. Based on a logical framework, the theme analysis will highlight patterns and provide a deeper understanding of the dynamic interaction between these risks and the perspectives of solo travelling participants.

4.3.2 Exploratory research

Along with the thematic analysis, an exploratory research approach will be used to identify unique insights and emergent themes in solo travel experiences. In order to identify and thoroughly explore issues that might not have been previously predicted or predefined, this qualitative method welcomes flexibility and adaptability.

The exploratory research is designed to go over the categories that were previously created in the deductive thematic analysis. This phase seeks to detect emerging topics that were not initially covered by the defined codes. This approach, which allows for open-ended and recurrent study, will shed the light on aspects of the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks that may occur naturally during the interviews.

During this phase, the previous analysis will evolve to reflect new insights and rising patterns. The process will be defined by a constant data exploration, to guarantee that the analysis is relevant for the depth and diversity of solo travellers' experiences. In order to fully capture the variety and depth of perspectives related to the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks, this flexibility is necessary.

When conducting exploratory research, it is necessary to retain reflexivity throughout the research. To enable an honest and objective interaction with participants' experiences, we will continue to be alert to our own possible prejudices and presumptions. Exploring unexpected

themes generates a real and responsive conversation between participants and researchers by putting preconceived preconceptions on hold.

The method of topic analysis will be smoothly incorporated with the emerging themes found during exploratory research. By combining established and new ideas, this integration guarantees a thorough analysis that offers a comprehensive picture of how solo travellers perceive and manage the chosen Psychological and Sociocultural risks.

By combining both previous analysis and research methods, it facilitates the natural finding of unexpected discoveries while simultaneously permitting an organised analysis of common themes and patterns. While including the selected Psychological and Sociocultural risks in a holistic way, the thesis intends to provide an exhaustive and nuanced investigation of the perspectives of solo travellers, enhancing our knowledge of the specific risks that one faces when travelling alone.

5. Analysis

Through the interpretation of the data and their connection to the theoretical framework and literature review of this thesis, the current research seeks to offer significant insights from the data. First, the interviews are introduced and evaluated, and then the study moves on to different components that focus on: (1) selected Psychological risks, (2) selected Sociocultural risks, (3) risks perception over time and experiences, (4) similarities and (5) pattern recognition. The analysis was determined to structure as previously described, in order to divide the analysis under cohesive portions considering the full research.

In the course of this study, a series of fifteen interviews with individuals of various nationalities, generations, all of whom were solo travellers were made. Before conducting the interviews, a sample of three pre-tests were done. The original interview questions were primarily designed to extract relevant data about the participants' profiles.

5.1 Interviews

This demographic information is shown visually in the table below (refer to Table 1). Pseudonyms have been used to protect participants' anonymity in accordance with ethical standards.

Table 1. Pre-test interviews' participants

Name	Nationality	Age	Gender
Pablo	Portuguese	25	Male
Karl	German	24	Male
Marie	French	57	Female

Source: Own work

After conducting the pre-tests, a first examination was executed. The data obtained with the pre-testing interviews were too dense and mostly rough to understand for participants. The questions needed to be reshaped and some questions were merged into one. When asking the first question, the second one was answered directly in this answer and was not necessary.

Thereafter, the reshaped questions were suggested to a broader group of participants. The fifteen participants, including the pre-tests, are specified in table 2 underneath.

Table 2. Interviews' participants

Name	Nationality	Age	Gender
Jade	French	22	Female
Leyla	Azerbaijani	22	Female
Celia	French	23	Female
Karl	German	24	Male
Carlos	Portuguese	24	Male
Alina	Polish	24	Female
Pablo	Portuguese	25	Male
Isabella	Italian	25	Female
Mia	Slovenian	26	Female
Kamal	Indian	27	Male
Aubrey	American	28	Female
Yasmin	Iranian	30	Female
Hazel	Singaporean	32	Female
Miguel	Brazilian	34	Male
Marie	French	57	Female

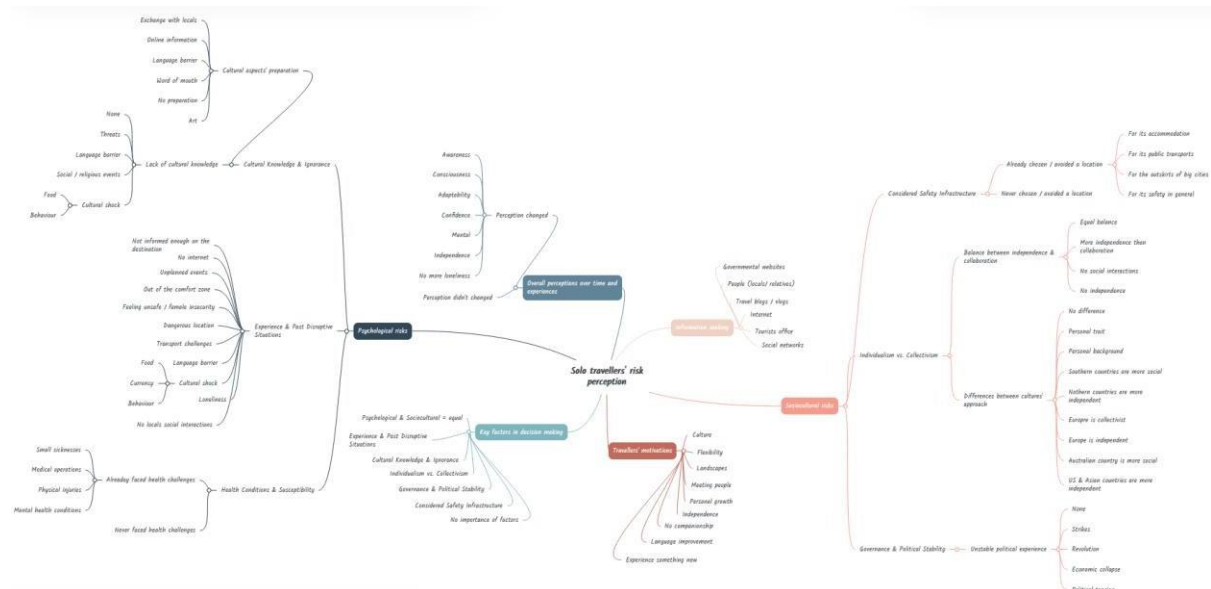
Source: Own work

Diversity of the group was essential to complete this investigation. Accordingly, the participants regroup twelve different nationalities, from 22 to 57 years old. Only four people were over 30 years old. A count of five participants were male and the other tenth individuals were female.

5.2 Findings

This qualitative study was developed by using a conceptual map as exploratory research. Thus, with this tool few categories and subcategories were established as seen in Figure 2 underneath.

Figure 2: Solo travellers' risk perception



Source: Own work

The research findings show how solo travellers dealt with their risk perception. This process began with their initial motivations and continued with their perception over time and experiences. Despite facing difficulties in risk factors, they gained important knowledge about preparedness, which encouraged optimism and community resilience about solo travel in general. Figure 3 stated below is showing a framework of themes encountered through the data collection.

Figure 3. Thematic Framework: Solo travellers' perspective

Theme 1: Experience and Past Disruptive Situations • Previous disruptive situations: individuals that has been through challenging past experiences during their travel that can impact their future solo travel. Theme 2: Health Conditions and Susceptibility • Faced health challenges: participants that were impacted by medical situations while solo travelling. • Never faced health challenges: people that didn't experienced any medical challenge while abroad. Theme 3: Cultural Knowledge and Ignorance • Lack of cultural knowledge: an instance of deficit by the traveller regarding the culture of the destination that can lead to difficulties. • Cultural aspects' preparation: individuals using different measures before the travel, to be the readiest upon arrival, related to cultures. Theme 4: Individualism vs. Collectivism • Balance between independence and collaboration: the need to balance the independence and the social interactions during a solo travel or only one extreme. • Differences between cultures' approach: the different nationalities or ethnicities approach when it comes to face solo travel. Theme 5: Governance and Political Stability • Unstable political experience: a disruptive political and governmental event during the travel. Theme 6: Considered Safety Infrastructure • Already chosen or avoided a destination: choosing or avoiding a destination only for its unsafety infrastructure. • Never chosen or avoided a destination: never felt the need to choose or avoid a destination for its unsafety infrastructure. Theme 7: Overall risk perception • Perception over time and experiences: the older you get, the older you perceive risks differently; and the more experiences you get, the more your approach to solo travel will change.
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Source: Own work

All these themes categories were developed during the data analysis process conducted with the conceptual map. After making interviews, key questions were sorted out and kept for the conceptualising map. Three Psychological and Sociocultural factors conserved, with key factors in decision making, travellers' motivations, information seeking and overall perceptions over time and experience. Hence, the categories were divided while only presenting the seventh themes above. Findings refined different data within these themes.

5.2.1 Theme 1: Experience and Past Disruptive Situations

The main data in this theme was previous disruptive situations that solo travellers experienced, if they had any. A total of eleven categories, and one subcategory were found. Fewest past experiences were part of no connection during travel, cultural shock about food, currency and even behaviour related to locals. Dangerous location, transport challenges, language barrier, not being informed enough on the destination and no locals social interactions were also part of the least felt experiences.

The biggest challenges were defined as unplanned events, being out of your comfort zone, feeling unsafe and loneliness. Unexpected situations were encountered by three participants out of fifteen. Male and females related. The comfort zone has been occurring for four participants and were equally divided into two males and two females' solo travellers. Then, the feelings of insecurity were only felt by five female participants. Many females commented about the unsafe feeling as *"what can be perceived as safe for one girl cannot be said for another person"* (Isabella, Italian) and also as a *"big challenge"* (Mia, Slovenian) of the woman's perception during a solo travel.

Finally, the aspect of loneliness was also encountered by five participants, as the unsafe feeling. A count of four female participants experienced it against one male respondent. Isabella (Italian) stated that she was *"scared of being alone, like a bit bored"*, where she can struggle by being too much on her own and needing social interactions. Carlos (Portuguese) thought about loneliness as *"challenging"* and described it as difficult with the judgement of the glance of others: *"when you're travelling alone because you are alone, sat at the table and eating"*. It is two different ways for males and females to feel loneliness.

This factor is important for more than half of the participants to search out before planning a future solo trip. As a matter of fact, the data collection shows that thirteen participants out of fifteen see this risk as important and/ or primary. The two other participants that don't feel the same concern are both males, from 25 and 34 years old.

5.2.2 Theme 2: Health Conditions and Susceptibility

The Health Conditions theme is linked to participants that faced and participants that never faced any difficulties with medical situations during a solo travel before. An amount of nine individuals against the sixth others had already faced health challenges previously. Four categories of health issues were stated: small sicknesses, medical operation, physical injuries and mental health conditions. The most endured one was small sickness with six participants. The three other people had experienced the rest of the other health concerns.

For each of the participants, Health Conditions never stopped them from travelling to a destination. However, five out of fifteen individuals commented that it was a primary factor while looking at the location. Some respondents thought about it as an important factor to avoid “*harsh situations*” (Jade, French) and others are referring to the language barrier in the medical field while being abroad (Isabella, Italian). Six participants were referring to it as a secondary factor. They would search for medical institutes and insurance but it wouldn’t be an issue. As Aubrey (American) said, it is “*not always a primary factor*” but she just needs “*access to medical institutions*”. The last four participants stated it was not a risk factor to take into consideration. One was a male and the three other females. One of the female participants is doing self-medication while sick. Therefore, she doesn’t mind Health Conditions as an important factor, she’s curing herself (Hazel, Singaporean).

This component is noted as primary important for five out of fifteen solo travellers. Six other participants saw it as a secondary factor while the four last people didn’t identify this risk to be important at all. All gender and age individuals are mixed in these three assets, primary and secondary factor until not a considered factor anyhow.

5.2.3 Theme 3: Cultural Knowledge and Ignorance

The third psychological risk, Cultural Knowledge and Ignorance, has been categorised into two sections. The first one is about the lack of knowledge by solo travellers and the second one is the cultural aspect’s preparation by participants.

Data has shown in the conceptual map various specificities about the first section. Lack of cultural knowledge was mainly felt by all solo travellers. Only six participants didn’t go through this aspect, five females and one male. Into this section, the encountered reasons were: threats, language barrier, social or religious events, cultural shock with food and behaviour. Out of the nine participants that encountered lack of cultural knowledge, six of them mostly experienced cultural shock behaviour, two males and four females of 22, 27, 30, 32, 34 and 57 years old. The rest of respondents experienced other cultural ignorance aspects.

Then, for the cultural aspects’ preparation, six categories were made. Exchange with locals, online information, language barrier, word of mouth, art and no preparation at all. Word of

mouth and no preparation were equal in the results, with three and three participants doing the same. The most searched one was preparation online. In effect, seven out of fifteen individuals were looking for online information of the cultural aspects of the destination. Five of them were females and two others were males. They were aged 22, 23, 24 (twice), 25, 27 and 32 years old.

This factor was seen as very important by nine of the participants and the other six respondents classify it as a secondary factor. This means that none of the participants felt the factor wasn't important.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Individualism vs. Collectivism

To continue with theme 4, it was separated into two sections: balance between independence and collaboration, and differences between cultures' approach.

Firstly, four categories were created to organise a balance between independence and collaboration from solo travellers' perspective. The equal balance, as fifty independence and fifty social interactions; more independence than collaboration; no social interactions and no independence. Twelve participants out of fifteen considered Individualism vs. Collectivism as an equal balance. They need to balance having the exact amount of time doing alone activities and social interactions. The three others were divided in between the other categories. Yasmin (Iranian, 30 years old) is seeking more independence than collaboration while solo travelling. Celia (French, 23 years old) prefers not to have any social interactions, due to the fact she is more introverted. Besides, Alina (Polish, 24 years old) is only looking for social exchanges as she does *"desire meeting new people"*.

Afterwards, differences between cultures' approach determined nine subcategories in it: no differences between cultures' approach while doing solo travel; differences due to personal trait, personal background; Southern countries being more social, Northern countries being more independent, Europe as collectivist, Europe as independent, Australian country as more social, and US and Asian countries as more independent. The subcategories are regrouping both personal and ethnicity perspectives.

Five respondents out of fifteen perceived the different solo travellers' approach as a personal trait, four females and one male. Kamal (Indian) considers that travelling depends on each solo traveller because *"everyone has their own story and motivation for why they choose to do solo travel"*. To equal answers, three participants thought there was no difference and three others that Southern countries were more social in general. As stated by Jade (French), *"some cultures have the habit of regrouping [...] some Europeans, Spain, France or Italy"*. The other categories left were a count of one or two individuals that considered it. For example, only two participants thought that Northern countries were more independent and two also believed that US and Asian countries were more independent. The reason given is usually a matter of culture. The other contradictory parts of Europe being collectivist or independent is from two different

ways of thinking. Carlos (Portuguese) thought Europe was more collectivist because Europeans are “*known to be solo travellers*” therefore more independent. Rather than Aubrey (American) thinking Europe is more collectivist, because it is her home country that is independent.

All these insights show that solo travellers have different ways of thinking and can have various preconceived ideas. The most agreed comment about differences between cultural approaches is the personal trait. But, when it comes to balancing independence and social interactions, solo travellers do have the same habit.

5.2.5 Theme 5: Governance and Political Stability

Governance and Political Stability theme is organised in one section: the unstable political experience. Of the fifteen participants, only three already faced unstable political experiences. From strikes (Yasmin, Iranian), revolution, economic collapse (Hazel, Singaporean) and political tension in general (Pablo, Portuguese).

Even though just three people experienced this factor, twelve participants considered political stability was a primary risk to search before travelling. Two others feel that this is only a secondary factor to look at. Except one last participant that doesn't take into account this particularity. In point of fact, Hazel (Singaporean) that has experienced political revolution and economic collapse doesn't mind this risk factor.

In contrast, Miguel (Brazil) who lived in an unstable government all his life but never experienced political instability as a solo traveller, felt that it was a dangerous factor. He has a “*big resistance to going to countries that are politically challenging*”. Actually, he is very strict about it, “*if the political perspective of the country is not being open, I don't go*”.

This theme shows different perceptions including the importance of political risk in a destination. Most of the participants, males and females included, never faced any unstable political or governance issues and still, they are aware of the danger it can create. While others are brave enough to face the same issues without being afraid.

5.2.6 Theme 6: Considered Safety Infrastructure

Theme 6 is related to Safety Infrastructure while solo travelling. It is divided into two sections: individuals that already chose or avoided a location based on its perception of safety infrastructure and those who never chose or avoided the location.

In total, nine participants already avoided a destination based on their perception of its safety infrastructure. While the six others never did choose a destination based on this risk factor. Thence, a structure of four categories was arranged. To choose or avoid a location for: its accommodation, its public transports, the outskirts of big cities and its safety in general.

An amount of six participants experienced this risk for the safety of the destination in general. There were three males and three females. When looking for a solo travel destination, Aubrey (American) will choose areas recommended by solo travellers and “*specifically female solo travellers*”. For the remainder, one female already avoided a location for its accommodation (Marie). One other female for its public transports (Jade). The last participant, Isabella, had already chosen a destination for the safety of the outskirts of big cities, because it can be quite “*dangerous*”, especially when you are travelling alone. Of these nine respondents, six were females and three were males.

Among these individuals, eight out of fifteen recognised the aspect of Safety Infrastructure as a primary factor. There were five females and three males. As a fact, Carlos (Portuguese) stated “*if I don’t feel safe, then I am not going there alone*”. Moreover, Celia (French) is really concerned by her safety, “*as a female solo traveller my security comes above anything*”. Celia is not the only female solo traveller to feel this insecurity. In fact, Leyla (Azerbaijani) has the feeling that “*some countries can be really dangerous for women*”.

Plus, three participants saw it as a secondary factor, from one male to two females. Karl (German) is aware of the safety regarding areas, but doesn’t see it as a primary factor. Again, the four last respondents didn’t see this component as important. It was a count of one male and three females. In this, Pablo (Portuguese) doesn’t feel the need to be afraid of the Safety Infrastructure in a destination as it is more a “*part of the experience*” for him. Mia (Slovenian) will be “*more careful*” but won’t stop travelling in a destination for this risk factor only.

Lastly, of the eleven participants that considered Safety Infrastructure as a primary and secondary factor, seven were females and four were male individuals.

5.2.7 Theme 7: Overall risk perception

The final theme is related to perception of risks over time and experiences. Thus, this theme was divided into two sections. The first component is associated with solo travellers that felt a change in their perception of risks with time and experiences. The second one is about individuals that didn’t feel any change about their risks’ perception. The changing perception category was divided into seven subsections: awareness, consciousness, adaptability, confidence, independence, no more loneliness and mental reasons.

The most perceived one was awareness. Of fifteen participants, six of them did feel their change of perception through awareness. Jade (French) has more awareness “*of the danger*” now that she has been doing solo travel a few times. It is with experiences that she gains this knowledge. On the same thought, Marie (French) is being more “*selective*” nowadays because she’s aware of the danger over time within a changing era. The two previous female participants have acquired awareness in general to face any kind of risks. On the contrary, Miguel (Brazilian) is

more aware of one side of the risks. He stated that he was more aware particularly “*from the political aspects*”. Which correlates to his past, because he has mostly been triggered by governance instability in his home country, now he’s prudent.

Furthermore, the second overall perception was consciousness. In fact, five people out of fifteen relied on this aspect. This impression was made for different reasons. Kamal (Indian), thinks the consciousness came from the “*introduction of social media*” that has made a “*lot of changes in solo travel experiences*”. It can come from the idea that with the growth of social media there have been more visibility on destinations that can lead to consciousness through perception, with negative and positive outcomes. While for Alina (Polish) it is more throughout experiences that she learned consciousness. As a fact, the more she travels, the more she discovers “*what kind of things can possibly happen*” and be better prepared for new adventures. Plus, Isabella (Italian) said she was “*more conscious about the risks*”. Aubrey (American), as for herself, realised that “*things aren’t as risky or dangerous as people want you to believe*”, which means, sometimes, there’s misleading information related to risk perception that can scare individuals and make them think of negative preconceived ideas. Thus, in travelling, the solo traveller will create his own perception of risks and conclude if this is risky or not for him.

Subsequently, three participants identified their overall perception with the growth of confidence while travelling. For instance, Leyla (Azerbaijani), a young solo traveller, declared that before doing solo travel she had “*preconceived ideas*” and was “*scared of some factors*”. With the experience, she understands that sometimes a thought is not the reality and it can be harmless to go somewhere. Afterwards, she added that she gained “*confidence*” over time. Karl (German) had the same idea about risk perception. He shared that he got “*more comfortable travelling alone*” and with “*more confidence*” after doing solo travel repeatedly. Then, Hazel (Singaporean) continued with the idea of more “*trusting*” her “*gut*”. It’s the idea of trust between the solo traveller and his own perception of risks. This is a valuable example of growth related to solo travel.

Moreover, the other four subsections had only one participant per component. In effect, adaptability was perceived by Mia (Slovenian), where she declared “*we’re scared of the unknown*” but also intensified on the idea of “*adapting ourselves*”. No matter where she is, she will try to find a way of sorting out things in different environments. For Isabella (Italian), it is the aspect of independence that counts. With more alone travel experiences she gained independence because she knew she would be confronted with this element. Additionally, Carlos (Portuguese) was “*scared*” to be alone. Over time, he learned how to avoid this negative though and now he is delighted to make friends and socialise. Besides, Yasmin (Iranian) tackled the mental expression of solo travel perception. As solo travellers are alone, they are more vulnerable than anyone else and she insisted on this factor.

Lastly, only one participant didn’t perceive any change in his overall perception through time and experiences. In fact, Pablo (Portuguese) stated he didn’t have a “*good perception*” and

specified he preferred to focus on the destination itself and locals rather than preconceived impressions.

In the end, more than half of the participants, from any genders and ages, had the feeling that their perception changed over time and solo travel experiences. Similar risk perceptions were noted through the interviews.

5.3 Similarities

Significant similarities emerged between participants' initial perceptions of risks and solo travel experiences in this subset. Notwithstanding the wide range of separate experiences and destinations visited, the common experiences highlighted significant patterns in the way solo travellers view and handle risks.

Among the participants, there was a clear commonality: they had all encountered unforeseen challenges when travelling. Solo travellers, despite their age or gender, often encountered issues that pushed them beyond their usual comfort levels, that range from cultural shocks to logistical challenges. The majority of the respondents emphasised the importance of resilience as well as adaptation in addressing these challenges, underlining that even though these experiences were tough they had considerable effects on their confidence and personal development.

Particularly among females travelling alone, there was a greater awareness of safety risks. When choosing destinations, they consistently gave safety infrastructure and political stability the most importance. Frequently, their narratives encompassed comprehensive details on the safety precautions implemented and the perceived risks related to individual travel, particularly in locations recognized for political fluctuation or deficient safety facilities. This common emphasis on safety focuses awareness to a gender-specific method of evaluating and controlling risks when travelling alone.

On the other hand, younger individuals travelling alone demonstrated a less marked emphasis on cultural knowledge as a precautionary security measure. Older travellers frequently took the time to study about the subtle cultural differences in places they visited, whereas younger travellers were more likely to go on impromptu trips and rely on flexibility and learning while they went. The disparity in objectives and risk perceptions between age groups of solo travellers is shown by this gap in generations. To note that, even if some young solo travellers were looking for cultural information before the trip, most of them were mainly waiting to be at the destination to do any research.

Furthermore, loneliness emerged as a prevalent subject, with travellers of all genders reporting stresses about being alone. The ways in which they addressed this varied, though; many turned to local events or travel communities in search of social opportunities. Even while travelling

alone naturally entails times of isolation, the experience is frequently enhanced by the deep relationships that are formed during the journey, with locals and foreigners.

Finally, a recurrent issue was the significance of elements associated with health. Health-related issues did not prevent participants from travelling, but the accessibility of healthcare facilities and insurance choices was often mentioned as a key or secondary factor. The consistency of health-related worries suggests that people are generally aware of the risks and the importance of being well-prepared.

Overall, despite individual differences, solo travellers showed notable commonalities in their approaches to risk assessment and management. By highlighting the similar issues and universal aspects of risk management in solo travel, these shared characteristics give insightful information about the overall experiences of solo travellers.

5.4 Pattern recognition

The results of the thematic analysis demonstrated prominent patterns in how solo travellers perceived and dealt with risks while travelling. As an outcome, travellers' decisions and behaviours are formed by these patterns. They provide valuable insights into the way solo travellers handle the challenging environment of Psychological and Sociocultural risks.

Experience and Past Disruptive Situations come out to be one of the outstanding patterns among solo travellers. As a matter of fact, respondents persistently experienced unforeseen occurrences, involving unplanned events, insecurity and loneliness. Gender-specific risk perceptions were highlighted by the increased reporting of feelings of loneliness and unsafety among female solo travellers. Solo travellers have developed adaptive behaviours that are demonstrated by their recognition of such issues and their coping mechanisms, which include seeking out social connections and making plans for unexpected situations.

Another notable pattern was the presence of health concerns. Previous health problems affected the choice of destination, but they did not prevent solo travellers from starting new adventures. Health insurance and the availability of medical facilities were regularly mentioned by participants as essential considerations when making solo trip preparations. This pattern illustrates that individuals are commonly aware of the possible risks connected to certain medical conditions and are taking preventative actions to reduce those risks.

Regarding cultural preparedness and knowledge, the analysis illustrated a persistent pattern. In effect, different age groups of solo travellers showed varying levels of cultural awareness; older travellers, on average, took more time to learn about the customs of the destinations they visited than younger participants. Cultural shocks were frequently caused by a lack of cultural awareness, particularly when it came to local habits, food, and social standards. Thus, in order

to lower the possibility of cultural misinterpretation and improve the journey overall, this pattern emphasises the significance of cultural preparation.

One common pattern among solo travellers was finding a balance between social interactions and individualism. Majority of the respondents discussed independence and social connections as equal balance. To combine the exact same amount of time for both. Nevertheless, some participants preferred to rely on only one of each. Few individuals were exclusively seeking independence or, as a contrary, for social time. It demonstrates well the variation of options regarding these factors.

Moreover, Governance and Political Stability came out to be one of the essential elements for participants that gave importance to countries with steady political situations. It does represent the overspreading perception over this risk factor. Political Instability was seen as a substantial risk factor even by participants who had not personally experienced it. This pattern demonstrates the careful approach used to ensure personal safety and the increased awareness of political concerns among solo travellers.

Besides, Safety Infrastructure was seen as another pattern, as participants reported to avoid a solo travel destination due to unsafety. The consideration of proper accommodation, public transportation and safety of the cities' outskirts were brought to the interviews. It was mostly female solo travellers that insisted on the safety measures. It shows the importance of this factor in travel planning and as a collective perception from various solo travellers.

At last, the pattern of Overall risk perception over time and experiences was demonstrated as most of the participants felt the change while solo travelling. Components such as awareness, consciousness, confidence were shown to be related in travel risks organisation. The evolution indicated a shift in adaptation, independence and less loneliness feelings. The pattern of overall risk perception emphasises the dynamic of solo travel experiences along with how overcoming difficulties during travel contributes to personal growth.

The classified patterns in this subchapter contribute to the understanding of risk perception among solo travellers within their thorough experiences. Their findings provide light on the various ways that solo travellers handle and control the Psychological and Sociocultural risks that come with their travels, which will be useful for future projects and actual travel risk management applications.

6. Results and discussion

The qualitative analysis' results are presented in this chapter, along with a discussion of how they relate to the initial research assumptions. Every section of the analysis addresses one of the hypotheses, and it is organised around the key themes that were discovered during the data collection process. The objective is to offer an in-depth understanding of solo travellers' view and response to the various threats they may come across while travelling.

H1: Experience and Past Disruptive Situations risk

How do solo travellers perceive and react to experiencing negative situations in a destination?

The data collected in the analysis process present the theme 1 as common for solo travellers. The unsafety feeling, loneliness and unplanned events are part of these recurrent aspects. The way these encounters shaped their beliefs and actions is essential. Particularly female solo travellers that emphasised the safety factors. Many of the female participants cover the vulnerability by doing solo travel. Which was not encountered for male solo travellers. Another common problem among travellers was loneliness, where they indicated the need for social connections to help them manage this perception. It's interesting to understand that for many participants, confronting themselves and achieving their goals of personal growth and enhanced travel experiences meant moving outside of their comfort zone.

The results provide data in support of H1, showing that solo travellers are acutely aware of unfavourable circumstances and respond accordingly. In order to prevent any disruptions, their responses include being more cautious, attempting to socialise, and doing extensive pre-trip preparations. In contrast, some studies by Perpiña et al. (2017) stipulated that experienced solo travellers were perceiving less risks rather than new solo travellers. The significance of providing specific tools and support for female solo travellers is further highlighted by the gender variations in perceived safety challenges. This is shown within Reicher et al. (2007) study where it stated that female travellers have a higher perception than males in previous disruptive situations.

H2: Health Condition and Susceptibility risk

What are the health-related considerations and the role of insurance in the decision-making process of solo travellers when choosing a destination?

The Health Conditions factor has evolved into an important concern for solo travellers. Access to healthcare facilities and insurance coverage were cited by participants as essential considerations when selecting their destinations. Health issues impacted the stages of planning and preparation but did not prevent them from travelling. The prevalence of small sicknesses and the experiences of some travellers with deeper medical conditions highlight the need for health insurance and easily accessible medical information.

Data supports H2, which indicates that solo travellers' travel plans heavily factor in health issues. According to Bianchi (2016), solo travellers in general are more tempted to worry regarding health concerns when they're travelling. Plus, study of Valaja (2018) supported Bianchi's point while insisting on the fact that healthcare was significant in individuals' stories. As a result of a proactive approach to risk management, insurance and access to healthcare become a priority. This emphasises the necessity for comprehensive packages that cater to the special requirements of solo travellers, as provided by travel insurance carriers.

H3: Cultural Knowledge and Ignorance risk

How important is cultural knowledge to young solo travellers when selecting a solo travel destination?

Most respondents, particularly the younger generation of travellers who were constantly seeking out information about their locations, thought that cultural understanding was quite significant. Ignorance of culture frequently resulted in problems like miscommunication and cultural shock. To culturally prepare themselves, participants consulted a variety of sources, such as online resources and suggestions from fellow travellers. There remains a difference in the significance assigned to cultural understanding as not all travellers prepared extensively for their journey.

The results somewhat corroborate hypothesis 3, indicating that although many young people travelling alone value cultural understanding, not every individual gives it the highest priority. As shown in Radojevic, Stanisic & Stanic (2015) study, individuals are more interested in amenities such as Wi-Fi and location than cultural awareness. On the other hand, some studies emphasise the idea of cultural knowledge as a crucial role to develop risk perception (Lupton, 1999). The positive effects of rigorous cultural preparation can be seen in the fact that individuals who prioritise cultural awareness typically have more enjoyable travel experiences with less disruptions.

H4: Individualism vs. Collectivism risk

How do solo travellers perceive the social aspects of their travels?

Based on the data, a pattern emerged regarding solo travellers who maintained a balance between autonomy and social connections. Several travellers intentionally looked out relations to improve their experience, while others relished their independence and alone time. Personal characteristics and previous travel experiences impacted this equilibrium. Participating in social events made travellers feel less isolated and more a part of the communities they were visiting.

The results support H4, indicating that solo travellers value social connections as much as independence. A satisfying travel experience requires the capacity to find a balance between these factors. Many researches indicate the feeling of wanting to interact with others while doing solo travel locals (Bianchi, 2016; Laesser et al., 2009; Osman et al., 2019). In order to

accommodate the many interests of solo travellers, this understanding implies that travel agencies and communities should provide opportunities for both social interactions and isolation. However, other perceptions show different types of motivations for solo travel. In fact, some individuals prefer to travel alone due to lack of common interests with other travellers (Ganguly, 2018).

H5: Governance and Political Stability risk

How does the experience of political and governance instability influence solo travellers' willingness to visit politically unsteady countries?

The Governance and Political Stability theme did raise important consideration throughout participants. Most of them choose to avoid countries where political instability is strong. Solo travellers that have encountered political disturbances are even more prudent and reject the idea of visiting similar destinations. On the contrary, less individuals thought about this risk as an important element of the journey and were not affected that much about it.

The results support hypothesis 5, which states that one of the main considerations when choosing a destination for solo travellers is political instability. Valaja's paper (2018) implies that travellers are mainly influenced by political issues. Travellers require up-to-date information and travel advisories to assist them make informed decisions, as seen by the increased knowledge of and avoidance of politically problematic destinations. Political unsteadiness can lead to discouragement of visiting a destination (Gartner & Shen, 1992).

H6: Considered Safety Infrastructure risk

How do female solo travellers' perceptions of safety-related risks vary from male solo travellers' ones?

Significantly more than male travellers, female solo travellers prioritised the Safety Infrastructure theme. In their travel planning, women often mentioned the importance of secure surroundings, dependable public transports, and safe housing. Though not to the same extent, male participants were similarly concerned about safety.

The statistics effectively show that there are gender disparities in safety perceptions, supporting H6. The increased awareness of safety issues among female travellers highlights the need for specific safety measures and information to assist them. Study by Mehmetoglu (2003) insists that safety infrastructure is a key factor to take into account by solo travellers. In fact, travellers are more likely to change destinations and avoid the feeling of unsafe risk somewhere (Pizam & Fleischer, 2002; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009). In order to draw in and convince female solo travellers, travel agencies and lodging establishments must emphasise and make explicit safety elements.

H7: Risk perception between generations

How do risk perceptions differ from older and younger solo travellers?

Risk perception varied among generations, according to the analysis. Elderly travellers typically prioritised safety and health concerns and were more meticulous and cautious in their planning. Although they were aware of the risks, young participants were more inclined to encounter uncertainty and saw potential challenges as an exciting aspect of the travel. Travellers' preparation and response to different travel risks were influenced by this generational gap.

The results corroborate hypothesis 7, which states that older and younger solo travellers have very different risk assessments. Younger travellers tend to be more flexible and adventurous, in contrast to the more cautious attitude of older travellers. To note that some young travellers did have some change in their overall risk perception but they were less aware of risks in general in contrast to older travellers that were more vigilant. Given the disparity in age groups, it is essential that travel supplies and advice be customised to each age group's unique needs and interests. Moreover, there is a lack of data in the generational gap, as no relevant data was found in the Literature Review to support this hypothesis.

Most of the hypotheses are confirmed by the results and discussion chapter, which offers a thorough analysis of solo travellers' risk perceptions and behaviours. Results emphasised and considered factors such as health and safety aspects, cultural readiness and stability between individualism vs. collectivism. Travel experiences are also greatly influenced by differences in gender and generation. By creating resources and tailored support for solo travellers, these insights can improve their overall security and satisfaction on their travels.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate how certain Psychological and Sociocultural factors affect solo travellers' perceptions of risk. After a thorough thematic analysis of the qualitative data, a number of important insights appeared noticeable, revealing the diverse processes that shape the experiences and perspectives of solo travellers.

First of all, the research conducted assesses the factor of Experience and Past Disruptive Situations to have a significant impact on solo travellers' perceptions and reactions. The investigation brought attention to gender disparities, showing that female travellers' participants were more concerned about their safety than male travellers. Decisions about travel were heavily influenced by health factors as well, including insurance and availability of medical services.

The ability to navigate new environments and lessen culture shock was found to be enhanced by cultural awareness, which was found to be especially essential for younger travellers. Solo travellers value their time alone, but social interactions are important to reduce loneliness and

add travel experiences. The harmony between individualism and collectivism was identified through participants.

The majority of travellers avoided places they thought to be politically insecure, making political stability an important factor. The significance of current information and trustworthy travel advisories is highlighted by this study.

Thus, travellers' perceptions of safety varied significantly depending on gender, with females placing a higher priority on Safety Infrastructure than males. In addition, risk perceptions were also influenced by generational differences, with older travellers tending to be more cautious and younger travellers being more adventurous.

As a whole, the study demonstrates how different factors, including both Psychological and Sociocultural ones, influence how alone travellers perceive risk.

Despite offering insightful information, this study has several limitations. Due to the qualitative character of the study, the conclusions are based on a small sample size, which may not be entirely representative of all solo travellers. Furthermore, the utilisation of self-reported data raises the potential for bias, since individuals might have portrayed themselves in a way that was socially acceptable.

The study also mostly examined the experiences of young solo travellers, thus ignoring the viewpoints of more senior individuals who might have different risk perceptions and travel habits. Only four participants out of fifteen were over 30 years old, which shows the limit over lack of participants aged. Moreover, the study was conducted with more females' solo travellers than males. Which can lead to different outcomes that don't represent the solo traveller community. The exploratory research of this thesis is only on a small sample scale. Thus, the interpretation of the findings to a higher amount of the population, would have been a more effective data collection method.

Lastly, the data taken in the Literature Review chapter is lacking from recent studies. More research needs to be completed to have a better comprehension of solo travellers' case in more risk factors. Some data were more or less outdated.

The use of mixed methods approach could provide deeper understanding of the thesis research on solo travellers' risks perception. To address the previous limitations, a merge of qualitative and quantitative data analysis within a larger sample scale, with a more diverse and higher group of participants would be more accurate. It would help represent the solo travellers' community precisely. The idea of adjusting the qualitative hypotheses with the quantitative ones can help getting more insights during the analysis and results processes.

Plus, another research design as the longitudinal study could bring various data samples as well. Instead of the actual cross-sectional study, following participants over a longer period of time is another way to define risks' outcomes into solo travellers' journeys. The application of other tools for data analysis as Nvivo, Jamovi, etc. might bring more useful ways of sorting out the data in general. Only relying on the conceptual map to analyse data can lead to missing information, as it is a self-reported data collection method.

After the study, future research is a way to extend the previous data collected from this subject to increase knowledge in the recommended field. Two researches are presented ensuing this thesis investigation.

Subsequent investigations ought to go more into the disparities between genders in terms of risk assessment and safety-related actions when travelling alone. In comparison to their male companions, female travellers have distinct requirements and concerns that should be better understood in order to design resources and safety measures that are specifically tailored to them. A deeper comprehension of gendered travel experiences might be possible by examining how these inequalities materialise in various cultural contexts and environments.

On the other hand, investigating Psychological and Sociocultural positive risks is a relevant path for future study. As a tradition, risks are perceived as negative. However, if we go over the traditional way of perceiving risks as negative, there is a chance for positive risks assessments. It can be seen as opportunities for various reasons, such as personal growth, cultural enrichment, etc. Through a behaviour and cognitive approach, an experimental manner to perceived risks can be done. As a traveller, we will need to be more resilient about a crisis in a country and not wait for a country to calm down. It would be beneficial to both travellers and the travel industry to comprehend the elements that motivate travellers to take measured risks in the hopes of achieving favourable results.

To conclude, the Psychological and Sociocultural factors influencing solo travellers' perception of risk have been thoroughly examined in this thesis. The analysis demonstrates how Experiences and Past Disruptive Situations, Health Conditions and Susceptibility, Cultural Knowledge and Ignorance, Governance and Political Stability, Overall Perception and Generational disparities all play a significant role in the influence of solo travellers' view and reaction to risks. Future researches can expand upon these themes and patterns found in the analysis to get more insight from the limitations of this current study.

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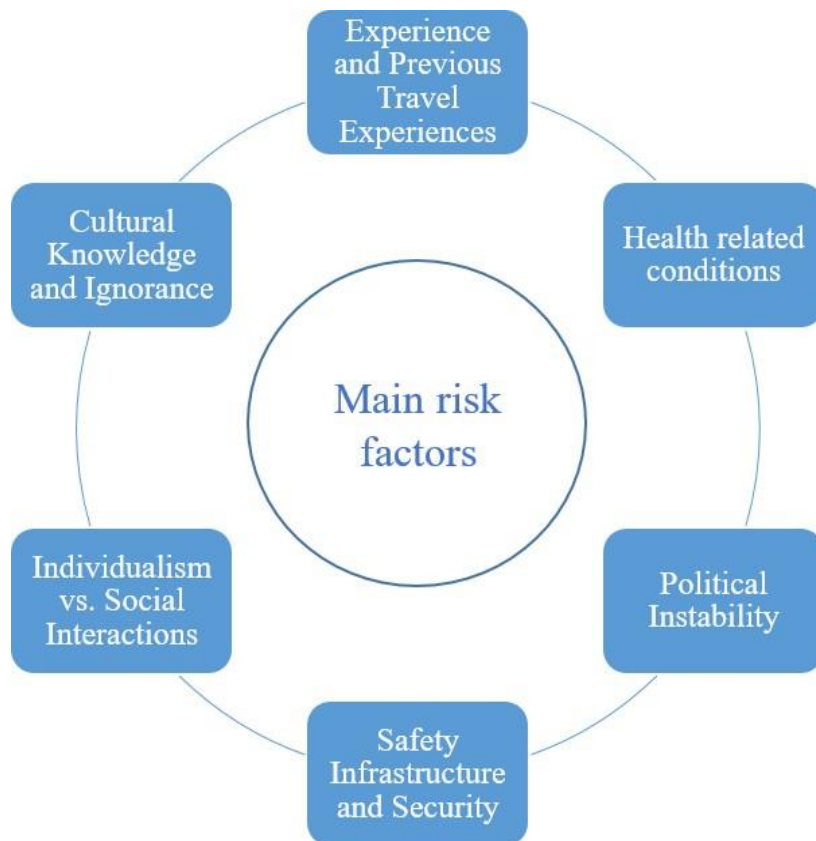
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Appendix

List of Figures

Figure 1. Main risk factors



Source: Own work

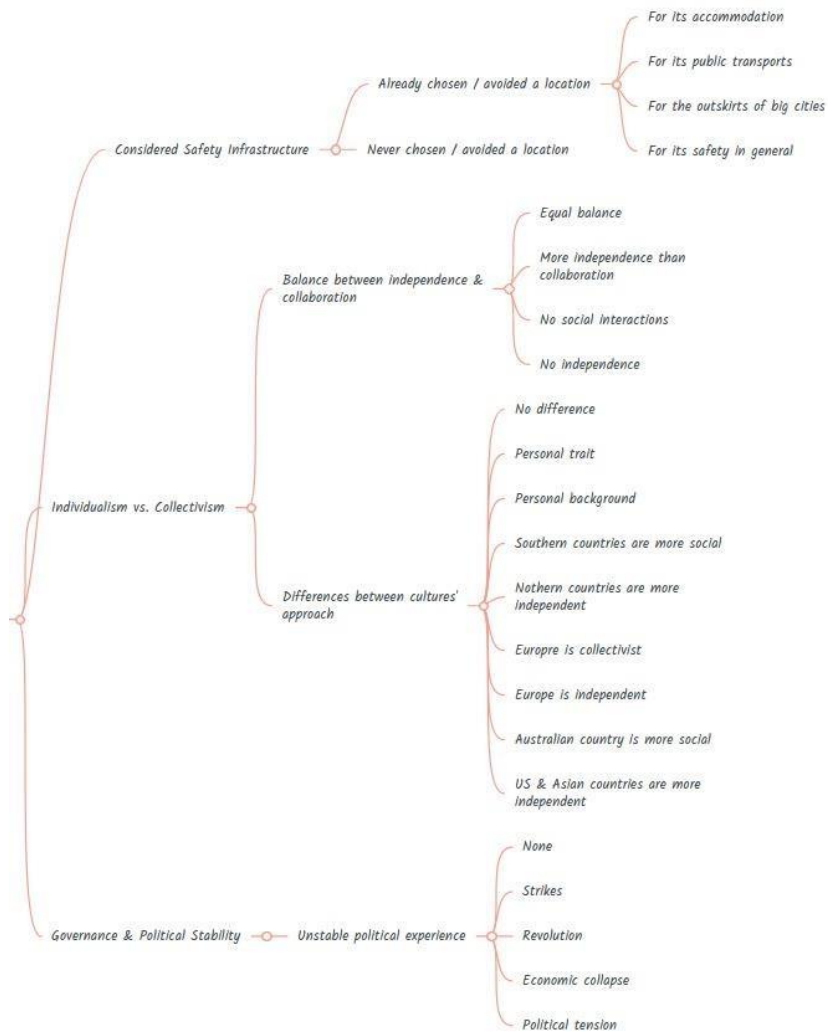
Figure 2. Thematic Framework: Solo travellers' perspective

Theme 1: Experience and Past Disruptive Situations • Previous disruptive situations: individuals that has been through challenging past experiences during their travel that can impact their future solo travel.
Theme 2: Health Conditions and Susceptibility • Faced health challenges: participants that were impacted by medical situations while solo travelling. • Never faced health challenges: people that didn't experienced any medical challenge while abroad.
Theme 3: Cultural Knowledge and Ignorance • Lack of cultural knowledge: an instance of deficit by the traveller regarding the culture of the destination that can lead to difficulties. • Cultural aspects' preparation: individuals using different measures before the travel, to be the readiest upon arrival, related to cultures.
Theme 4: Individualism vs. Collectivism • Balance between independence and collaboration: the need to balance the independence and the social interactions during a solo travel or only one extreme. • Differences between cultures' approach: the different nationalities or ethnicities approach when it comes to face solo travel.
Theme 5: Governance and Political Stability • Unstable political experience: a disruptive political and governmental event during the travel.
Theme 6: Considered Safety Infrastructure • Already chosen or avoided a destination: choosing or avoiding a destination only for its unsafety infrastructure. • Never chosen or avoided a destination: never felt the need to choose or avoid a destination for its unsafety infrastructure.
Theme 7: Overall risk perception • Perception over time and experiences: the older you get, the older you perceive risks differently; and the more experiences you get, the more your approach to solo travel will change.

Source: Own work

Figure 3. Conceptual map – Solo travellers' risk perception





Source: Own work

List of Tables

Table 1. Pre-testing interviews' participants

Name	Nationality	Age	Gender
Pablo	Portuguese	25	Male
Karl	German	24	Male
Marie	French	57	Female

Source: Own work

Table 2. Interviews' participants

Name	Nationality	Age	Gender
Jade	French	22	Female
Leyla	Azerbaijani	22	Female
Celia	French	23	Female
Karl	German	24	Male
Carlos	Portuguese	24	Male
Alina	Polish	24	Female
Pablo	Portuguese	25	Male
Isabella	Italian	25	Female
Mia	Slovenian	26	Female
Kamal	Indian	27	Male
Aubrey	American	28	Female
Yasmin	Iranian	30	Female
Hazel	Singaporean	32	Female
Miguel	Brazilian	34	Male
Marie	French	57	Female

Source: Own work

List of Appendices

A.1 Interview Questions

1. Introduction:

- Can you start by telling me a bit about your experience as a solo traveller?
- What motivates you to travel alone?

2. Psychological Risks:

2.1 Experience and Past Disruptive Situations:

- Can you share any past experiences or events during your solo travels that you found particularly challenging or disruptive?
- How do these past experiences influence your decision-making when planning future solo trips?

2.2 Health Condition and Susceptibility:

- How do you assess and manage health-related risks when travelling alone?
- Have you ever faced health challenges during solo travel, and how did you handle them?

2.3 Cultural Knowledge and Ignorance:

- How do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination before travelling alone?
- Can you share an instance where lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo travel experience?

3. Sociocultural Risks:

3.1 Individualism vs. Collectivism:

- How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?
- Have you noticed differences in the way solo travellers from various cultures approach independence and collaboration?

3.2 Governance and Political Stability:

- How much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there alone?
- Can you recall a situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience?

3.3 Considered Safety Infrastructure:

- What factors do you consider when evaluating the safety infrastructure of a destination for solo travel?
- Have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

4. Cross-cutting Questions:

4.1 Self-Perception of Risk:

- How would you describe your overall perception of risks when travelling alone?
- Do you think your perception of risks has changed over time or with more solo travel experiences?

4.2 Decision-Making Process:

- Could you walk me through your decision-making process when selecting a destination for solo travel?
- How do psychological and sociocultural factors play a role in your decision-making?

4.3 Information Seeking:

- Where do you typically seek information about the risks associated with solo travel?
- How important is online information, recommendations from others, or official travel advisories in shaping your perceptions?

A2. Interview Transcripts

A2.1 Interview 1

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as “Speaker 1”)

Name of the interviewee: Pablo (labeled as “Speaker 2”)

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 25 years old / Portuguese

Date of interview: 13/05/2024

Duration of interview: 08:34 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hello, my name is Emilie and I am currently writing my thesis about the selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception selected among solo travellers. Let’s start with the interview. Let’s start with the introduction. Can you start by telling me a little about your experience as a solo traveller?

Speaker 2: Yes, for sure. I had the opportunity to travel alone to New Caledonia for two years and also to Lisbon by myself for a week.

Speaker 1: Okay, that’s great. And what exactly motivates you to travel alone?

Speaker 2: What I really like to do when travelling alone is to go out on my own and discover different landscapes and take the opportunity to meet new people and learn about their culture.

Speaker 1: Okay, that’s great. Let’s start with the first risk factor, psychological risk. Can you share any experiences or events during your solo travels that you find particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: What I found particularly challenging was that during my last hike in New Caledonia, I was just recovering from a twisted ankle and I didn't inform myself correctly about the hiking distance. It was way more than I expected and I ended up disconnected, with no connection and without a means of communication.

Speaker 1: Oh, that must be really terrifying. And how did you end up? Maybe by finding the road again or just by being helped by someone?

Speaker 2: Luckily, I met the guide line...the... *[looking for his words]* the man who does the hike was passing by and I gently asked him to show me the good way to get back to my car. And he accompanied me to the end of the road.

Speaker 1: That's great, so you found some help in the end.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: And how have these past experiences influenced your decision-making in planning future solo trips?

Speaker 2: Now, when I plan my future solo trip, I always prepare myself with an application that works offline and by downloading the local map so I always have a connection and a way of finding the road.

Speaker 1: Oh, and what is the map exactly, the application?

Speaker 2: I use Maps.me, it's a very good application because you can download the local map.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's great. And now let's go to the health conditions and susceptibility. How do you assess and manage health related risks when travelling alone?

Speaker 2: It's not a primary factor for me to check. I just don't go in a place I don't feel right about to avoid any risks.

Speaker 1: Ok, and have you ever faced health challenges during your solo travel and how did you handle it?

Speaker 2: Not for now and I hope I will not in the future.

Speaker 1: I hope for you too. For the cultural knowledge and ignorance factor, here are the questions: how do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination before travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Since my last experience, I am always making sure that I exchange a little with the locals if I have the opportunity to do so. And I ask them to avoid any offensive behaviour.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's interesting. And, can you share with me an instance where a lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo travel experience, maybe?

Speaker 2: Yes, for sure. I was driving near a local area, a tribe in New Caledonia. And when I was passing by the local house, the locals stopped me by blocking the road. They threatened me that I should drive slower with my windows open to pay attention to them. What we have to do is say hello, be polite, drive slowly and be aware of the environment.

Speaker 1: Wow, that is really like a culture shock. So you must be really shocked at the end when they just let you go.

Speaker 2: They were really helpful and full of kindness. But what was complicated is that it was totally new for me. And it was totally unpredictable.

Speaker 1: Yeah, ok. For sociocultural risks, let's go with individualism and collectivism. How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I balanced them both. What I like when travelling alone is that I am not forced, but kind of, to exchange with locals or foreigners. These exchanges always end up really warmful and helpful.

Speaker 1: Yeah, great. And have you noticed differences in the way solo travellers from various cultures approach independence and collaboration?

Speaker 2: Not really. Most of them were really open minded and welcoming.

Speaker 1: Okay. Let's go for governance and political stability, for the factor. How much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there alone?

Speaker 2: If I heard about an unstable political climate I won't go to this area until I found a local person that can explain to me or help me and guide me without any risks.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's smart. Can you recall a situation where political stability or perhaps instability impacted your solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: For the unstable experience, once I needed to cancel a solo trip due to the political tension within a tribe in the New Caledonia, it was way too dangerous for me to go there and my life would have been safe there.

Speaker 1: Okay. And for the safety infrastructure, what factors do you consider when evaluating the safety infrastructure destination for solo travellers?

Speaker 2: The safety infrastructure doesn't influence my choices when planning my solo trip. They are more a part of the experience for me.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's a way to see... *[looking for her words]* of looking at it. Have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: Not really for now.

Speaker 1: Okay. Hum...Then let's go to the end of the interview. How would you describe your overall perception of risk when travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I'm really not good at that, but I don't see a lot of risks when travelling by myself. In general, I don't have a good perception and that's why I prefer to refer to local or friends or people on the networks that have the opportunity to do this experience before me.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's a way to perceive risk *[both laughing]*. Do you think your perception of risk has changed over time or with more solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: Not enough for now, I think.

Speaker 1: Okay. Could you walk me through your decision making process when selecting a destination for solo travel?

Speaker 2: The first thing I am looking for is a place to stay for the night if it's a trip during a few more days. I am making sure I have everything I need in my backpack. Like the essentials: food, drinks, clothes and electronic devices for safety.

Speaker 1: Oh, that's good. And how do psychological and sociocultural factors play a role in your decision making?

Speaker 2: Not all factors play a role in my decision before my solo trip as long as I think the decision is safe enough for me. But some as cultural knowledge, individualism and collectivism are more important to me.

Speaker 1: Okay. And where do you typically seek information about the risks associated with solo travel in general?

Speaker 2: In tourist offices, or social networks like a group on Facebook or WhatsApp.

Speaker 1: Okay. And how important is online information, recommendations from others or official travel advisories in shaping your perception?

Speaker 2: They are really important to me. I always liked getting feedback from previous travellers. Their experiences are important to be shared. They can help me to project myself in the future.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's great. So...Thank you for the interview and thank you for the time. Have a nice day!

Speaker 2: Thank you, you too!

Speaker 1: Thank you!

Speaker 1 and 2: Bye!

[End Transcript]

A2.2 Interview 2

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as "Speaker 1")

Name of the interviewee: Karl (labeled as "Speaker 2")

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 24 years old / German

Date of interview: 15/05/2024

Duration of interview: 14:58 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hello, my name is Emilie and I am actually doing a research thesis on the selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. So, I'm gonna start with the introduction. Can you tell us about your experience as a solo traveller?

Speaker 2: So, I've maybe solo travelled three times or something like that over the last few years. It's never really been a month of travelling. It's more like a week or something. And usually there was some sort of end goal. Me visiting someone, I travel by myself and stop by. I stop on the way, and generally in hostels. So yeah, it's roughly like two days or a week.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's still good for a solo travel experience. Even if it's a few days or a week, that's okay. What motivates you to travel alone exactly?

Speaker 2: Hum...*[thinking]* you are just a lot more flexible. This is the main part. When you're alone, it's also easier to fully experience a place, to meet people. I always checked where I stay by looking at the ratings, you know like on Hostelworld, you can see the social ratings. This is where you know where it's easy to meet people. This is where a lot of other solo travellers will be also. It's quite nice if you're in a city you've never been to and you just join people who are in the same situation and go around with them. I think that's the main motivation. And then, also when you haven't really planned exactly where you go, you might meet someone. They say they are going there tomorrow. And you join them. So like it develops from there, you don't have to check or plan everything.

Speaker 1: That's good. Also when you travel alone, it's when you meet a lot of people. Because you don't have someone to stick to it. Let's go to psychological risks. The first one is about experiences and past disruptive situations or events. Can you share any past experiences or events during your solo travels that you find particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: Hum... *[thinking]*... I don't know about disruptive, but sometimes it never goes as planned. I mean, if you expect that, it's not that fun. Sometimes you don't really know what to do. Because there's not as much happening as you thought. But then usually you just make an alternative plan. Like go around by yourself or do something else. In some cases, like I've been to Bosnia and then it was a bit difficult with the different currency. I didn't have Internet. But I knew that before as well. At some point, when you have Wi-Fi, you download the Google Maps so you have a save or something. I guess these are the main things. It's like being out of your comfort zone basically and not having these usual things that you sort of take for granted to fall back on. To check your phone, to know the currency, to judge how to get somewhere.

Speaker 1: Yeah. How do these past experiences influence your decision-making when planning future solo trips?

Speaker 2: Well, I definitely check more where I wanna stay to an extent. So I know what I can expect from there. Because also sometimes, well it's just practical questions. You need to know if they have towels at the hostel or something. So you know how to plan and to pack. For example, I was in Albania once and I didn't have the internet. I didn't think of that. But I sort of managed. And actually, for Bosnia, I thought I was going to do the same. My conclusion was like, it's fine I just need to be aware of that.

Speaker 1: That's also fine. Let's go to the health and conditions susceptibility. How did you assess and manage health related risks when travelling alone?

Speaker 2: What do you mean with health risks? Injuries or something?

Speaker 1: Maybe about injuries, medication or anything for example, when you go to a destination, if there are sanitary or health risks in that destination. Is it primary for you when you are looking for this? Or do you just go even if you know the conditions aren't really good in that country?

Speaker 2: It's never been an issue for me. It's never something I considered. But if I would go to South Asia, I would maybe consider it because there are certain vaccines that you need to get. But I have never travelled to countries where you have to get certain vaccines. I am aware that in some countries the health supplies are not as good as in other countries. But I always managed to find pharmacies if something happened. I try not to let it influence me.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's good. So you answered the second question. Let's go to the cultural knowledge and ignorance part. How do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination before travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I definitely prepare for it, but more indirectly. One of the reasons I am travelling is the cultural aspect. I want to see something of the destination and know what's going on. It depends. In some destinations, I actually look stuff out. For example, I look at the art or which destinations are interesting to see. I might even do some basic language preparation, just like Duo lingo. But for others, I try not to research too much on purpose. Especially destinations I already know things about. I try to go with the flow. I was in Rome once and I didn't want to go to museums because I have been to Rome before. So, I, on purpose didn't choose this option. I just went alone.

Speaker 1: Yes, it makes sense. Can you share maybe an instance where lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo travel experience? If you have any.

Speaker 2: Hum...[thinking]

Speaker 1: It can be about the locals, or maybe a situation where you weren't really aware of the cultural areas or places. If you don't have any, it's ok.

Speaker 2: I never had any conflicts. Sometimes you have to be aware of opening hours, places that can differentiate. I remember in Bosnia, I was not aware but it was obviously Ramadan so a lot of restaurants were closed. It was never a big issue. I guess usually there are infrastructural things that you don't consider. Like shops not open or something.

Speaker 1: That makes sense. So, you just need to be aware of it and do the research before in general. Now let's go to the third factor, the Sociocultural risk. Individualism and collectivism. The first question is: how do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Both are important. I definitely need to balance them somehow. When I'm somewhere, especially when I'm staying somewhere it's important to connect with others. Because we witness a place differently. But for actual travelling, I like to be very independent. Travelling by train or bus. I care about myself and then connect with people.

Speaker 1: Okay. Have you noticed any differences in the way solo travellers from various cultures approach independence and collaboration?

Speaker 2: I've noticed that people who come from further away are more into socialising with others. Like Australians that travel to Europe for a whole month or something. For them, they are living their lives. It's a different approach. Some people are just more open minded. I think Southern Europeans are more into socialising in general. But within Europe I would say that there are no big differences.

Speaker 1: Yeah, okay. Now let's go to governance and political stability. How much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there alone?

Speaker 2: It influences when it's actually unsafe. If there's a travel warning, that's definitely something I consider. If it's just a country with things like higher corruption, it's not really an imminent danger. It's not really important to me. But I do check. If I come across something on the news, it's definitely a factor.

Speaker 1: Okay. And maybe, if you have any, can you recall a situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: I do not think so. I don't think that happened.

Speaker 1: That's good actually, if you don't have any instability that impacts your solo travel experience *[both laughing]*. Okay. Let's go to the safety infrastructure. What factors do you consider when evaluating the safety infrastructure of a destination for solo travel?

Speaker 2: I don't know if it's a safety infrastructure, but what we've brought up already, how the places are considered safe or not. That's something I've never really checked the actual infrastructure or something like that. But you get a sort of an impression of a country that usually stays in the right direction.

Speaker 1: Ok, and maybe have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception about what is safe or not for the infrastructure?

Speaker 2: Not specifically, but when I am choosing a destination, generally, I think that also plays a role. It's not the only factor, but when you are choosing, it's not just the solo travel, but

maybe when you choose, in general, a summer vacation, your main reasons are is it nice there, what can I do there, but there is also always the consideration of how safe it is.

Speaker 1: Yes, it's normal.

Speaker 2: But I would say it's maybe the fourth or fifth thing in my mind, I don't know.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's fine. So now let's go to the end of the interview. And how would you describe your overall perception of risk when travelling alone?

Speaker 2: It's something that I definitely consider, but I try not to influence me too much. I'm actively telling myself, let's not be overly careful about things, and also go off the written path.

Speaker 1: And do you think your perception of risk has changed, maybe over time, or with more solo travel experiences that you have done?

Speaker 2: Well, you get more comfortable travelling alone, and you have more confidence doing these things alone, once you've done them, and you realise it's not that dangerous. So yes, in that sense, yes.

Speaker 1: Okay. And could you walk me through your decision-making process when selecting a destination for solo travel? Like, how do you do, the steps...?

Speaker 2: It's usually linked to something else. Like, I have a friend somewhere that I want to visit, and I sort of combine it with visiting something on the way, where I haven't been yet and which sort of interests me. That's the decision-making process for selecting the destination. It has not much to do with anything else.

Speaker 1: Okay. And how do psychological and sociocultural factors that we've seen, for example, play a role in your decision making?

Speaker 2: Psychological, maybe, in the sense that if I had a bad experience somewhere, that's obviously something that stays in your mind. Or if I've had good experiences, of course. And sociocultural, yes, in the sense that we brought up, socialising at the accommodation, how easy it is and how interesting the cultural aspects are.

Speaker 1: Okay. And where do you typically seek information about the risks associated with travel? Is it on the Internet or maybe with someone that you talk to?

Speaker 2: It's mainly on the Internet, if I look it up. If you look at any travel blog on a country, that's often already mentioned, and I might even have a link for travel advice. And I don't seek

information on risks with other people, but I talk to other people generally so it might come up and it can influence me.

Speaker 1: Okay. How important is online information, recommendations from others or something like that in shaping your perception?

Speaker 2: I would say it's very important because it's basically your only source when you're solo travelling, because you're not travelling with anyone or you don't know anyone there. So it's very important and I try to do it as much as possible.

Speaker 1: Okay. It is the end. Thank you for participating and, well, have a good day.

Speaker 2: Yeah, thanks.

[End Transcript]

A2.3 Interview 3

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as "Speaker 1")

Name of the interviewee: Marie (labeled as "Speaker 2")

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 57 years old / French

Date of interview: 17/05/2024

Duration of interview: 15:15 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hello, my name is Emilie and I am currently doing my master's thesis on the selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. You're here today because I want to interview you and I'm going to start with the introduction. Can you start by telling me a bit about your experience as a solo traveller, please?

Speaker 2: I travelled on my own, as an au pair, when I was 20 years old. It was quite an incentive to travel, I enjoyed it a lot.

Speaker 1: Did you solo travel other than when you were 20 years old, or was it the only first one?

Speaker 2: Yes, I did, I would say, 30 years later, something like that. For example, I wanted to have a better level in Spanish, so I was used to travelling in Spain, in Madrid.

Speaker 1: Okay. And what motivates you to travel alone? The second one was because you wanted to improve your English, and for the first one, at 20 years old?

Speaker 2: I wanted to have a fluent accent, because later on I became an English teacher.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's fine. So, let's move on with the psychological risks. The first factor is experience and past disruptive situations or events. Can you share any past experiences, or events during your solo travel, that you find particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: Well, I wanted to buy a jacket, a jeans jacket, when I was an au pair, and I went into a very dangerous area. But I didn't know it, and some English friends told me that I was... hum
[looking for her words] ...

Speaker 1: Crazy?

Speaker 2: Crazy to do so! [both laughing] That it was so dangerous. But that never happened to me, it never happened anything.

Speaker 1: Okay. Any other challenging experiences? Or that's the most dangerous thing you can remember?

Speaker 2: Yes, there is another one. It was in England, when I was an au pair. And there was a serial killer, not far from the house where I lived [laughing nervously]. And I had to take the train, and there were the woods, and it was at night, you know. It's frightening. Because at that time, you know, I was 20 years old. I wanted to have fun and go out with friends. It was a little dangerous, but it was fine.

Speaker 1: That makes sense. And how do these past experiences influence your decision-making when planning future solo trips?

Speaker 2: I would say that even though I'm getting older, I like to take a little bit of risk. So now it's going to be a little more measured. But I know there are always risks, and I understand that completely.

Speaker 1: Okay, that makes sense. So, let's go over the health and conditions susceptibility part. So how do you assess and manage health-related risks when travelling alone? For example, is it really important for you, for a destination, to have a high medical area, a lot of hospitals, or a very well developed health related situation?

Speaker 2: In fact, for health, there is health insurance. If there are big troubles, I will be taken in charge, I can go to a hospital. And That is what happened when I was an au pair, because I had to undergo an operation for my knees. Then I went back home afterwards, and it was fine as well.

Speaker 1: Okay, so maybe it's primary for you to look for a country where you have insurance, otherwise it will be complicated for you, that's right?

Speaker 2: Yes, but now, even I don't know... in Thailand, for example, you've got a lot of doctors. Maybe I won't go to Mongolia like that. But far away, yes it's possible.

Speaker 1: Okay. So, I was about to say, have you ever faced health challenges during a solo travel? Yes, you did when you were au pair before and you explained everything. Let's go to cultural knowledge and ignorance. How do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination before travelling alone? Is it something really important for you to look for the cultural aspects and the knowledge of the destination?

Speaker 2: Yes of course. For example, when I went to Brussels a few days ago, I could see the difference and make a parallel between art in France and art in Brussels.

Speaker 1: So it's really important to you when you go there. You like going to museums or cultural areas, to visit and everything.

Speaker 2: Yes, I do appreciate art.

Speaker 1: And, maybe, if you have any, can you share an instance where lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo travel experience? Where you didn't have enough knowledge about the cultural aspect of the destination and it was a problem, for example, with the locals or the lack of knowledge about something else.

Speaker 2: Yes! As well, when I was an au pair. It was the first time you know and in France you remove the skin of the potatoes but not in England, so they were really shocked. For example, with croissants and coffee, it's completely prohibitive in England. This is not an appropriate way to behave.

Speaker 1: So it's more a cultural shock about food or behaviour. Now let's go to sociocultural risks. Let's start with individualism and collectivism. How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Oh okay, it's not a problem in fact to be alone. For example, in Madrid, I took a car and then I visited another city. It was quite interesting because I met a person from another Spanish country and we talked the whole way around. It was fantastic. I knew the culture, how she lived, where she lived. She told me about her family and so on.

Speaker 1: So, you would say that for individualism and collectivism, when you're the most independent is when you meet a lot of people.

Speaker 2: Yes, just because you're alone doesn't mean you can't meet someone and make friends. In fact, you have a lot of possibilities. It depends on if you like meeting people, if you like discovering things.

Speaker 1: Have you noticed differences in the way solo travellers from various cultures approach independence and collaboration? For example, a nationality where people are friendlier than others, or a personality?

Speaker 2: For example, there are differences... *[looking for her words]* very often between a typical English person, I would say. When you know the person better, it's fine, but it's a little bit complicated at the beginning. But when you meet someone in Scotland, for example, in the street, he will talk to you, ask you how you are today, he is going to give you advice.

Speaker 1: So they are more friendly and less shy. Okay. Let's go to governance and political stability. How much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there alone?

Speaker 2: Before, I didn't used to be afraid of it. But now it's a little different because there are a lot of wars. They are not diplomats in some countries. It's really dangerous, I would say.

Speaker 1: Can you recall, maybe if you have any, a situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: No, I don't think I've ever considered this kind of situation.

Speaker 1: Let's go to considered safety infrastructure. What factors do you consider when evaluating the safety infrastructure of a destination for solo travel?

Speaker 2: For example, in England you have to choose your hotel. If you choose a 2-star hotel there are a lot of people who are addicted, it's dangerous. It's like in France.

Speaker 1: Okay, so the stars are maybe different to countries?

Speaker 2: Yes, a 2-star hotel is not good at all in England but it is fine in France.

Speaker 1: Okay. Have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: Yes, it happened with this hotel which was very cheap and in fact I didn't stay in it.

Speaker 1: And which country was it?

Speaker 2: It was in England. But you know, England can be as dangerous as another country far away.

Speaker 1: Okay. Let's go to the end of the interview. It is about self-perception of risk. How would you describe your overall perception of risk when travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Now, I would be a little more selective about my choices. It's not the same era now. It's a little more dangerous than before.

Speaker 1: Okay, so you may have changed your mind. My second question of this part is, do you think your perception of risk has changed over time or with more solo travel experiences as you said for the first question, right?

Speaker 2: Yes, I would say so.

Speaker 1: Okay. So, about the decision making process. Could you walk me through your decision making process when selecting a destination for solo travel? For example, step by step, how do you think about it, how do you plan? Do you book the hotel first, or are you looking for the activity first?

Speaker 2: In fact, I like to look on the internet and find information about its culture, the way people live, and the museum. And then I will find a hotel.

Speaker 1: Okay. And how do psychological and sociocultural factors play a role in your decision making? For example, the factors that you observed in this interview.

Speaker 2: I won't go to a country where there are riots or things like this because it is really dangerous, you can see that you've got NGOs...hum... *[thinking]* which are in some countries and who are killed as well, so it's not possible.

Speaker 1: So for you it would be, the most important and primary factors would be the government instability, right?

Speaker 2: Yes.

Speaker 1: Okay. Let's go about the information seeking. Where do you typically seek information about the risks associated with solo travel? It is on the internet...?

Speaker 2: Yes, it is on the internet and there is information on diplomacy. It is possible to know if it is really dangerous or not.

Speaker 1: Okay. How important is online information, recommendations from others or official travel advisories in shaping your perception?

Speaker 2: Not so much.

Speaker 1: Not so much? So you are just looking for information and then you make your own perception on it?

Speaker 2: Yes, because when I'm in the country, I meet people I discuss with them. They are human beings. That's just the way to communicate with them, which makes the difference.

Speaker 1: Okay, thank you. So perfect, that's the end of the interview. Thank you for accepting to do the interview.

Speaker 2: I was pleased to do so.

Speaker 1: Thank you, enjoy your day.

Speaker 2: Thank you, you too.

[End Transcript]

A2.4 Interview 4

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as "Speaker 1")

Name of the interviewee: Jade (labeled as "Speaker 2")

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 22 years old / French

Date of interview: 29/05/2024

Duration of interview: 20:44 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: So hello, my name is Emilie and I'm currently doing my master thesis on the selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. So you are here today for an interview. So I'm going to start with the introduction. Can you start by telling me your name, age and nationality please?

Speaker 2: Yes, so my name is Jade. I'm 22 years old and come from France.

Speaker 1: Okay, and what motivates you to solo travel?

Speaker 2: I think it was the desire to experience something new, something different because I think I travelled quite a lot in groups before and I just wanted to see if it would be enriching

for myself, if I would maybe explore new sides of myself, let's say. Yeah, see what would happen *[laughing]*.

Speaker 1: Okay, so let's start with the psychological risk. The first one is the experience and past disruptive events. Can you share maybe any past experiences or events during your solo travels that you found particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: Yeah, for sure. So I don't know if I already told you this story before, but when I was maybe 20 years old, I was in a semester abroad in Mexico and at the end of the semester we decided to travel. So first we were travelling all together. It was really fun and then I don't know really why, but I decided like oh let's have a little solo trip for the reason I told you before because I wanted to see, you know, what I could discover if I was by myself and if I would travel in a different way and blah blah blah. So I just went to a city by myself but unfortunately like there were some events where that was happening like I lost my credit card at this very moment.

Speaker 1: Oh no!

Speaker 2: It was very chaotic *[laughing]* I have to say because yeah like fortunately Mexico is a country where you can still pay quite a lot by cash but it's difficult when you don't have your credit card, you have a limited amount of cash left. So this was really stressful and also yeah because I had...I couldn't take a taxi so I had to find some other ways to get to the Airbnb we had and stuff like that. Like, one thing that was nice is my friends were actually a few days later joining me again, so I wasn't a full-on solo travelling for like two weeks but just like for I think five days or so and then I could meet my friends so they could help me with the money and stuff because at the moment I couldn't really. So yeah that was a little bit challenging and also except from this money thing like also taking the transportation alone and getting to the airport and stuff because you know in this type of country sometimes the information is a little bit like mixed up and you don't really understand what you have to do to get to the airport for example.

So for sure this was a bit of a challenge as well and then well as I was telling you just before we start this interview also maybe sometimes meeting some bad people let's say because when you are alone I would say for me I tend to be a bit more social let's say because I don't have my friends to rely on so I'm more in an open type of vibe *[laughing]* but maybe a bit too much in some case and then you don't have your usual you know barrier so this definitely is something I would maybe act in a different way in the future.

Speaker 1: Okay that's great. So have you ever faced health challenges during solo travel? If yes, how did you handle it?

Speaker 2: I don't think I had health challenges *[thinking]* no not really like maybe you know some back pains because I take Flixbus so much *[laughing]* so not really. After, in Mexico also

it was the Covid time so it was you know all of these things so I was not alone alone because there were still my friends but for sure like you know you're not in your own country and you don't have like your parents or some people that actually know maybe how to act so for this you need to also find a clinic and find how to do the test and stuff but except from that no.

Speaker 1: Okay and is it something that you consider health challenges when making future solo trips?

Speaker 2: Yeah for sure because I think you have to be ready to know a little bit how the system is working there and also for the insurance and stuff. I think it's really important to plan a little bit before because otherwise you can find yourself in a quite annoying situation.

Speaker 1: Okay and then how do you prepare for the cultural aspects of the destination before travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Yeah that's a good question. To be honest, I think I'm quite spontaneous as a person so I don't know if I prepared that much before. But once I'm there, I try to discover as much as I can of the culture I try to learn the language I think that's very nice and many times actually when I arrived on solo trips I realised I couldn't speak the language as good as I wish I would because, I think it directly creates like a bond with the local people, if you can you know try to speak a little. When I went to Italy for example, I thought I could speak a little bit but honestly it was impossible to speak with them with this rhythm of speaking and also the girl she thought at first that I was Italian because of my surname so she was just talking full on Italian to me and I was like *[laughing]* and I definitely regretted at this moment that I couldn't you know but I hadn't prepared in this aspect but yeah I like to discover on the spot I would say.

Speaker 1: Did you maybe encounter another aspect or experience as you said for the lack of language barrier? Do you maybe have another lack of cultural knowledge that affected other solo trips, or it's the only big experience?

Speaker 2: I would say sometimes there are a few things that you learn about the country during your trip and you thought oh maybe it's a bit disrespectful that I didn't know that before going there. But in another way, in most of the countries I went to, I felt like people were actually so happy to share this side of their culture or their country and that actually it was also a good experience for them to share this. And maybe if I would arrive very prepared knowing all this aspect already it would also take something away from this exchange.

Speaker 1: Okay makes sense. So now, let's move on to sociocultural risks. How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Oh yeah that's a hard question for sure *[both laughing]*. I think I just try to rely on my energy levels. Let's say if I feel like I'm very tired I'm gonna try to stay alone and recharge.

And if I feel like maybe I'm tired but because I didn't have enough social connection I'm gonna maybe try to go to some place where there are more people, where I could meet people and I really try to respect these energies. But for sure it's not easy because I feel like once you get to connect with people sometimes you're a bit like you know like dragged into this social.

Speaker 1: Yes, I see.

Speaker 2: Yeah and then when you have to say no it's a whole process to learn how to say no.

Speaker 1: Yeah it's difficult. So you need to find the right balance between both.

Speaker 2: Exactly and I would say really listen to yourself because even if it can maybe appear selfish for others that you want some time alone you will be a better person with others when you are with your good energy so I think it's important you know to respect this.

Speaker 1: Makes sense. Have you noticed differences in the way solo travellers from various cultures approach independence and collaboration?

Speaker 2: I'm not sure. I would say I think some cultures have the habit of regrouping I would say like if I think about it I would say maybe some European countries to be honest like Spain or France as well and maybe Italy, these kind of countries often when they see another person of their country they like to regroup quite fast. I would say maybe they are a bit afraid of independence sometimes but once again it really depends on the person because there are also some very independent people from these countries but yeah I would say maybe the group is more important from what I could see.

Speaker 1: So it's like more southern countries are more tempted to socialise directly or regroup as you said?

Speaker 2: I felt like this but I don't know if it's just my observation or not. But I felt a bit like it was faster to make a connection.

Speaker 1: Okay. How much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there?

Speaker 2: I think it has an influence, you have to think about it and then you have to prepare better I guess because you can't just go to this kind of situation where it's very tense like this right. But, I also feel like there is this thing of curiosity where you want to see far away countries even if the political situation is tense but there is a limit. I would say that for example I wouldn't travel to Afghanistan or whatever because that's too dangerous.

Speaker 1: Okay. And can you recall maybe a situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: Yeah, for example when I was in Mexico where I wanted to go I thought it was like Veracruz or something like this and then someone in the bus told me such a horrible story about there and I thought okay I'm not gonna go there. Of course there's a lot of tension with the drug traffic and stuff but once again like I feel like we don't really know if people are exaggerating but you don't want to push the thing too far yeah like that's right.

Speaker 1: Yeah so you must be careful. If someone told you it's maybe that there is a reason.

Speaker 2: Yeah exactly and it's local so you don't want to disobey.

Speaker 1: Exactly. Have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: Hum...[thinking] I don't know, maybe. Probably but I can't really remember what it was. Maybe some common transportations or things like that you know because sometimes you can see, it seems a bit sketchy. So this type of thing I would say is common transportation it's something sometimes I have avoided.

Speaker 1: Okay. So let's go to the end of the interview. Do you think your perception of risk has changed over time or with most solo travel experiences?

Speaker 2: Yes, I think so, definitely. I would say that when I was 20 I was really like yeah I'm going on an adventure like, nothing can happen to me but almost. And then I realised like oh I'm really being a bit like I couldn't feel the danger that much to be honest. Afterwards I got a bit more...How do I say that like...distance like I would try to think more ahead. I think that's also maybe becoming older and the trips that made me realise oh this time maybe I really put myself in a dangerous situation and I should have thought before.

Speaker 1: And do you think there are some essential or primary risks that you think of first like for example we talked about some psychological and sociocultural risk? Are you more aware or are you more careful about some risks than others?

Speaker 2: So some specific type of risk?

Speaker 1: Yeah, for example we talk about safety infrastructure. Is it important for you to look first before for example instability of government in a country or health related challenges or individualism, collectivism?

Speaker 2: Yeah I think one thing is like trying to look up the place and the transport if I can come back safely. How to travel in the transportation, Should I take a taxi, Should I take common transport or is it dangerous? These types of things are really important. Because when you are in a moving vehicle you don't really have control anymore. Of course when you're in the street it's also difficult if you get in a bad situation but I really feel like for me this is the thing I would check the most. Like, how to come back to my hotel or whatever in a safe way.

Speaker 1: Okay. And where do you typically seek information about the risk associated with solo travel? Is it online information, recommendation from others?

Speaker 2: I think you know you have this service online for a French website. It's like...what it is called. I don't remember the name of the website but you can put any countries and you have recommendations for what you should do.

Speaker 1: Oh, that's really interesting.

Speaker 2: Yeah, like I checked this before, honestly it's a little bit scary when you go on it and you look at it because it seems like you're gonna get all the worst things in the world. But in another way like that you are aware of the risk and you also have to register on something called "le fil d'aria" I don't know if you know it. Like that they know you are abroad and for how long and stuff so you know it can help in case something bad happens. Then, I would say I researched a little bit online but not too much because I think it's very contrasted online but I also asked you know some people that maybe went there already or are from there or once I was there I talked with a lot of people to see. I think this is the most important.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's great and interesting for the website you told me about. So, thank you for your time, that's the end of the interview. Enjoy your day.

Speaker 2: Well, thank you.

[End Transcript]

A2.5 Interview 5

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as "Speaker 1")

Name of the interviewee: Isabella (labeled as "Speaker 2")

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 25 years old / Italian

Date of interview: 29/05/2024

Duration of interview: 12:45 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: So hello, my name is Emilie and I'm currently doing my master thesis on selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. So let's start with the interview. Can you start by telling me your name, age and nationality please?

Speaker 2: I'm Isabella, 25, and I'm Italian.

Speaker 1: Okay, and what motivates you to solo travel?

Speaker 2: I think the main motivation I experienced also through the years is that I'm doing it to seek a bit more independence, so it's a bit also a matter of personal growth. But also to try and meet new people because I've learned that, well, it's always nice actually to get to know different people, different experiences, different motivations also, and also sometimes meeting new people while travelling also helps you find out different things about the destination that maybe you didn't consider before. So, I don't know, places that are not that touristic or like, I don't know, places that people already see that can recommend you. So maybe that's also one of the reasons, and maybe in a small percentage is that also the more we grow, I realise the less, the more difficult it is to find common time to go on holiday with your friends.

Speaker 1: That's true.

Speaker 2: That could also be like a point.

Speaker 1: Yeah, so let's start with the psychological risk. Can you share any past experiences or events during your solo travel that you found particularly challenging or disruptive, if you have any?

Speaker 2: I think maybe at the beginning what worried me the most was being scared of being alone, like a bit bored because, you know, I would maybe struggle to find people to talk with or to find activities to do. So maybe the worry of being too much alone, that could be from the psychological side, but also being alone in a city I didn't know. So I think at some point you can read everything about a destination, but it's not until you're there that you can actually assess if this is true. I think most of those experiences are also really personal, so maybe what can be felt as perceived as safe for one girl cannot be said for another person. So maybe that was more about, yeah, being alone and safety reasons, because, you know, like being a girl is always a bit more challenging. So that could be mostly the main risk, I would say.

Speaker 1: Thank you. Have you ever faced any health challenges during your solo travel? If yes, how did you handle it?

Speaker 2: To be honest, not a serious one. Maybe the only one I had was, I basically had to take a plane back to Italy and I was feeling sick during the night, so I was in between like flying or not. And I remember I was young, I was just 18, so it was also one of my first flights alone

and I basically ended up being at the... *[looking for her words]* how do you say...the emergencies at the airport. And yeah, the doctor was actually really nice because he suggested to me, like, he tried to reassure me that everything would be fine. He gave me some pills and stuff for the sickness and everything was fine at the end. Maybe that was the best, and also to be honest, it's not that I've travelled that far from home, so there weren't that many risks.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: But maybe this one was the only one, yeah.

Speaker 1: Okay. And maybe do you consider health conditions really important to planning future solo trips or it's not important?

Speaker 2: I think, to be honest, yes, I think it would be one of the main concerns, especially if you're thinking about going somewhere out of Europe where, you know, you need the specific insurances or maybe places where you don't speak the language or are struggling to communicate. So, I think you should always consider that this can happen. It's quite important.

Speaker 1: That's true.

Speaker 2: Because, yeah, if something happens and you cannot deal with that anymore, it's, yeah...

Speaker 1: Yeah, makes sense. And how do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination before travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Well, I think, again, I've never travelled that far, so most of us, most of the travel I had alone was more related to cultures that are similar in a way to the one I live in, so there's not much difference. But what I do normally is, well, I will look for information normally online or like, you know, blogs, forums or also sometimes TikTok is useful to see because you see people actually doing things like some blogs. So, to have a base of what to expect when you're there. And also, it happens to be this app that is called Hostelworld. So, when you normally book through Hostelworld, there's also some chats that put you in contact with people there and that's also useful to understand what you could be, you could do in the place or like if you can meet other people. And, yeah, I think that's mostly what we do, I would say.

Speaker 1: Okay, yeah, that's great. And maybe if you have any, can you share an event where lack of cultural knowledge has affected your solo trip experience?

Speaker 2: I cannot find a proper example to be honest because, again, I didn't see, I didn't travel to any place that could be that different.

Speaker 1: So, let's move on to the second section, sociocultural risk. So, how do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling?

Speaker 2: I think what I did also in my last travel, it was close. So, I went to Copenhagen but I was alone in a hostel for like four days and at the beginning I was like, okay, I need, you know, to talk to someone. I won't go one day without talking to anyone. So, I tried to make friends, to meet people but then I realised after like the day after I was so tired already and I needed some time on my own. So, what I ended up doing, it was like maybe, you know, try to get some times during the day where you do yourself, where you do your things you plan to do.

Speaker 1: Yeah, of course.

Speaker 2: For example, I don't know, I had some things on the list that I wanted to visit so I just went doing that but then maybe in the evening I met up with other people again. So, I think, yeah, it's a matter of balancing and also in a way just reinforcing what you want to do. For example, I don't know, I was like, some people wanted to go to one place and I didn't want to go because I visited something else. So, I was like, well, being together is fine but I'm also eager to do what I wanted to do. So, in a way you can, there's a limit where you can say, well, I will do this on my own still and I think it's important anyway to have some time on your own.

Speaker 1: Yeah and have you noticed differences in the way solo travellers from various cultures approach independence and collaboration?

Speaker 2: I think I've noticed that, for example, I don't remember the nationality so I wouldn't say but I met many people that were, despite being younger than me, they were so much more used to travel alone, so much organised, they were like, in a way, more ready to face also some uncertainties that I wasn't. So, I think it was also maybe from more northern countries, like northern Europe and I think it's also one fair point in a way because I've known that like southern Europe is more, less independent in a way. They became independent later compared to the northern countries, so maybe that could be a point.

Speaker 1: Okay, yeah. And how much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there?

Speaker 2: I didn't have any case in which I said I don't want to travel, maybe because, again, I didn't take those much further away from my country travel, but I would say that's an important factor to consider, especially when a girl and when travelling alone, if you can get informed about also the political situation to avoid, I don't know, specific conflicts. Yeah, I think it's an important aspect to consider, obviously.

Speaker 1: And have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: I would say so, maybe not that big of a deal problem, let's say, but more about how big the city was. So, I don't know, when I've been to Barcelona, for example, I tried not to be alone, because I knew that the outskirts of the city were quite more dangerous. So, while I don't know, there are other cities in Spain that have been considered more safe in a way and being smaller, then it was easy to move. To be honest, it depends. Also, for example, Madrid, I felt it was safer than Barcelona. And I think it also depends on how the cities are judged to be safe. But mostly, this was the thing I avoided, like when there are too many big cities that are considered to be not that safe for girls alone.

Speaker 1: Okay, so let's move on to the end of the interview now about self-perception. Do you think your perception of risks have changed over time or with more solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: I think so, definitely. I think, again, what I mentioned before, it's also a matter of growing. For me, the decision to do solo travels, I was like, okay, I'm gonna test the improvement I made on myself. So, maybe when I was younger, I was more scared, not only maybe not meeting people or not feeling safe, but also not enjoying it at the same time, because I was used to travelling with more people, maybe. And now, apart from the fact that I feel more independent and more conscious about the risk sometimes, maybe when you're younger, you don't think about it that much. You're like, okay, just go to this party, let's go here. Now, there are things that you consider more. So, I would say you definitely improved, yeah.

Speaker 1: Okay. And how do psychological and sociocultural factors play a role in your decision making?

Speaker 2: Well, I would think they are both one of the main factors that one should consider before travelling alone. I think they are equally important, I would say, because apart from actually feeling safe in one place and avoiding situations in which you could be in danger, it's also fair that one person is at ease with his mind, you know, psychologically. So, I would say it's, yeah.

Speaker 1: And where do you typically seek information about the risks associated with solo travel? Is it online or recommendations from others?

Speaker 2: I think it's both. Mainly, maybe what I would normally do is researching first online and then see if I have any recommendations from friends already and try to combine the two to see, like, again what I said before, sometimes it's also really subjective. So, the more you try to research, the more maybe you will have real information on it. So, it makes sense. Mostly both, but we'll say more online.

Speaker 1: Okay. So, thank you for your time. That's the end. Enjoy your day. Thank you.

Speaker 2: Thank you.

[End Transcript]

A2.6 Interview 6

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as “Speaker 1”)

Name of the interviewee: Carlos (labeled as “Speaker 2”)

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 24 years old / Portuguese

Date of interview: 29/05/2024

Duration of interview: 10:08 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hello, my name is Emilie and I’m currently doing my thesis on the selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. So let’s start with the interview. Can you start by telling me your name, age and nationality, please?

Speaker 2: Okay, hi, my name is Carlos. I am 24 and I am Portuguese.

Speaker 1: Okay, great. And what motivates you to solo travel?

Speaker 2: My motivations are just the fact that I can be alone, I can schedule my own agenda during my vacation, my day off and yeah, the peace and quiet, I would say.

Speaker 1: Yeah, okay. So let’s start with the first factors, the psychological risks. Can you share maybe any past experiences or events during your solo travels that you found particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: Yes, I think it was when, you know, the lunchtime, I mean, all like the food situation, it could be a bit challenging when you’re travelling alone because you are alone, sat at the table and eating and like everyone else is with like family, friends and they’re all like, like staring at you. But after a day or two, you’re just getting used to it and I think it’s pretty nice because you’re entering your own company.

Speaker 1: Okay. So, will it be more difficult for you to get used to loneliness at first, because it’s not usual?

Speaker 2: Yes, that’s true.

Speaker 1: Okay. And have you ever faced health challenges during solo travel? If yes, how did you handle it?

Speaker 2: Not so far. No, I didn't have any health challenges during my solo travel.

Speaker 1: Is it, for example, the primary factor that you are looking for when you are solo, when you are planning a solo trip?

Speaker 2: Sorry, are you talking about if, sorry, I don't get it.

Speaker 1: Yeah, for health challenges, is it a primary factor for you when you are looking for solo trips? Or you don't care about the destination if it's not a really well developed health condition?

Speaker 2: Ah, okay. Honestly, I would say 50-50. I will have a look at it just to check how the health is in the country I'm travelling to. But it's not like a main priority, I would say.

Speaker 1: Okay. And how do you prepare for the cultural aspect of a destination before travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I will say that I will actually Google the destination. I will try to read articles, watch maybe documentaries, videos, and also ask around. Maybe, you know, I know someone went there alone or with friends, so I can have feedback. And I don't know if you know, but "Routard" sometimes, I could like, you know, buy the book.

Speaker 1: Okay. Can you share maybe if you have one, an instance where lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: Let me think. No, I didn't have any like... No, that never happened so far.

Speaker 1: No? That's great at the end *[both laughing]*. So let's move on to the sociocultural risks. How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I would say the balance will be, for example, doing activities with other people. Even though you're alone, you can meet different people, maybe make friends or get along during a ride or an activity. And that's the balance because you have like half of the day alone so you can do whatever you want. And the other half doing activities or some sport or trekking in the jungle, I don't know, with other people so you can have connections with like people.

Speaker 1: Yeah, that's great. And have you noticed differences in the way solo travellers from different cultures approach independence and collaboration?

Speaker 2: Yes, for example, I don't know, like the European community, I would say they're well known to be like travellers, like solo travellers. So you can meet like a solo traveller and

they're really completely fine with it and they can, you know, share a bed in the hostel or they're sleeping in the van, whatever. But when it's talking about, I don't know, maybe Asian countries, it's a bit more, they're a bit more careful because they're really far away from their home and we don't grow the same way as European and Asian countries. So they will, I would say like they're more like about security, checking everything is in order and they will maybe go more like a hotel, Airbnb than hostel.

Speaker 1: Makes sense, yeah. And how much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there?

Speaker 2: That's the same about health. I will check it just to make sure everything is alright and there is no war going on or if I'm Portuguese, I can travel there. If something happens to me, there is a consulate nearby. But once again, I would say 50-50. It's not like the main priority.

Speaker 1: Okay. And can you recall, maybe if you have any, a situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: Not so far and I hope it will never happen *[laughing]*.

Speaker 1: I hope too for you. Have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: Yes, definitely. I know it's kind of bad to say it, but yes, like when I'm checking the location or what's going on in the country, then if it's not, I don't know, if I don't feel safe, then I'm not going there alone. I'd rather go with friends or family than going by myself.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Okay. So let's go to the end of the interview about self-perception of risk. Do you think your perception of risks have changed over time or with more solo travel experiences?

Speaker 2: Yes, definitely. I think before going on my first solo trip, I was really scared and I was like, I'm going alone. I don't know if something happened to me or what I'm going to do during the day, I'm going to make friends? And now I did, I'm just going to like, you know, it's life, you're going to meet people, you're going to enjoy your time by yourself. So yeah, the perceptions change.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Okay. And could you walk me through your decision making process when selecting a destination for solo travel, like step-by-step, what do you think, what do you do first?

Speaker 2: I think the first thing I'm doing is checking the plane ticket, the price, let's be honest.

Speaker 1: Yeah [both laughing].

Speaker 2: To see where I can go, we're all like, do not go over my budget. And when I'm on the destination, I'm going to check the culture, the health, the safety, what I can do there, and activities. And yes, and after, I will use my social media to look at videos and pictures of what's going on inside the country, where I can go for the sunset, to have lunch, to do, I don't know, an activity. So yes.

Speaker 1: Okay. And how do psychological and sociocultural factors that we have seen play a role in your decision making?

Speaker 2: Well, as I, I don't know, for example, if I'm looking to go to, let's say, Jamaica, as I've never been, I will read articles, I will watch documentaries, and I'm going to try to see what's going on. And I'm going to try to not go, I don't know, with bad thoughts or having a cliché in my mind and giving it a try.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's fine. So maybe the further the destination is, the more you are looking for information about all the risks around it?

Speaker 2: Yes. Yeah, definitely.

Speaker 1: Okay. And where do you typically seek information about the risks associated with solo travellers? You said about social networks, but are you looking on the internet also, like official advisories or offices?

Speaker 2: Yeah, yes, yes. I will use the Portuguese like government safety, and I'm going to, you know, you have the same in France, the consulate, and you can check like through your country and where you're going as like a Portuguese citizen, what's going on, and what's the risk if there's a high level, middle level, low level. And also the, like there you have many information because you have like, for example, political issue, but also health, as the COVID like happened three years back, you know, you have still to check if everything is alright, and also if you need like vaccination and stuff. So yeah, I will say like, for the risk, like really risk, I will use like the government website.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's good. That's a good idea. Okay, so that's the end of the interview. Thank you for participating and enjoy your day.

Speaker 2: Thank you, you too.

[End Transcript]

A2.7 Interview 7

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as “Speaker 1”)

Name of the interviewee: Mia (labeled as “Speaker 2”)

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 26 years old / Slovenian

Date of interview: 29/05/2024

Duration of interview: 09:01 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hello, my name is Emilie and I’m currently doing my master thesis on the selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. So you are here today for an interview. Can you start by telling me your name, age and nationality please?

Speaker 2: Yes, hi my name is Mia, I’m 26 years old and I come from Slovenia.

Speaker 1: Great, what motivates you to solo travel?

Speaker 2: Well, my first reason why I started solo travelling was because nobody that I wanted to travel with had time and I just didn’t want to wait for them anymore.

Speaker 1: Okay. So let’s start with the psychological risks first. Can you share any past experiences or events during your solo travels that you found particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: I think a big challenge during my travel was how I was perceived as a woman. I noticed that when I was in Egypt and when I was in Colombia, Mexico, it made me feel really uncomfortable, maybe more unsafe than if I were a man.

Speaker 1: Yeah, okay. And have you ever faced any health challenges during your solo travel? If yes, how did you handle them?

Speaker 2: I faced two bigger challenges. One of them was when I got COVID in Colombia. At that time, I just went to the hospital, I got tested and they didn’t really do anything so I just went to my hostel and waited it out. And the second one was again when I was in Egypt, I got food poisoning and it was pretty bad. But again, I just threw up and let it pass.

Speaker 1: Oh my god. Did you have any medication for food poisoning or you just let it pass directly?

Speaker 2: No. Well, my friends called a doctor because I had insurance and they said that they can send a doctor to pick me up and maybe give me some medicine but to be honest, I was

really sick. I didn't even feel like standing up so I just said no thank you and continued my way in the past.

Speaker 1: Oh my god. Okay, and how do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination before travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I think just by talking to people that know about the destination, maybe they've been there before or I don't know, I can make a review of that destination or yeah, log.

Speaker 1: Okay, and can you share if you have any instance where lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: By now, not really.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's great then. Let's move to sociocultural risks. How do you balance your desire for independence with a need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I think I didn't have any problems with that because when I'm travelling alone, I mostly stay in hostels and most of the hostels I've been to, they're really social. You meet so many people and you just choose the people that you get along with and you can travel with them or if you feel like not being with anyone, I can always be alone and discover the destination by myself.

Speaker 1: Makes sense. And have you noticed differences in the way solo travellers from different cultures approach independence and collaboration? Like for example, maybe some people from different nationalities tend to be more socialising or maybe others that are more independent?

Speaker 2: I don't think so. I mean, I've met people from various countries and I think it's, I mean, obviously, there are some differences. Maybe some cultures are more collectivistic. They tend to, you know, maybe hang out more but I don't think there's like a rule to it because I think it's just a personality trait.

Speaker 1: Yeah, just depending on the person and not nationalities, yeah? Okay. And how much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there?

Speaker 2: I think quite a lot. Yeah. I mean, it has to be a safe destination to go there. I've been advised not to go to some destinations that I really wanted to go to just because their political state was not very good.

Speaker 1: Okay. And can you recall if you have any situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: I mean, I've been to countries that are maybe not most stable but it didn't really, I didn't feel unsafe at any point or it didn't change my plans or anything so I would say no.

Speaker 1: Okay, great. And have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: No, I still went there. No, you just have to be maybe a bit more careful. You have to have it in mind but I wouldn't just not go.

Speaker 1: Yeah, well, it's not something that will stop you directly.

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Okay. Do you think your perception of risk has changed over time or with most of the travel experiences?

Speaker 2: Yeah, I think so. A lot of times we're scared of the unknown but once we are put in the environment, we're kind of adapting ourselves also to the culture and environment.

Speaker 1: Okay. So, could you walk me through your decision-making process when selecting a destination for solo travel? Like step by step, how do you choose? What are your plans?

Speaker 2: When I'm choosing a destination, I don't really have a rule book or like steps that I take. A lot of different destinations were just, you know, maybe I saw a TikTok somewhere or Instagram or somebody told them about it and then, you know, I do my little research and I get interested in it but I don't think I have like a step by step. Once I choose it, maybe I go as I said, like to watch some videos or like to learn more about what the destinations have to offer.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Okay. And how do psychological and sociocultural factors that we have seen play a role in your decision-making?

Speaker 2: Which one?

Speaker 1: Like it just depends on governments and political stability. Like from what you have said for individualism and collectivism; it was not a big deal. It just depends on how you feel. For example, cultural knowledge, health conditions and previous situations that you have encountered.

Speaker 2: What was the question? Can you go down?

Speaker 1: Yeah. How do psychological and sociocultural factors play a role in your decision-making? Maybe some factors are more primary for you to look out for a destination or some like for example, safety infrastructure is not something that you will look for and not be really aware of before choosing the destination or...

Speaker 2: I think I am aware of it or at least I'd like to believe so but I don't think it affects my decision-making directly.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Maybe, I don't know, I wouldn't really go travelling by myself to a country where I know that women are not positioned really well. Maybe, you know, I wouldn't feel safe there again as I said as a woman but otherwise, it's more something that I just take notice of and maybe have it in the back of my mind. But it's not like a primary thing to focus on when I'm choosing a destination.

Speaker 1: That's great. And where do you typically seek information about the risks associated with solo travel? Online information, official advisories, recommendations from others?

Speaker 2: Yeah, it's mostly the internet and also I really like to have some opinions from travellers and mostly solo travellers.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's great. So, that's the end of the interview. Thank you for accepting to do it and enjoy your day.

Speaker 2: Thank you. It was my pleasure.

[End Transcript]

A2.8 Interview 8

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as "Speaker 1")

Name of the interviewee: Hazel (labeled as "Speaker 2")

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 32 years old / Singaporean

Date of interview: 30/05/2024

Duration of interview: 14:27 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hello, my name is Emilie and I'm currently doing my thesis on the selective psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. You are here today for an interview, so let's start. Can you tell me your name, age and nationality, please?

Speaker 2: My name is Hazel, I turned 32 this year and I'm Singaporean.

Speaker 1: Okay, and what motivates you to solo travel?

Speaker 2: I can't think of one reason in particular, but I suppose a multitude of different reasons, from schedule with friends not aligning, with enjoying my own company and maybe also being willing to take risks that I'm not sure other people might be willing to take. Those would be some reasons.

Speaker 1: Okay, so let's move on with psychological risks. Can you share any past experiences or events during your solo travel that you found may be particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: Do you need it to be recent? At this moment, I'm trying to think. Okay, the last time I was in Sri Lanka, I was there for like one and a half months and many times during my trip, I was stopped by just men in general who would try to comment about my clothes or advise me different things about my safety and sometimes they would try to hit on me and try to suggest some kind of romantic possibility.

Speaker 1: That's really scary.

Speaker 2: Yeah, I suppose but I was in a very particular area in the very northern province, so it is not as urbanised, I think, and so there are not many tourists and also because I speak the language that is spoken in Sri Lanka, they thought I was like them but I'm not from there, so there were many cultural differences.

Speaker 1: And have you ever faced health challenges during solo travel? If yes, how did you handle them?

Speaker 2: I've definitely had stomach aches and like food poisoning and these kinds of different things. Usually, I self-medicate. I don't always use prescriptive medicine from the pharmacist. I just use ointment that I have from Singapore or like mint leaves, ginger, lemon, whatever. If it's really bad and I need to be hospitalised, that has only happened once or twice with the help of some friends who put me in the hospital.

Speaker 1: Okay, well, that's great. And how do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination before travelling?

Speaker 2: Usually, I read up on sites like Reddit or Facebook groups of people who have travelled there alone just to understand a little bit how it is. And I usually find out through blogs or some things other solo travel female travellers have done just to have an idea. But the most important thing is when I go there, I observe how other people behave, like locals behave, and then I get a sense of it for myself before I do anything.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's really interesting. And if you have any, can you share an instance where lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo trip?

Speaker 2: I mean, I think the example I gave you in Sri Lanka is quite a good example because in theory, even though I was Singaporean, I was of Tamil heritage, which is the same ethnic marker of the people in the northern province of Sri Lanka. So, like the fact that someone of a Tamil heritage in the area would never leave and travel by themselves alone was a cultural difference because I would do it. I mean, I have been raised to think it's fine, but they would not. So, there was a cultural difference because to them, this behaviour was not safe and, you know, just different things. So, it's nothing that can be changed, obviously, because I can't change how I look or my race or my ethnicity. It's just what it is.

Speaker 1: Yeah, exactly.

Speaker 2: And I just had to tell them I was trying. I have like a local fixer. I have local friends who are looking out for me and things like that. It wasn't negative to a point that I would never return there. But I do think that it's something quite uncommon and specific to me as a person because there were maybe like other white or Western people who I saw, like maybe five or six people in the entire time I was there, and they didn't experience the same thing. So, I know, yeah, the reason I faced it was because of the way I look quite similar to the people there and the fact that I can speak the same language.

So, it's difficult for the locals to understand that, yeah, like I'm like them in some sense, but at the same time, I have different values.

Speaker 1: Okay. So, let's move on with sociocultural risks. How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Usually, I only meet people like when I'm at a meal or when I feel like I have trusted them enough to hang out with them because I don't know if they would suit my travelling style and things like that. So, I usually spend the mornings by myself. And then I think like, okay, maybe I can meet someone at lunch and if they are comfortable, I feel connected, then I can say like, oh, do you want to hang out after? I don't make plans to be with someone for the whole day off the bat unless I know them from before or I trusted them after our first meeting.

Speaker 1: Okay. So, it's more the last moment with the vibes and if it's okay for you. Okay. And have you noticed differences in the ways solo travellers from different cultures approach independence and collaboration?

Speaker 2: I mean, I definitely do think that people who grow up in cultures where freedom is a given and when you have a lot of independence from a young age, you feel very comfortable travelling by yourself with no worries.

Speaker 1: Of course.

Speaker 2: So, usually solo travellers from Germany and I don't know, Switzerland or Denmark, Swiss, Swedish travellers I've met, many girls and boys, they come from very safe cultures. So, they have a very open approach to the world, I think, and everything seems possible to them in comparison to maybe people who come from not as stable or safe environments who might rely a bit more on social media or talking to people online before they meet someone offline. And I think the need for collaboration is not, in my opinion, at least culture specific. I think people generally like company but maybe the biggest difference is that or what I've noticed is in group meetings, people who come from maybe bigger families or bigger social networks, when they go to gatherings, they don't mind the noise. They're comfortable talking even if it's very noisy and they don't have an issue with many people being there. Maybe whereas some cultures where they are more individualistic, they feel like, okay, this is too much for me. I would rather just meet someone one-to-one.

Speaker 1: Makes sense. Okay. And how much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there?

Speaker 2: In my case, it doesn't. I'll be honest. I think it's not something I've ever thought about because I always believe that what's happening to people in a place is very different from how the government is treating people. So, I've really been to many places. I was in Egypt during the Arab Spring Revolution and then I lived in Pakistan and I've been recently in Sri Lanka right after the economic collapse. So, I think the political climate is just the media's perception of how things are. It's never really the entire reality.

Speaker 1: Yeah, it's not something that will stop you then. Okay. And have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: No, I have not.

Speaker 1: Okay. So, let's go to the end of the interview. Do you think your perception of risk has changed over time or with more solo travel experiences?

Speaker 2: Yeah, I'm sure because I've been travelling solo for a long time. So, it's something I think I learned to get better at trusting my gut or taking risks when I started doing it when I was 21, 22. So, it has helped me to gauge a situation and decide whether or not I should do something.

Speaker 1: Okay. Could you maybe walk me through your decision-making process when selecting a destination for solo travel? Like step by step, what do you think when choosing the destination?

Speaker 2: I think the first thing I do is think about whether I have met someone from there or I know someone who lives there based on the last place I went to. That's usually the first thing. And if I don't have either one, then I think about my friends. Do they know anyone from those places? Just to have an idea of where I can stay or just maybe anyone they know I could meet or I could do an experience based on some friend they have running a business or whatever. Just as a primary decision-making.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: And then the second is, of course, the transport there. I definitely look at the cost of what it takes to fly there or what it takes for me to go by land. And then the next thing I do is also decide how long I want to spend there, based on how much it is to live there from day to day and depending also on how much I'm willing to spend for this part of the trip. I allocate the number of days I spend there. And I think I would also try and see how well connected the public transport system is. If I feel like I want to spend more time, then I know I would want to go between the city and the countryside. So I will just check if there's trains or buses. Most cases there are. And then that would be it actually.

Speaker 1: That's already enough, I think. That's great. And how do psychological and sociocultural factors, for example, that we have seen play a role in your decision-making?

Speaker 2: I mean, I think definitely people will tell me like, oh, this place is not safe or this place is something that happened to my friend when she went there. And it's a moment where I take in what they say and then I decide for myself whether it's something I want to follow or not. And sociocultural, I think that's why the first step I do is very important. Usually I'll talk to someone who lives there or I know someone who's been there recently and I'll just hear from their experiences. And also the person telling me, I try to know a little bit more about who they are, because like I said, if they are from a Western culture or culture that's very individualistic, it would be quite different from how I know I'm going to experience it. So I would also take that into account, like just knowing their background and what kind of travelling they did before I make a decision.

Speaker 1: And where do you typically seek information about the risks associated with solo travel? You said before it was on blog and everything. So do you also look for offices or official advisories?

Speaker 2: No, definitely not. Like that would be the last place for me.

Speaker 1: So it's more like recommendations from others or just like online information, social networks?

Speaker 2: Yeah, I could say that. Yes.

Speaker 1: Okay. So this is the end for me. Thank you for the interview.

Speaker 2: Thank you.

[End Transcript]

A2.9 Interview 9

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as “Speaker 1”)

Name of the interviewee: Miguel (labeled as “Speaker 2”)

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 34 years old / Brazilian

Date of interview: 04/06/2024

Duration of interview: 09:05 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hello, my name is Emilie and I’m currently doing my thesis on the analysis on selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. So you are here today for the interview. Can you start by telling me your name, age and nationality, please?

Speaker 2: My name is Miguel, I’m 34 years old and I’m Brazilian.

Speaker 1: Okay, and what motivates you to do solo travel?

Speaker 2: Not really a motivation, I just want to go places and I don’t mind going by myself.

Speaker 1: Yeah, okay. So let’s start with the first psychological risks. Can you share any past experiences or events during your solo travels that you found particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: Well, challenging I would say when you are in a place like this, like where the locals are not very socially open and you can have a bit of a struggle to have social interactions. I don’t mean that you cannot ask for any assistance or things like that, but if you just want to communicate with people on a social level, it can be challenging, I guess.

Speaker 1: And have you ever faced health challenges during your solo travel? If yes, how did you handle them?

Speaker 2: What kind of challenges? Sorry?

Speaker 1: Health challenges, like health conditions in a country, like medical conditions.

Speaker 2: Health conditions? No, never did.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's great in a sense. And how do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination before travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Well, mostly I just get worried about security issues. So I checked that. Aside from that, I don't get much worried about it.

Speaker 1: Yeah, so you never have any situation when you have a lack of cultural knowledge. That's maybe something about the locals or anything in this area that can affect your experience? Never?

Speaker 2: No, yes. It's something funny actually [*laughing*], because when I was travelling in Scandinavia, I have the tendency to look people in the eyes and apparently this is not something that they appreciate.

Speaker 1: Oh, really? Okay, so they think it's maybe bad or mean?

Speaker 2: Yeah, like you're being mean or...

Speaker 1: Oh, okay. So it's kind of a cultural shock then, a bit different culture.

Speaker 2: Aside from something, I don't think this is a serious thing.

Speaker 1: Yeah, no, it just depends. Maybe they are more conservative, so that's why they want to...

Speaker 2: Yeah, I think it's more about they are not more shy, more introspective.

Speaker 1: Oh, also, yes.

Speaker 2: And then your kind of challenge them a little bit.

Speaker 1: Yeah, okay. So let's go now to the sociocultural risks. How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I'm not really sure what you mean by that. Can you explain the question?

Speaker 1: Like when you go to a country, when you travel alone, how do you balance being alone and connecting with other people, to socialise?

Speaker 2: Okay, I understand. Well, usually when I'm travelling, I like meeting new people, so I try to seek activities, like group activities. Usually in the hostels or in public events, you can find those. And then on these occasions, I have specific plans where I want to interact with people, and then I make other specific plans where I can just sightsee or do a hike or something more connected with nature. So it really depends on what my plans are.

Speaker 1: Okay, so it's just during the moment of the country and everything, right?

Speaker 2: Yeah, like the moment when I arrive, I try to seek some specific activities, and then depending on my feeling, I will do one thing or another.

Speaker 1: Okay, makes sense. And about different cultures, have you noticed differences in the way solo travellers approach the balance between independence and socialisation? Like for example, some countries are more social than others?

Speaker 2: Yeah, I never really stopped to think about it. But as I said, I go with the activities of the hostels mainly, so I don't think I have felt much of a difference.

Speaker 1: Yeah, okay. And how much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there?

Speaker 2: Yeah, I have a big resistance to going to countries that are politically challenging. So if the political perspective of the country is not being open, I don't go.

Speaker 1: Okay. And have you ever been in a situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: No.

Speaker 1: Okay, good. Have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Yeah?

Speaker 2: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Okay. So let's go to the end of the interview with the self-perception of risks. Do you think your perception of risks has changed over time or with most solo travel experiences?

Speaker 2: Yeah, of course. I think I have become more aware, especially from the political aspects of how to do the risk assessment, actually.

Speaker 1: Okay. And could you walk me through your decision-making process when selecting a destination for solo travel? Like step by step, what do you do when you think about the country?

Speaker 2: Yeah, usually I try to see if it's okay to sightsee or do these remote walks by myself if it's safe. Like on a security level. The other aspect is how it's a political part. As I said before, if the political environment is not a liberal one, I would say from the social aspects, I would not, I'll probably decide not to go. And the third part, but that's not necessarily just that will not tell me if I go or not. It's like, how is the social culture there? How do people interact or?

Speaker 1: Yeah. Okay. And where do you typically seek information about the risk associated with solo travel? Like maybe only on the internet or?

Speaker 2: Usually I try to find someone, some local that I know personally from there.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: So if I know a person that has been there or lives there or is from there, I will ask on a personal level. But in a case that I don't know anyone that I really want to visit this country, I would just probably just trust information online.

Speaker 1: Okay. Online, like social networks, or are you also looking on official like advisories or?

Speaker 2: Yeah. Both of them like forums or like informal and formal pathways.

Speaker 1: Okay. That's good.

Speaker 2: So media news and forum for travellers or something like that.

Speaker 1: Okay. Great. So this is the end of the interview. Thank you for your time.

Speaker 2: Thank you.

[End Transcript]

A2.10 Interview 10

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as "Speaker 1")

Name of the interviewee: Aubrey (labeled as "Speaker 2")

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 28 years old / American

Date of interview: 05/06/2024

Duration of interview: 11:51 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hi, my name is Emilie and I'm currently doing my thesis master on analysis on selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. You are here for the interview today, so can you start by telling me your name, age and nationality please?

Speaker 2: My name is Aubrey, I am 28 years old and I am from the United States.

Speaker 1: Okay, and what motivates you to solo travel?

Speaker 2: Really I want to continue to explore the world and travel, but also sometimes you don't always have people to go with you, so I've been wanting to explore more on my own and with that you can travel solo and it's a good experience to gain a lot of skills and grow in yourself.

Speaker 1: Yeah, that makes sense. So we'll start with the psychological risks. Can you share any past experiences or events during your solo travels that you find particularly challenging or disruptive, if you have any?

Speaker 2: I think sometimes with certain events that you want to go to solo, I found sometimes it can be awkward because you need someone to socialise with or someone to talk to and there's been a couple of times where I've gone to events alone and I felt awkward, not uncomfortable, but it would be better to have someone to socialise with. And maybe disruptive is feeling safe and sometimes you feel like people are looking at you or might want to target you because you're alone.

Speaker 1: Okay, yeah. And have you ever faced any health challenges during your solo travel? If yes, how did you handle them?

Speaker 2: I've faced I guess the most challenges I've faced is with transportation or public transportation in other countries and I just have to adapt and think on my feet and do something different. I usually take a lot of buses and if they don't come and I need to get somewhere in a certain place, I'll walk or I'll try and find a solution or take a taxi, just coming up with different ideas to get where I need to go.

Speaker 1: Okay. And for example, when you were in a country, did you ever experience any medical situation, like food poisoning or something else?

Speaker 2: I've had really bad colds and probably food poisoning. I have a sensitive stomach so it happens sometimes.

Speaker 1: Okay. And is it a primary factor for you when looking for a destination, like the medical situation of the country, if it's developed or not?

Speaker 2: Not always. I think just as long as I might have access to a pharmacy in case I get sick, but I don't really get sick that often.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: Or I'll bring medicines with me and possibilities, but it's not really a deciding factor.

Speaker 1: Okay. And how do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination when travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I do a lot of research. The places that I want to go to, I have looked at for a while and if not, if it's somewhere new, I research about the place, the people, the culture, the language and try to learn a few things before I go. Just to be prepared, I know a few things about the area that I'm going to and also to interact with people.

Speaker 1: Okay. And can you share maybe an instance where a lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo experience, like something about locals maybe that you didn't know or?

Speaker 2: Well, right now I'm travelling through Spain and I have like an A1, A2 level of Spanish, so sometimes my inability to communicate or speak with others can affect me, but nothing that I can't use, translate or try to communicate with what I do know.

Speaker 1: Okay. Okay, great. So let's go to the sociocultural factors now. How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I really like that question. I like to balance my time with being in social situations or also will balance my time with social situations, but also alone time because I think I'm an introverted extrovert, like half and half because I really love interacting with other people, but sometimes I need space to have quiet and alone time. So every day I try to balance my time with time for rest and relaxation and then time to be social and doing activities.

Speaker 1: That's great. And have you ever noticed differences in the way solo travellers from various cultures approach independence and collaboration?

Speaker 2: I think it kind of depends on, I mean, how you were raised, like family wise, and then how, I guess, how your personality is, but also sometimes cultural, like people from the

US are very independent, but people from other countries or in Europe are more collectivist and want to do things for the good of the group or other people. And so sometimes where you come from affects how you want to interact or do things in your own way.

Speaker 1: Okay. Yeah, that's interesting. And how much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there?

Speaker 2: I think I want to travel to places that are safe, but also I'm interested in learning about other cultures and what people believe. But if it's like an environment that, what's the word, not radical, but things are happening there a lot, I probably won't travel there just for my safety.

Speaker 1: Yeah, makes sense. And if you have any, can you recall a situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: I don't think I have any experiences.

Speaker 1: Okay. And have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: I think like when I choose places to stay, like hostels, I choose ones that are in a good area or other solo travellers recommended or specifically solo female travellers. And if they have a comment or a review that says it's not in the best area or they didn't feel safe, then I probably won't stay there.

Speaker 1: Okay. Do you think your perception of risk has changed over time or with more solo travel experiences?

Speaker 2: I think so, because I came from a very sheltered environment and in the US they try and, I guess there's a big perception of people not travelling and not exploring other places because they think it's unsafe. But I think as I've travelled and lived abroad, I have experienced more things and realised things aren't as risky or dangerous as people want you to believe. So I think it's helped me be more open-minded and independent.

Speaker 1: Okay. And could you walk me through your decision-making process when selecting a destination for solo travel, like step-by-step? How do you choose a country? What do you do there?

Speaker 2: This is actually my first big solo travel experience outside of the US. But when I travel in the US, I have a bunch of bucket list destinations and activities that I want to do. So usually I choose a place based on that and how much time I may have. Like, is it a long weekend or a week or extended trip? And what activities do I want to do there? Like, am I going there

for a certain reason, for a certain activity? Or am I going there to explore or learn something new? Or I'm just going to a place I've never been to before? Well, mostly I travel to places I haven't been to before and just figure it out when I get there. But usually it's what length of time do I have? And what activities do I want to do there?

Speaker 1: Okay. And how do the psychological and sociocultural factors that we have seen play a role in your decision making?

Speaker 2: I think a big thing is social and cultural because I want to be able to learn from other people and learn new things about the country. Or if I've been practising or learning something at home, like here I've learned a lot of Spanish and some Catalan and so I've been wanting to go explore more of the culture and get to practise my language skills. But also I think about the risk factors, choosing somewhere that's safe and somewhere that I have researched and I know other people that have travelled there or I would feel comfortable being there alone.

Speaker 1: Okay. And finally, where do you typically seek information about the risk associated with solo travel? Like is it only online recommendation from others, official advisories maybe?

Speaker 2: I think what's online and maybe recommendations from others, but I've also seen a lot of people use like, I think for the US government, they have like a travel page that tells you places that are restricted or different levels of safety for travelling. I don't often look there. Usually I do research online, but unless it's somewhere I don't really know a lot about, then I would probably use that resource.

Speaker 1: Okay. So that was the last question. Thank you for the interview and your time.

Speaker 2: Okay. Thank you so much.

[End Transcript]

A2.11 Interview 11

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as "Speaker 1")

Name of the interviewee: Yasmin (labeled as "Speaker 2")

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 30 years old / Iranian

Date of interview: 05/06/2024

Duration of interview: 14:56 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hello, my name is Emilie and I'm currently doing my master thesis on the analysis of selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. So let's start with the interview. Can you start by telling me your name, age and nationality, please?

Speaker 2: My name is Yasmin, I'm 30 years old now and I'm from Iran.

Speaker 1: Okay. And what motivates you to solo travel?

Speaker 2: Um, what motivates me to solo travel? *[thinking]* Sometimes I want to just be alone and spend time with myself and go deeper inside me. That's why I chose to travel solo. Also, sometimes it's not easy to find people who are compatible with your timetable.

Speaker 1: That's true.

Speaker 2: So sometimes it was out of choice and sometimes it was just something that I had to do.

Speaker 1: Okay. So let's start with the first psychological risk. Can you share any past experiences or events during your solo travel that you found particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: In a psychological sense?

Speaker 1: Yeah, exactly.

Speaker 2: I think when it comes to psychological sense, it's about problem solving. When you, for example, miss a train in between, or you're facing some hardship that you need someone to help you. For example, there was this time that I was staying in a hostel and there was this guy that was snoring a lot and it was really annoying me and I couldn't get a good sleep that night. And I was sick afterwards. I got a cold and it was really hard for me to spend the time alone because I was critically challenged. That was one of my experiences when I was travelling solo. Also, I don't know if this is of any interest, but I did hitchhiking alone. That was also a bit challenging because sometimes it's hard to trust people to hitchhike.

Speaker 1: Yeah, that's interesting. That counts actually.

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So that's it, yeah.

Speaker 1: And have you ever experienced any bad medical situations? Like you said you had a cold after the snoring part?

Speaker 2: Yeah, yeah, yeah. When I travelled to Lisbon, when I travelled to Portugal, I got a cold. I had a stomach problem and then I couldn't sleep the night, so I had a very bad day afterwards. And also because I didn't want to spend a lot of money on public transportation, I had to walk. So it was quite hard.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Financial and medical problems. How do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination before travelling alone?

Speaker 2: To be honest, I don't read about the cultural aspects of the destination that I'm travelling to. I just try to probably just go to the destination and see how it is going and try to be open and understanding and try to be open to diverse groups. That's mostly what I do. I don't do special research before travelling.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: I mean, I have some perception based on the word of the mouth but that's it.

Speaker 1: Okay. Yeah. Makes sense. And can you share, if you have any, an instance where lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo travel experience, maybe? Like something with the locals that you didn't know?

Speaker 2: I'm not sure if this is exactly about the cultural aspect, but once I was in Hamburg and I was alone and I was not planning to go to Hamburg. I was having a stopover in Hamburg and I was stuck there for an hour. The city felt quite heavy on me because my hostel was close to the bus station and there were a lot of homeless people. And I found it quite hard to feel at ease in the city because I didn't know how to react or how to interact with them. And that was the hard part that I've had.

Speaker 1: Okay. Makes sense. So now let's move on to sociocultural risks. How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I pretty much prefer to stay alone. I think if I want to divide it into percentages, I spend my time 70% alone, 30% with other people. And that 30% is through the free tours that maybe the hostel is suggesting or the hangouts that people are doing. But as I said, I mostly prefer to stay alone and I don't hang out with other people a lot.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: Or maybe just in the common spaces in the hostel when you have people next to you. That's the only part that I interact with other travellers. But sometimes, if I want to talk about interacting with the locals, I sometimes go to local cafes and talk to people. And I find that part more interesting than talking to tourists.

Speaker 1: Okay. Yeah. And have you noticed differences in the way solo travellers from various cultures approach independence and collaboration?

Speaker 2: I think solo travellers in general are more careful towards others, maybe subconsciously, they want others to be understanding towards them as well. So they're taking this step.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: And I find them as I have interacted with them. In general, I find them quite understanding as solo travellers and open to other people. And also resilience.

Speaker 1: Yeah. How much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel alone?

Speaker 2: The political climate. I think that mostly I have been solo travelling within the context of Europe.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: And Europe is kind of like a stable political destination. So I don't think I have had solo travelling experience that was affected by a political situation. Because, for example, the part of the world that I'm coming from, it can be quite politically challenging. And I think if there was a dispute or whatever, or some kind of conflict, I wouldn't travel there.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: Or I would travel with family or with friends.

Speaker 1: Okay. If you have any, can you recall a situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: I think the only political instability that I have faced was the strike of the train employees, the train... What is it called? The railway employees.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: Because there was a strike, I couldn't continue my travel or I kind of lost my next destination.

Speaker 1: Okay. Yeah. That counts. Have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: This is the case of just solo travelling, right?

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: No, I haven't. And I think... No, I really haven't.

Speaker 1: Okay. Do you think your perception of risks has changed over time or with most solo travel experiences?

Speaker 2: I think when you're travelling solo, you are kind of more vulnerable than when you're travelling with other people.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Speaker 2: And you feel more endangered. So you do feel the danger, but it's not true. It's just because you're perceiving that you're alone, something might happen to you and you're miserable. But otherwise, I mostly think in my case, it was mostly just mental than a real thing.

Speaker 1: Okay. And could you walk me through your decision making process when selecting a destination for solo travel, like step by step? When you think first of the destination, are you going to prepare something or not?

Speaker 2: I think first I have to see if I can financially support the destination.

Speaker 1: Yeah.

Speaker 2: For example, I wouldn't see it possible for me, for example, to travel to Switzerland because I couldn't make that choice because I didn't have the financial... I wasn't financially prepared, for example, to travel to Switzerland or Sweden or like the Scandinavian countries that are more expensive. I mean, I could go to Denmark, but I know how to survive in Denmark without spending a lot of money. So I think first and foremost, maybe one of my main influential decision making processes is to see if I can afford the situation or not. And if I do, I would choose the destination that I have to spend the least money to reach. For example, if I need to reach a place by hitchhiking, I would choose that place. But if I have doubts between two destinations, I would see which one I can travel to easier or spend less money and enjoy the more. And also affordability, the weather. If I would see that I need to be in a sunny place or I want to be by the seaside, I would see what I am craving at the moment. Or also when I miss, for example, this is not exactly like solo travelling, but just the means of transportation when I'm alone. For example, when I miss my family, I would go to Berlin with my friends, but I'm still travelling alone. So there are many variables that can influence my decisions.

Speaker 1: Okay. And how do psychological and sociocultural factors that we have seen play a role in your decision making?

Speaker 2: Well, I am quite...I am a person that I am quite aware of the sociocultural of a place. For example, when I was in Copenhagen I knew the main reason for my travel was to go to Christiania. That's a pretty interesting place for me to be in or experience.

Speaker 1: So you are more aware of sociocultural risk and not psychological? Like it's not the primary factor.

Speaker 2: I don't find them separate, to be honest. I don't find them that separate from each other because for me it's quite entangled, like psychological and sociocultural factors for me are quite affecting each other. So I wouldn't say that I would go for sociocultural not psychological or I would go for psychological not sociocultural. For me, it's a whole package that all of them together affect me. So I wouldn't say that I would choose one over the other one.

Speaker 1: Okay, fine. And last question, where do you typically seek information about the risks associated with solo travel?

Speaker 2: It really depends on what I might choose for the purpose of my travel. So if it's just leisure I would just check online. On leisure websites, TripAdvisor, Instagram. It just depends on that. So basically it would be social media and websites. But if I am travelling to a destination for other reasons than leisure, like what I did to Copenhagen for my thesis, I did solo travel, I wouldn't choose media for that. I would go through articles or books.

Speaker 1: Okay, fine. So that's the end of the interview. Thank you for participating.

Speaker 2: Your welcome. I hope it helps you.

[End Transcript]

A2.12 Interview 12

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as "Speaker 1")

Name of the interviewee: Celia (labeled as "Speaker 2")

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 23 years old / French

Date of interview: 02/07/2024

Duration of interview: 08:05 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hello, my name is Emilie and I'm currently doing my master thesis on analysis on the selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. Can you start by telling me your name, age and nationality please?

Speaker 2: My name is Celia Villa, I'm 23 and I'm French.

Speaker 1: Okay, and what motivates you to solo travel?

Speaker 2: I'm an introvert, so I don't always crave to travel with people, but more than that some people I could travel with don't have the funds to.

Speaker 1: Oh okay. Let's start with the psychological risks. Can you share any past experiences or events during your solo travels that you find particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: When you're in a country where you don't speak the language, it's not always evident because there's a probability of things turning wrong if you don't understand someone or something and the butterfly effect, a lot of shit can happen. This said, I've always quite succeeded in communicating because I've always met people who knew English which is the vessel language. I do have a pretty recent experience though, while in Spain, I'm trying to learn Spanish but I'm bad for now. I tried to communicate in Spanish but soon knew it would be difficult because when they say more than 12 words I'm lost...

Speaker 1: Well, that's understandable. But you're putting effort so that's nice.

Speaker 2: Yeah. Also, a really disruptive event that I'll always take into account while solo travel is getting sexually assaulted in Canada, you're never prepared for that...

Speaker 1: Oh well...I am sorry to hear that. Hum...[confused] and, is Experience and Past Disruptive Situations an important factor while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: It definitely is when you're not discounting the fact that it can happen to anyone, a female solo traveller, because you're always worried whether you're gonna be safe or not. One thing I always do before planning to travel somewhere is search on the internet if it's safe for you to go when you're a female. I would say it has refrained me from going to some places.

Speaker 1: Okay. And have you ever faced any health challenges during your solo travel? If yes, how did you handle them?

Speaker 2: Never, lucky about that.

Speaker 1: Yes. And is it a primary factor for you when looking for a destination?

Speaker 2: Not really.

Speaker 1: Fine. And how do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination when travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I usually have some knowledge about where I go because if I'm visiting there it's mostly for the culture first. I go there eager to learn about the culture.

Speaker 1: That's nice. And can you share an instance where a lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo experience?

Speaker 2: I don't recall anything.

Speaker 1: Okay, great. So let's go to the sociocultural factors now. How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Well, as I said at the beginning, I'm introvert and most of all socially awkward so I never really connect to people while travelling.

Speaker 1: Yeah, makes sense. And have you ever noticed differences in the way solo travellers from various cultures approach independence and collaboration?

Speaker 2: Not necessarily.

Speaker 1: Interesting. And, how much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there?

Speaker 2: It's one of my number one priorities. As a socialist, I won't go somewhere if the politics or government don't align with my values. There's a lot of countries I would love to visit in terms of culture and landscapes but won't go because of their politics.

Speaker 1: Yeah. And can you recall a situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience?

Speaker 2: No. I don't have any.

Speaker 1: Okay. And have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: Absolutely, like I said as a female solo traveller my security comes above anything. Before booking a hotel, Airbnb I always check the surroundings on maps. It is one of the main priorities for me, my own safety.

Speaker 1: Yes, it makes sense. Do you think your perception of risk has changed over time or with more solo travel experiences?

Speaker 2: I would say so. I think I might've had some preconceived ideas about where I would be safe based on what might be depicted on social medias but being there changed my perception. To state an example, I always thought Montreal was super safe but it was not, whereas I would think of Madrid as risky when I've never felt more safe.

Speaker 1: Okay, as an analysis, it is definitely interesting. Next, could you walk me through your decision-making process when selecting a destination for solo travel, like step-by-step?

Speaker 2: Yes. So, first I will use google flight. It helps select a destination based on the prices, then if I see good prices somewhere, I'll wonder if I would like to visit that country. Then I'll search if it's safe for a female solo traveller on the internet, or most recently TikTok. It is more helpful when travelling than you would think. My goal is to not spend money I don't have, or would like to save up so checking the accommodations' prices is important because sometimes it can get really pricey. I would love to go to Ireland, flights prices are affordable but hotels and Airbnb aren't, so I haven't got yet.

Speaker 1: Okay. And how do the psychological and sociocultural factors play a role in your decision making? Are they important?

Speaker 2: Yes, they are, because it's all about your feelings. You have to be sure you can endure the distance, time being there...

Speaker 1: Yes, of course. Because you are far away from home than usual. And, final question now. Where do you typically seek information about the risk associated with solo travel? Online, recommendation from others, official advisories?

Speaker 2: First, I'll do some research on the web, then I'll dive into TikTok because there are more and more solo traveller's bloggers. If I know someone who has been where I'm heading to, I'll ask them how they felt there.

Speaker 1: Okay. Great. Well, that is the end of the interview, thank you for your time. Bye.

Speaker 2: Thank you, bye.

[End Transcript]

A2.13 Interview 13

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as "Speaker 1")

Name of the interviewee: Kamal (labeled as "Speaker 2")

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 27 years old / Indian

Date of interview: 02/07/2024

Duration of interview: 07:04 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hi, my name is Emilie and I'm currently doing my master thesis on analysis on selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. You are here for the interview, can you start by telling me your name, age and nationality please?

Speaker 2: Yes, my name is Kamal, I am 27 and come from India.

Speaker 1: Great, and what motivates you to solo travel?

Speaker 2: I would say the exposure to different cultures, the varied perception and mostly the challenges.

Speaker 1: Okay. So let's start with the psychological risks. Can you share any past experiences or events during your solo travels that you find particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: My travel to Denmark from India would definitely be the biggest challenge I faced. Moving out of my home country to an entirely new environment. Completely new language, time zone, people and culture was very much intriguing yet challenging at the same time.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Is Experience and Past Disruptive Situations an important factor while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Yes, I would surely say that experiences and past disruptive situations are important factors while travelling alone. And I also believe that every challenge faced is a new learning.

Speaker 1: Okay. And have you ever faced any health challenges during your solo travel? If yes, how did you handle them?

Speaker 2: If mental stress could be considered as a health challenge, Yes, I have faced it. The constant thought of not knowing what is going to take place next has always bothered me while travelling alone. I believe it is mainly because of not having anyone by your side for a second opinion. I try to seek help from friends, online, or strangers along the journey.

Speaker 1: Okay. And is it a primary factor for you when looking for a destination, or not?

Speaker 2: I try to be in the best shape during travel as it would be really hard if you are alone and not being in your best shape. So definitely yes.

Speaker 1: Makes sense. And how do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination when travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I tend to read or watch videos about the destination before the travel to provide myself with basic knowledge on the destination, rules and do's-don'ts.

Speaker 1: Okay. And can you share maybe an instance where a lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo experience?

Speaker 2: The example that I can think of is again during my first visit to Europe, in Denmark, where everyone started to be very polite and helpful. This did not affect my solo travel but I was a bit shocked to experience this. And this in fact helped me gain confidence.

Speaker 1: Oh, so that's a positive cultural shock then. Nice to hear that. So let's go to the sociocultural factors now. How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Connecting with people along your journey is part of the solo travel, is what I believe. Even Though you meet people along, you still have your own definition of solo travel. End of the day, it is the experience that I gained travelling.

Speaker 1: Yeah, you're right. And have you ever noticed differences in the way solo travellers from various cultures approach independence and collaboration?

Speaker 2: Yes, for sure. I feel like everyone has their own story and motivation for why they choose to do solo travel.

Speaker 1: Yeah, that's interesting. How much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there?

Speaker 2: Very much. I'd say it is one of the main factors that decides travel. Nobody would like to put their life at risk during a conflict especially when you are travelling alone.

Speaker 1: Yeah, makes sense. And can you recall a situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience, if you have any?

Speaker 2: Apologies to say, I do not have any real life examples as I try to avoid such situations as much as possible.

Speaker 1: That's okay, no need to apologise. And have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: Yes. Safety is one another factor that needs serious concern.

Speaker 1: Okay. Do you think your perception of risk has changed over time or with more solo travel experiences?

Speaker 2: Yes, I think with the introduction of social media, there have been a lot of changes in solo travel experiences.

Speaker 1: Okay. And could you walk me through your decision-making process when selecting a destination for solo travel, like step-by-step?

Speaker 2: Yes. I start with the safety factor, then the accessibility, and the potential learning that could be captured and then the rest of other factors.

Speaker 1: Okay. And how do the psychological and sociocultural factors play a role in your decision making? Are they important?

Speaker 2: Yes, psychological readiness and understanding cultural norms help me feel prepared and confident.

Speaker 1: Okay, great. Finally, where do you typically seek information about the risk associated with solo travel? Online, recommendation from others, official advisories?

Speaker 2: First I seek to get in touch with my close friends. Next, online reviews and finally blogs and vlogs of other travellers.

Speaker 1: Okay. So you are using plenty of resources before going to the destination place. This is the end of the interview. Thank you for the interview and your time.

Speaker 2: Okay. Thank you so much. Enjoy your day!

[End Transcript]

A2.14 Interview 14

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as “Speaker 1”)

Name of the interviewee: Alina (labeled as “Speaker 2”)

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 24 years old / Polish

Date of interview: 03/07/2024

Duration of interview: 07:32 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hello, my name is Emilie and I'm currently doing my thesis for my master on analysis on the selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. Can you start by telling me your name, age and nationality please?

Speaker 2: My name is Alina, I am 24 years old and polish.

Speaker 1: Okay, and what motivates you to solo travel?

Speaker 2: Well, if my friends do not have time, money or willingness to travel where I want to go, I would go alone.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's clear. So, let's start with the psychological risks. Can you share any past experiences or events during your solo travels that you find particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: For now, I didn't have any bad experiences. Probably, only loneliness sometimes. I had a "dangerous" situation also when I was travelling with my friends, which made me think that I shouldn't travel outside of Europe alone.

Speaker 1: Oh well...Okay. And, is Experience and Past Disruptive Situations an important factor while travelling alone, for you?

Speaker 2: I guess so, we can fear more, which can impact the choice of the destination, but maybe also learn from the experiences we had.

Speaker 1: Okay. And have you ever faced any health challenges during your solo travel? If yes, how did you handle them?

Speaker 2: During solo travelling I haven't. No.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's great in a sense... And is it a primary factor for you when looking for a destination?

Speaker 2: Not really sure what you mean by health condition, but if it's about the condition of the country, then I can say that, maybe I wouldn't travel alone or at all, to a place with bad health conditions.

Speaker 1: Yes, that's what it means. Okay... And how do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination when travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Usually, I read blogs, watch YouTube videos, or Tiktoks to get some advice from people who already travelled to the place.

Speaker 1: Fine. And can you share an instance where a lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo experience?

Speaker 2: I didn't have anything like that.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's great in the end. So let's go to the sociocultural factors now. How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: Usually, I stay in hostels where it's easy to meet new people. I don't desire independence when travelling alone. It's not the reason why I do it, so I do desire meeting new people.

Speaker 1: Yeah, makes sense. And have you ever noticed differences in the way solo travellers from various cultures approach independence and collaboration?

Speaker 2: I feel like most solo travellers like the freedom when it comes to planning, however they do prefer to engage with other people, and plan things with people they meet on the way.

Speaker 1: Interesting. And, how much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there?

Speaker 2: A lot. I wouldn't travel to a place with a bad political situation in general.

Speaker 1: Yeah. And can you recall a situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience, maybe?

Speaker 2: I didn't have anything like that.

Speaker 1: Okay, good. And have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: I always consider safety when choosing a destination.

Speaker 1: Okay, so you're considering it before going to the destination. So like that you avoid any problem on arrival. Do you think your perception of risk has changed over time or with more solo travel experiences?

Speaker 2: Hum...[thinking] I would say the more I travel, the more I discover what kind of things can possibly happen, so yes it has changed.

Speaker 1: Well okay. Could you walk me through your decision-making process when selecting a destination for solo travel, like step-by-step?

Speaker 2: It's more that if I want to go somewhere, and I don't have company now, I will go there alone. I'm quite impatient so I don't want to wait for others.

Speaker 1: Yes. And how do the psychological and sociocultural factors play a role in your decision making? Are they important?

Speaker 2: In my decision-making, I mostly care about the attractiveness of the destination rather than anything else.

Speaker 1: Oh okay. Final question now. Where do you typically seek information about the risk associated with solo travel? Online, recommendation from others, official advisories, relatives, social networks?

Speaker 2: Recently I would say it was Tiktok the most, but also if I know someone who's been to the destination I'll ask for first-hand information.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's interesting. Actually, Tiktok is very good for tourism content and tips during travel. So, I agree with you. And, well, thank you for your time, that's the end of the interview.

Speaker 2: Thank you. Have a nice day.

Speaker 1: Thanks, you too.

[End Transcript]

A2.15 Interview 15

Name of the interviewer: Emilie (labeled as "Speaker 1")

Name of the interviewee: Leyla (labeled as "Speaker 2")

Age and nationality of the interviewee: 22 years old / Azerbaijani

Date of interview: 04/07/2024

Duration of interview: 07:01 minutes

[Begin Transcript]

Speaker 1: Hi, my name is Emilie and I'm currently doing my master thesis on the selected psychological and sociocultural risks perception among solo travellers. Can you start by telling me your name, age and nationality please?

Speaker 2: My name is Leyla, I am 22 years old and come from Azerbaijan.

Speaker 1: Okay, and what motivates you to solo travel?

Speaker 2: The self-exploration, but also being out of my comfort zone, making myself do the first step, taking the initiative in my hands.

Speaker 1: Okay, great. So, let's start with the psychological risks. If you have any, can you share any past experiences or events during your solo travels that you find particularly challenging or disruptive?

Speaker 2: I won't say I have a lot of disruptive events. But, it is more about starting conversations, and doing something extreme on my own.

Speaker 1: Okay. And, is Experience and Past Disruptive Situations an important factor while travelling alone, for you?

Speaker 2: Definitely yes. If you want to experience more and make more friends. It is still experiences that can help you grow, whereas it is negative or positive ones.

Speaker 1: Yes, that's a way of perceiving things. And have you ever faced any health challenges during your solo travel? If yes, how did you handle them?

Speaker 2: Not at all.

Speaker 1: Luckily. And is it a primary factor for you when you are looking for a destination?

Speaker 2: Yes, it is. Health challenges can be really hard to deal with if you don't have the right medical attention.

Speaker 1: Yes, that's true. And how do you prepare for the cultural aspects of a destination when travelling alone?

Speaker 2: I am just making myself familiar with the culture, and people of the country I am visiting but keeping a room for not being biased or believing stereotypes.

Speaker 1: That's a nice preparation for cultural perspective. And can you share an instance where a lack of cultural knowledge affected your solo experience?

Speaker 2: There is no specific case, but I always try to know in advance a bit about the political situation of the country so I do not say anything that may sound disrespectful.

Speaker 1: Okay. So let's go to the sociocultural factors now. How do you balance your desire for independence with the need to connect with others while travelling alone?

Speaker 2: In general, I try not to think of making friends abroad as “sticking together” always. Like that I can create a balance being on my own and with others.

Speaker 1: Okay. Have you ever noticed differences in the way solo travellers from various cultures approach independence and collaboration?

Speaker 2: Yes, definitely. I am more open to new suggestions; I do not take a “no” or other preferences personally anymore. And, when coming up with the idea, expect people to check out the idea, not agree or disagree because it is me who is asking.

Speaker 1: That's actually interesting. And, how much does the political climate of a destination influence your decision to travel there?

Speaker 2: Yes, it is very important. First, I wanna make sure that it is safe, but also just to be aware of how I am going to be welcomed.

Speaker 1: Sure. And can you recall a situation where political stability or instability impacted your solo travel experience, maybe?

Speaker 2: I didn't recall any unstable situation at all.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's good in a sense. And have you ever chosen or avoided a location based on your perception of its safety infrastructure?

Speaker 2: Hasn't happened so far. But it is important to think about it. Some countries can be really dangerous for women.

Speaker 1: Okay. Do you think your perception of risk has changed over time or with more solo travel experiences?

Speaker 2: Yes! Everything is way simpler than it seems. Before you have preconceived ideas and can be scared of some factors, but in the end it is not that risky when you go there. And then you gain confidence.

Speaker 1: Yeah. Could you walk me through your decision-making process when selecting a destination for solo travel, like step-by-step?

Speaker 2: It mostly happens randomly, when I wanna go somewhere within a very short notice and do not have energy to plan it with someone, so I just do it quickly on my own. I don't have specific steps, sometimes I just go with the flow and it's easier for me to do it like that. I don't have to stick to a plan or to someone.

Speaker 1: Fine. And how do the psychological and sociocultural factors play a role in your decision making? Are they important?

Speaker 2: Of course, they are important. The opener I become able to meet new people and be independent, the easier it gets. It's a matter of both factors.

Speaker 1: Sounds great. Finally, where do you typically seek information about the risk associated with solo travel? Online, recommendation from others, official advisories, relatives, social networks?

Speaker 2: Mostly from friends.

Speaker 1: Okay, interesting. You only have one resource actually for seeking information. But at least it's a trusted one.

Speaker 2: Yes, it is. That's why I am not looking anywhere else. It is very useful.

Speaker 1: Yes. Well, thank you for your time and your participation.

Speaker 2: Thank you. Goodbye.

Speaker 1: Goodbye.

[End Transcript]