

Safety of female travellers

Salla Ahokas



Author(s) Salla Ahokas	
Degree programme Matkailun koulutusohjelma	
Report/thesis title Safety of female travellers	Number of pages and appendix pages 37 + 8
<p>The aim of this thesis was to investigate how female travellers experience safety. The research questions were how female travellers could feel safer while travelling, what are the reasons on the sense of safety and insecurity, what kind of impact does safety have on decision-making process before trip as well as travel behaviour during the trip and what kind of impact previous travel experience has on the sense of safety.</p> <p>The theoretical framework consists of social trends among female travellers and theory of travel behaviour, such as motivation factors, determinants, constraints and discussion about travel behaviour of single female travellers. In addition, travel safety, for instance internal and external threats, is also presented in the theoretical framework.</p> <p>The method for quantitative research was questionnaire in respondent-completion format. The survey was conducted in 16.02.2017-15.03.2017 by using Webropol. The 62 respondents were members of international women-only Facebook groups based in Vienna, Austria as well as personal travel contacts.</p> <p>The results revealed that participants highly valued others' opinions, whether it was reviews from other travellers, guidelines from authorities or advices from friends and family. Safety was rarely a reason to cancel a whole trip, although there were destinations participants did not feel safe to visit. Respondents mentioned they had felt unsafe at one point during their travelling but felt safe to travel in general. 18 out of 62 participants had refrained themselves from doing something because they had not felt safe to do so. Previous travel experience did not play remarkable role in the sense of safety. Company of others, staying in safe neighbourhoods, travel insurance, confidence and good preparation before trip made travelling safe for participants. The main reasons for unsafety were harassment, unwanted attention, fear of various of crimes as well as time of the day.</p> <p>All in all, findings show that the one way to feel safer while travelling is preparation, such as background checks, knowledge of the destination and local language before travelling as well as interacting with other travellers and locals.</p>	
Keywords Female travellers, safety, travel behaviour	

Table of contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Female travellers.....	2
2.1	Social trends among female travellers	2
3	Travel behaviour	4
3.1	Motivation	4
3.2	Determinants	6
3.3	Types of travellers.....	7
3.4	Constraints.....	7
3.5	Travel behaviour of single female travellers	8
4	Safety.....	10
4.1	Socio-cultural crises in tourism.....	10
4.2	Safety among female travellers.....	12
5	Choosing the right method	14
5.1	Qualitative or quantitative research?	14
5.2	Three research models	14
5.3	Validity and reliability.....	15
5.4	Questionnaire based surveys.....	16
5.5	Collecting the data	17
6	Results	20
6.1	Respondents.....	20
6.2	Before the trip	21
6.3	Travel behaviour	22
6.4	Travel experience	23
6.5	Reasons behind the sense of safety and insecurity.....	25
6.6	Summary	27
7	Conclusions	29
8	Reflection	34
	Bibliography	35
	Appendices.....	38
	Appendix 1. Covering letter for the link.....	38
	Appendix 2. Survey introduction.....	39
	Appendix 3. Questionnaire	40

1 Introduction

According to travel megatrends, presented by Skift, 2017 is the year for modern female travellers. The safety of female travellers is a popular topic in several articles and blog posts. These articles and posts are focusing on personal experiences as well as on safety tips. It is true, that there are literature and studies about safety in tourism. However, there are not that many studies about safety of female travellers. For that reason, the findings of this thesis serve an important purpose in understanding better one part of tourism and travel industry, female travellers.

While discussing future as well as past trips and travelling in general with women, the safety is indeed one main topic of the discussions. Therefore, the aim of the thesis is to investigate how female travellers experience safety. Research questions are what are the reasons behind the sense of safety and insecurity, how female travellers could feel safer while travelling, what kind of impact does safety have on decision-making process before trip as well as on travel behaviour during the trip, and what kind of impact previous travel experience has on the sense of safety. Furthermore, the goal is to limit the research to female travellers, who are travelling abroad.

The report begins with introduction in chapter 1. Chapter 2 presents female travellers as well as social trends among female travellers. The theoretical framework also consists theories of travel behaviours, that are presented in chapter 3 and safety in tourism in chapter 4. Chapter 5 demonstrates the different research methods. The results of the survey are introduced in chapter 6, and chapter 7 consist conclusions as well as recommendations. Furthermore, reflections can be found in chapter 8.

Since the objective is to understand safety of female travellers as a group, is the research quantitative and the research method is questionnaire in respondent-completion format. Research is conducted by using data collected from international women-only Facebook groups, that are based in Vienna, Austria, as well as from personal travel contacts. The data will be analysed by using SPSS as well as compared to existing information stated in the theoretical framework. Perspective for this research is female travellers, how travelling can be safer for them. The results will especially benefit solo female travellers, who have not travelled often and are interested to travel more, but feel unsafe to do so. In addition, the findings can be used for further safety tips and recommendations for female travellers.

2 Female travellers

Nowadays women influence 85% of all the buying decisions, and 58 percent of online sales. The ways women are reached by the travel companies as well as how travel services are being marketed, are about to change. For instance, travel companies have more female leaders and notable number of female workers. (Skift 2017.)

The number of female travellers has been growing for the past decade because of the variety of political and social reasons, for instance an increase in GDP per capita and an increase in total female population. Furthermore, women are also becoming mothers at a later age and having less children, if not any. They are marrying later and getting a divorce is also much easier. Women are more educated and the female participation in labour force has been increasing. In fact, nowadays women travel for leisure as much as men do, and have similar amount of business trips. (Junek, Binney & Winn 2006, 54-55; Skift 2017.)

2.1 Social trends among female travellers

Due to increasing share of professional life, more females will travel also for work-related purposes, such as taking part of conferences and exhibitions. Many websites are focusing on solo business female travellers. In 2015, travel management company CTI Travel Ltd. started a cooperation with a Maiden Voyage, that focuses on female travel safety. CTI Travel Ltd. offers to their corporate customers female friendly hotels that have been personally checked that they meet the safety requirements. The requirements are safe location, round-the-clock reception and double locks in the doors. Feminization of the market can also be seen in increasing demand for incentives and spas. The popularity of spas has particularly drawn attention to women from higher socioeconomic groups. (CTI 2015; Holloway, Humphreys & Davidson 2009, 308.)

One long time trend has been hedonistic tourism. In hedonistic tourism, the travel motivation is based on search for happiness and pleasure. One group in hedonistic tourism is also known as Shirley Valentines. The name Shirley Valentines comes after a British movie, which is a story about women escaping their life at home and finding love in Greece. Shirley Valentines are usually older married women from Northern Europe travelling in a group to Mediterranean countries to have a holiday fling with local men. (Holloway et al. 2009, 124; Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 5-6; 35.)

Female solo traveller is a flourishing market. From 2008 the number of British solo travellers, female and male, has increased by 60%. In United States women travelling alone consists 11% of all the adult leisure travellers. Impressions regarding travelling alone, especially as a female solo traveller, have been changing. Women travelling, or even dining alone, does not surprise anymore. Furthermore, women feel more liberated and proud to travel on their own. (Cann 2016, 38; Skift 2014.)

Meaningful travel, a concept presented by Wilson & Harris (2006, 162.), is described as a travel experience that focuses on individualism, self-confidence, reflecting, exploring as well as the relationship with the others. For single female travellers, this means having time and space for their own needs and wants, such as creating their own schedules and following their own specific interests. Moreover, after life changes, such as divorce or becoming widowed, women are also keen to travel on their own. It can be argued, that travelling alone is empowering. When travelling alone, women have the freedom to make their own decisions, have the control on their actions as well as have more opportunities to meet new people. (Skift 2014; Wilson & Harris 2006, 165-167.)

Even though travelling alone has positive impacts, as noted in previous paragraph, it also can make travellers feel lonely and scared for attacks. One main challenge, that single female travellers still face nowadays, is linked to safety and security. For instance, single female travellers are more likely to worry about attacks, sexual harassments and overall personal safety while travelling. This can also limit their travel choices and prevent them from enjoying their trip. (Heimtun & Abelsen 2014, 163-164.) These constraints, what single female travellers face, as well as overall travel behaviour of single female traveller are presented more in detail in the next chapter.

3 Travel behaviour

Travel behaviour, or as in other words consumer behaviour, can be described as a study of what makes travellers, consumers, choose their trip and services. The factors impacting on consumer behaviour can be categorized as cultural, social, psychological, economic as well as geographic factors. (Kozak & Kozak 2016, 3; Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 6.)

3.1 Motivation

Motivation is a complex structure and depends on multiple factors, such as personality, experience and demographic components. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 61.) Behind the decision of traveller there are multiple motivations affecting at the same time. The core factors affecting motivation of the travellers are, as mentioned before, their personality, lifestyle, experience, past as well as how they identify themselves and how they want to be seen in the eyes of the others. One might say that the most important and usual motivation factors are novelty, escape, relax, family or friendship. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 53-55; Woodside & Martin 2007, 17.)

According to Maslow's hierarchy, needs can be organized into five classifications: physiological and biological needs, safety, belongingness and love, esteem and self-actualization. These needs have an influence on whether traveller wants to travel to the destination. Chance to fulfil physiological, love, belongingness and self-actualization needs, makes the destination appealing. Whereas safety is the main reason for avoiding the destination along with the failure to fulfil needs that made the destination attractive in the first place. In addition to needs in Maslow's hierarchy, aesthetic need and need for knowledge play a big role in travel motivation. Travelers are keen to learn about new cultures and to be surrounded by beautiful things. (Woodside & Martin 2007, 15-16.)

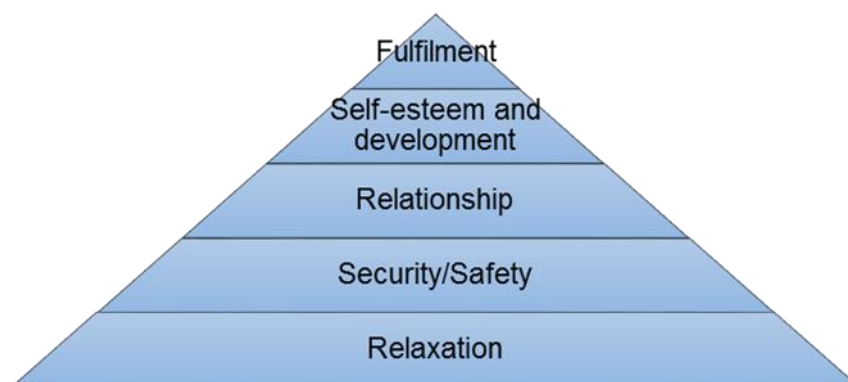


Figure 1. Travel career ladder. (Woodside & Martin 2007, 17.)

Travel motivation can change with age and experience. One conceptual framework, that supports this claim, is called travel ladder, which is presented in the figure 1. Needs and motivations are arranged on a ladder. With more experience travellers are after more fulfilling and higher level of needs, or stay on a specific level because of health and money limitations. Another conceptual framework, which is adapted travel career ladder, is travel career pattern. Travel Career Pattern, also known as TCP approach, can be emphasized as three layers. The most influential and common ones such as escape, relax and relationships, are placed on the core of the layers. The surrounding layer includes internal and external motives, for instance self-actualization and wanting to be in nature. The motive factors located in the outer layer are less important compared to the other layers and are less likely to change, such as nostalgia and social status. (Woodside & Martin 2007, 16-17.)

Motivation can also be specified into two factors: those which motivate a person to go on a journey and those which motivate a person to travel to a certain destination at the specific time. These can be known as push and pull factors. Push factors are more internal, such as wanting to relax, to go to an adventure or stay healthy. These factors describe why people want to travel. Pull factors, such as attractiveness of destination, define why people want to visit the destination. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 53; Woodside & Martin 2007, 17- 18.)

As mentioned in previous paragraphs, one of the most important and common motivation is friendship as well as fulfilling the need for belongingness, love and self-actualization. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 53-55; Woodside & Martin 2007, 15-17.) In general, people are keen to connect with someone new, whether they are travelling or not. Connecting with other people is known to increase happiness. One emerging trend that is supporting these claims is meeting and connecting with locals while travelling. The most known example of this is Couchsurfing, which is online hospitality exchange network. Main idea of Couchsurfing is to offer a platform to stay with locals for free, meet locals in various events or have a local to show around the destination. (Germann Molz 2011, 215-217; The New York Times 2015.)

On the other hand, safety comes to the fore when meeting locals or anyone during travelling. The main idea of Couchsurfing is to meet strangers, or as they refer friends you have not yet met. One might ask how safe can it be to invite a stranger to your home or stay with a stranger, or even participate in events. The Couchsurfing lists on their website safety measurements which travellers as well as locals should take into consideration,

and has a team assigned especially for safety and security. However, it has been discussed that a traveller is less likely to be a target if she or he starts the conversation. (Couchsurfing 2017; The New York Time 2015.)

3.2 Determinants

Determinants in tourism behaviour are factors, which determine whether traveller will be able to take part in a trip or not as well as what kind of trip she or he will take. It can be argued that a person does not make their decisions based on the information they have since determinants play a big role on rational decision making. However, determinants can be ignored or a person might not be aware of them at all. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 62- 66.)

Determinants can be divided into personal and external determinants. Personal determinants are circumstances, knowledge, attitudes and perceptions as well as experience, such as knowledge of the destination and attitude towards the destination. External determinants are for instance political, economic, social and technological (PEST) factors, that are demonstrated in figure 2. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 64.)



Figure 2. External determinants. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 64.)

Furthermore, there are no specific determinants which would be equally important for every traveller throughout her or his life since it is possible that determinants change by the age, family situation along with travel experience. Lifestyle and personality of the traveller can impact on whether external or personal determinants are more significant in their behaviour. Whereas introverts might like to trust their own experiences, can extroverts highly value the opinion of their inner circle. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 63-65.)

Since the goal of this research is to study safety of the female travellers, the determinants are more likely to personal than external. Personal determinants could be travellers' knowledge of the destination, is it safe to visit the destination or concern for the personal safety. External determinants could be media as well as of views of the close ones. As Swarbrooke and Horner (2007, 68). mention, one-off bad experience as a determinant can have a significant influence on the future travel behaviour. In this case, it would mean if one does not feel safe in some destination, his or her friends also can start to avoid the destination.

3.3 Types of travellers

According to the theory of Cohen, there are four types of tourists. The explorer takes care of the travel arrangements on her or his own. The aim is to meet local people and avoid other tourists, yet to have the comfort and security. The drifter makes the decisions for destinations and accommodation spontaneously. He or she does not plan ahead. The intention is to become part of local community. The organized mass tourist wants to have package holiday with a predetermined itinerary in a popular destination. He or she wishes to travel in larger group. Like organized mass tourist, individual mass tourist still depends on travel organisers in some level. However, she or he wants to have package that gives more freedom. The explorers and drifters are known as non-institutionalized tourists. Organized mass tourists and individual mass tourists are defined as institutionalized tourists. The non-institutionalized tourist can be considered as trendsetters for new destinations. When destination has enough developed infrastructure and is safe to travel, will institutionalized tourists visit the destination. On the other hand, even explorers and drifters are depending on the tourism industry. For instance, they are reading guidebooks to choose the right accommodation and transportation. (Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 85.)

3.4 Constraints

Leisure constraints can be described as factors that restrict participation or enjoyment of leisure. Travellers may have the freedom as well as the desire to travel. Constraints, however, can prevent it. Leisure constraints can be adduced in hierarchical constraint model with three levels. Intrapersonal leisure constraints are factors, such as knowledge of own skills, rights and an evaluation whether a certain activity is appropriate. Intrapersonal constraint is for instance not being able to find anyone to travel with. Structural constraints can be lack of time, money and transportation. (Kozak & Kozak, 2016, 16; Wilson & Little 2005, 155.)

It has been debated whether all above-mentioned constraints are hierarchical and valid. Furthermore, if constraints change depending on leisure activities, and does age, ethnicity or gender have an impact on constraints. From social and political point of view, less educated and less wealthy face more likely leisure constraints. Women, especially less socially privileged ones, experience constraints more than man. Some might say there is a leisure gap between women and men as well as among women. For instance, women in Iran might not have same possibilities to travel as women in United States have. (Kozak & Kozak 2016, 16-17.)

3.5 Travel behaviour of single female travellers

As mentioned previously, the most common motivational factors are novelty, escape, relax, family and friendship. Furthermore, need for knowledge and fulfilling various of needs, such as esteem and self-actualization, are factors that influence on travel behaviour. (Woodside & Martin 2007, 15-17.) Travelling without companion, can enable possibility for meaningful travelling, where one seeks for emotional, physical and spiritual fulfilment. In addition, single female travellers are often keen to travel alone for the sense of independence and autonomy as well as to be able to challenge themselves and step out of their comfort zone. (Wilson & Harris 2006, 164; Wilson & Little 2008, 168.)

Even though single female travellers want to travel independently as well as have the freedom to make their own decisions, they are also interested of meeting other people. In other words, their motivation is relationships. One solo single traveller can be interested of interacting with other travellers whereas another one wants to meet locals. It is also possible that a person wants to have hardly any interaction, whether it was with locals or with other travellers. Meeting new people can be even more easier when travelling alone, because one is far away from possible social pressures that influence back home. Furthermore, travelling alone can improve social skills as well as have an influence on the relationships one has back home. (Heimtun & Abelsen 2014, 163; Wilson & Harris 2006, 167.)

On the other hand, solo female travellers are concerned to be more constrained than solo male travellers. Constraints that impact on single female travellers can be classified into four categories. First category is sociocultural constraints. Gender roles, responsibilities as well as social expectations are sociocultural constraints that influence before travelling. For instance, one expectation, that limits solo travelling, can be that when reaching certain age women should stay home with family and not to spent money on travelling alone. For example, unwanted attention, sexual harassment along with locals' attitudes towards travellers have an influence while travelling. Personal constraints, that are strongly connected

sociocultural constraints, are based on traveller's feelings, beliefs as well as self-perceptions. For instance, sense of vulnerability can impact before the trip as well as during the trip. Even though one prefers travelling alone, can feeling of loneliness and isolation still be a limitation during travelling. Fear of danger can also prevent female travellers from doing something. Practical constraints are for instance, lack of money as well as language barriers. Single female travellers cannot interact with locals or do not have the money to travel alone, spend money on themselves. Fourth category is spatial constraints, that are also connected to previous constraints. Single female traveller might not have the freedom to travel. Single female travellers are either not allowed or do not feel comfortable travelling to certain destinations. These constraints affect especially on the choice of destinations. (Heimtun & Abelsen 2014, 164; McNamara & Prideaux 2010, 254; Wilson & Little 2005, 162-163)

4 Safety

Security can be described as protection of an individual, location or reputation from a harm that is caused by a person or a thing. Whereas safety is described as protection of people against unexpected results of involuntary nature. (Mansfeld & Pizam 2006, 46.) Personal security is one of the travellers' main concerns. Therefore, many travellers are looking for safe and secure destinations and refrain visiting unsafe destinations. The sense of safety and danger is shaped by the mass media, objective information about the destination, information gathered from friends and relatives, travel agents and own opinions what is safe and what is not. (Mansfeld & Pizam 2006, 15-16.)

As highlighted previously, one bad experience can impact significantly on future travel behaviour. (Swarbrooke & Horner, 68). After victimization, travellers feel unsafe and vulnerable. Victimization also can damage the image of destination. In a worst-case scenario, travellers might even stop travelling once for and all. (Mansfeld & Pizam 2006, 105; Swarbrooke & Horner 2007, 65.)

4.1 Socio-cultural crises in tourism

The concept social-cultural refers to features that describe the beliefs and lives of individuals and groups. (Henderson 2007, 73.) Henderson (2007, 83) states that socio-cultural crises in tourism are crises affected by social and cultural conditions as well as events, which may even be directly part of tourism industry. Crises can be divided into two parts; external and internal threats. Internal threats include unrest and crime. External threats are cultural conflicts and staffing. (Henderson 2007, 5.)

There has been discussion whether some criminal actions are strongly linked to tourism. Crimes against tourists are often results of rational thinking processes than spontaneous actions. One might say, tourists altogether are more tempting and easier targets for criminals than locals. This is because tourists are more likely to carry valuable items with them, stand out from the crowd with their clothing as well as are more relaxed and incautious. They also might not know the area, have no local support system and are unlikely going to report a crime. The crimes vary from minor thieves to murders, and can become character of the destination as well as the whole country. Furthermore, tourists can also take part of crimes, such as minor incidents to more serious violations of the law, which can also damage the reputation of the destination. (Henderson 2007, 77-78; Mansfeld & Pizam 2006, 16.)

In addition to crime and unrest, there is harassment. Harassment is a wide concept that affects tourism industry across the world, in developing and developed countries, and has numerous of patterns. In macro level harassment is institutional and done by authorities, such as customs and immigration officials. For instance, travellers of Hong Kong ancestry are being suspected of drug smuggling in Canada, Arab travellers are humiliated in airport checks and in Indonesia British travellers are forced to bribe the officials to avoid harassment. (Woodside & Martin 2007, 95-96.)

Individual harassment is done by sellers and other tourism service providers in micro level. It is more troublesome and global than industrial harassments. Badgering can destroy the tourism image and creates unhappiness among travellers. It is known problem in European destinations but also increasing quickly in developing countries. Sexual harassment has been for a long-time part of tourism. Sexual norms differ across the cultures and countries. What is considered normal in some countries can be insulting in another. In addition to harassment of female travellers, there are reports for example from Asians Pacific and Caribbean where male travellers are harassed by female prostitutes. (Woodside & Martin 2007, 95-97.)

Hospitality and overall friendliness of destinations residents can be one of the marketing ploys created by the tourist board of the destination. However, the feelings of the locals towards tourists vary from excitement to resistance. In some countries work in the tourism industry can be seasonal, low-paid and without chance for future success in the profession. Furthermore, migrants might be considered more wanted for higher roles, such as for management. This can create irritation between locals and migrants, and can have an impact on tourism overall. (Henderson 2007, 73.)

Tourism appears to be one possible reason for degradation of some cultures. Indigenous is destroyed and replaced with acritical. There is also acculturation, where two cultures meet and cultures start to adopt the core features of the cultures. In some cases, only the so-called weaker culture will start to change. Since the communication between traveller and local happens often either in English or the native language of the tourist, the local language is disregarded. Locals can also start to copy the lifestyle of the travellers and in the meantime, forget the habits and customs of their own culture. Residents might also feel envious by the fortune of the tourist and recognize that they would never able to have the same as the tourists have. (Henderson 2007, 73-74.)

One factor is religion. Travellers might be careless towards what is sacred in the religion, such as holy places and ceremonies. For instance, in Islamic states, Muslims might feel

distressed by the behaviour of non-Muslim travellers. Travellers may be neglecting everyday social norms of the destination for example by eating forbidden food, drinking alcohol and showing affection public. These can be considered as violations by the locals. Stereotypes and misunderstandings between Western and Islamic nations have also an influence on tourism as well as shape the attitude which people might have. After 9/11 terror attack Islam is regularly identified as a synonym for terrorism and hostility against Westerns. On the contrary, westerns can be considered as an example of unethical and godless societies. (Henderson 2007, 74-77.)

Terrorism, especially a fear of terrorism, has a notable impact on travel behaviour. For instance, women are more worried than before to travel to countries, which have faced terrorism attacks recently. Tourism is appealing to terrorists for multiple reasons. Tourism has a large economic impact worldwide, which terrorists want to damage. Tourism officials fear often that they would frighten travellers away if they took any significant steps to stop terrorism. Tourism is an icon of the country and destination, which terrorists want to destroy. In addition, terrorists would gather lot of publicity since tourism is strongly connected to the media. The targeted places are for example, airlines and other mass transportation systems, large events and anywhere where there are lot of people. (Mansfeld & Pizam 2006, 44-46; Skift 2016.)

4.2 Safety among female travellers

Women are more likely to be more guarded than men while looking for tourism activities. Furthermore, women are often more worried for their personal safety than men are. Possible menace and fear of violence and harassments restrains travel opportunities, choices for activities as well as for leisure. Women might feel like they cannot behave the same way as men because of the fear of being harassed. Going alone to certain public places or using public transportation alone causes fear, such as fear of sexual attack. This happens especially in countries, where status of women is different compared to western countries. Furthermore, fear of terrorism and daily problems during travelling causes stress and other health problems. While travelling for work, women can feel the stressed to travel unsafe destinations, where they are travelling for their career improvement. (Junek et al. 2006, 56; Skift 2016; Wilson & Little 2008, 168-169.)

Over time it has been questioned whether females should travel alone. One case that reactivated discussion happened in March 2016, when two Argentinian female backpackers were killed in Ecuador. These two females in their early twenties did not have any money left for accommodation so they were accommodated by two local men. The next day they

were found dead. Lots of people were asking why the girls were travelling alone, without a male companionship, even though they indeed were travelling together. One might say there was victim blaming. On Twitter #viajosola, which means I travel alone in English, was trending with over 5000 mentions among. On those tweets people were sharing their stories why they keep travelling alone and defending their choice of travelling alone. (BBC 2016; Vice 2016.)

One of the reasons for female-specific services is safety. In January 2017 Air India started offering six female-only economy seats on their flights after getting complains about sexual harassment. In business travelling, safety of female employees can be improved by using better travel management tools. For instance, when using online-based booking tools, it is more transparent where employees, travellers, are. For instance, which hotel they have booked and who will be driving their Uber. (Independent 2017; Skift 2016; Vice 2016.)

In 2015 Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Group Ltd, launched a boutique Virgin Hotels chain designed for female business travellers. A hotel in Barcelona, Spain, began providing female-only rooms after request from young female travellers. London Hilton on Park Lane presented a floor only dedicated for female travellers with private check-in area, spy-holes in bedroom doors and female staff on room service. The idea at London Hilton on Park Lane has now been cancelled since female customers felt safe in other floors and were not happy only being able to use one room type. (Economist 2015; Fearis 2009, 50; Vice 2016.)

There has been discussion if women-only floors would make women a target and emphasise their loneliness while travelling. Furthermore, the biggest safety gripe is when the hotel room number is announced aloud in the reception, where everyone could hear it. This makes both female and male travellers uncomfortable. One of the most vital safety tips come from the other women. Especially from them, who live in the destination and know the culture, such as female staff in the hotel and other local women. (Fearis 2009, 51-52.)

5 Choosing the right method

As previously stated, the goal of this research is to investigate how female travellers experience safety. It can be argued that the research is social science research than scientific research. According to Veal (2006, 3.) social science research deals with people, studies the social behaviour and the participants are not always predictable.

5.1 Qualitative or quantitative research?

The function of qualitative research is to help to understand the behaviours and situations, enable various of interpretations as well as investigate meanings. The collected materials in qualitative research are detailed and give, as its name says, qualitative information to the researcher. Yet the material focuses on a certain case and people, and often cannot be turned into numbers. In addition, it is believed that the people, who are involved on the situation, are the best to explain and describe the situation as well as their feelings by their own words. The qualitative methods used in tourism research vary from individual and group interviews to observation, ethnography and analysis of the texts. Quantitative research concentrates on numbers and the aim is to analyse statistically the information. The methods used in quantitative research are surveys, systematic observation or using statistics and records. (Pitkäranta 2014, 13; Veal 2006, 40, 193.)

For investigating perceptions of the individuals are qualitative methods appropriate. Whereas, for collecting and recording information of attitudes of the whole group of people, are quantitative, especially questionnaire methods, more convenient. In addition, qualitative research is often based on the future and quantitative research based on the past. However, it is argued that both of researches support each other. For instance, quantitative research is generally based on basic qualitative work. (Pitkäranta 2014, 9; Veal 2006, 40, 233; Vilka 2015, 61.)

5.2 Three research models

There are also three research models. The goal of the descriptive model is to find out, describe and outline patterns of behaviours in fields which are new and have not been investigated earlier. Descriptive research is a model often used in leisure and tourism fields, because the field is new and constantly changing. For instance, the choices for destinations and leisure activities are changing. Therefore, the patterns of behaviour described are often primitive. (Veal 2006, 3-4.)

What is found, described as well as outlined will be explained later or left to the other researches. In explanatory research the aim is to explain why and how trends and patterns happened. After the causes are being demonstrated and understood, the information will be used to prediction. Even though prediction in social sciences is not always accurate as hoped, prediction is still a key factor of the research in the leisure and tourism field. On the third model, evaluative research, can effectiveness and success of leisure programme and facility be evaluated. (Veal 2006, 3-5.)

5.3 Validity and reliability

Validity is a term that describes whether collected data indicates the phenomenon studied and analysed. The concepts as well as the group that is being investigated should be precisely specified. Moreover, planning how the material will be gathered, how the data will be analysed as well as whether the questions cover the research problems. In qualified research, there should not be systematic errors. One of the errors is that the subject of the research did not think the way researcher assumed he or she would think. In tourism and leisure research, can the validity of the data be less certain than for instance in natural sciences. This is because the research is often focusing on the behaviours and attitudes of the travellers. (Veal 2006, 41; Vilkkä 2015, 124.)

The second way to evaluate whether the research has been successful, is reliability. It means how accurate the findings are and whether the results would be same when repeated later, with a different researcher or with different subjects. However, in tourism and leisure research, as in other social sciences, this is not always the case. Research deals often with a group of people, who are living in different and changing social situations. The group structure and the behaviour patterns of some group members are also changing. It is argued that research is reliable in a place and time, and should not be generalized to different time and society. Thus, it is important to be careful when creating theoretical and general statements from the empirical research. (Veal 2006, 41; Vilkkä 2015, 124.)

It is possible that there are random errors that happen for instance when interviewee misunderstands the question or does not remember correctly something while answering. These random errors in the research should be mentioned. When the research represents the group that is being studied and there are as few as possible randomness in the methods, the research is reliable. (Vilkkä 2015, 124-125.)

5.4 Questionnaire based surveys

As mentioned before, one of the methods in qualitative research is a survey. Questionnaire-based surveys can be divided into two categories. In an interview format, that is conducted by telephone or face-to-face, the questions from the questionnaire are read aloud and the answers are recorded. While in respondent-completion format, the questions are read and answered by the respondent on-screen or on the questionnaire, and the participation of the interviewers is not needed. The questionnaire-based survey is one of the most used methods in leisure and tourism research. Since the statements of the research are quantified as well as general, and the methods are often easily understood. (Veal 2006,100; Vilkkä 2015, 61.)

Furthermore, in surveys the information is based on the answerers' own report of their behaviour, objectives and attitudes. It can be problematic for instance when the survey issues socially disapproved activities and thoughts. This raises a question for whether the answers are honest and reliable. In addition, the responders might feel the need to give answers that satisfy the researcher. Respondents can also overstate and underestimate the answers. How valid the data collected from questionnaire is, is a constant concern for researchers. (Veal 2006, 100, 277.)

The anonymity of the respondents in surveys, is one of the ethical problems in research. The respondent-completion format in the survey is especially suitable when the topic of the research is sensitive and the respondents prefer to stay anonymous. On the other hand, it can be difficult to assure that the respondent really is anonymous, when the invitation to the survey is sent by email. It is also possible to identify the respondents of the online surveys by their IP-address. (Veal 2006, 100; Vilkkä 2015, 61-62.)

Questionnaire should be created in a way that questions are in a logical order, which helps to respondent to answer. Firstly, the questionnaire should start with easy questions and after that continue with relevant ones. The personal and background questions, such as age and gender, of the subject should be at the end of the survey. (Veal 2006, 266.) In addition, the questions should be simple and not leading. (Veal 2006, 251-252.)

With covering letter, also known as opening remarks, of the questionnaire can the researcher convince the subject that the responses are confidential as well as anonymous. The function of the covering letter is thus to convince as well as motivate the respondent, subject, to take part of the research. The covering letter should also for instance tell the

reason for the research, the aim of the research as well as the contact details. (Veal 2006, 266; Vilkkä 2015, 121-122.)

Before sending out the questionnaire, the survey should be tested by couple of people, who represent the group of subjects and are capable to judge the questionnaire. The clarity and unambiguousness of the questions and instructions, time used to answer as well as the length of the survey should be judged. Furthermore, the goal of the evaluation is to discover if there are excessive questions and should there be more questions according to the research problem. (Vilkkä 2015, 71-72.)

5.5 Collecting the data

The research model used for this quantitative research was descriptive model. The aim was to find out and describe the pattern of travel behaviour, which was safety in this research. The research was implemented by using Webropol questionnaire in respondent-completion format.

Before publishing the questionnaire, the questions were tested by couple of people, who represented the target group, female travellers. The data was collected by using a questionnaire during 16.02.2017-15.03.2017. The respondents were approached through international Facebook groups based on Vienna, Austria as well as among personal contacts, who forwarded the survey to their contacts. The post regarding my survey that was posted in these Facebook groups can be found in appendix 1. The reason for choosing these groups was based on the variety of cultural backgrounds of the group members and the personal familiarity of these communities.

As explained previously, with covering letter can the researcher convenience that the answers will stay confidential as well as mention the purpose of the survey, aim of the research and the contact details. As can be seen in appendix 1, the covering letter of the link stated the reason of the survey, the topic of the research as well as the importance of the answers. In addition, the potential respondents were informed how long approximately it would take to answer, and that the answers would stay confidential and respondents would never be identified individually. The survey introduction, which can be seen in appendix 2, repeated the same information as in the covering letter of the link but also gave an email address for any further questions.

The questionnaire, which can be found in appendix 3, was divided into five parts. As stated previously in theoretical framework, the survey should start with easier questions. and then continue with more relevant questions. Therefore, first seven questions focused

on the travel background. For instance, respondents were asked to estimate how often they travel per year as well as approximately how many times they have travelled abroad before, and to describe how do they see themselves as travellers. For instance, would they describe themselves more experienced or unexperienced, curious or incurious, adventurous or unadventurous, do they like to plan ahead or do they like to go with the flow.

The more relevant questions were divided into three parts and were especially created to support the research questions. First respondents were asked about their behaviour before the trip, for instance whether participants have been looking for information regarding safety beforehand and have they ever cancelled a trip because they have not felt safe. The second part contained questions about travel behaviour during the trip, for instance do respondents feel safe while travelling and have they refrained from doing something while travelling because they have not felt safe to do so.

There were also two open-end questions where participants were asked to give their opinion about the current situation regarding the safety of female traveller as well as what kind difficulties female travellers may face nowadays. The point for these questions was to gather overall information about the phenomenon, female travellers.

As stated before, personal questions should be asked at the end of the survey. Therefore, the age and ethnicity were asked at the end of the questionnaire. As can be seen in the question 23 in appendix 3, the given choices for ethnicity were African, Caucasian, Caribbean, East Asian, Latino/Hispanic, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Mixed and Other. The reason why ethnicity of the respondent was asked instead of where they are from, their nationality, was based on the interpretation that ethnicity means group of people who share the same cultural, racial or national traits. Whereas nationality of the country can also mean the right to live in specific country. (Cambridge dictionary 2017a; Cambridge dictionary 2017b.)

Throughout the survey, respondents were given a possibility to mention if they did not prefer to answer the questions, to ensure that the respondent would still feel comfortable to continue taking part of the survey. It can be argued that this also affected on the validity of the survey, accuracy of the findings as well as how much answers would have differed if the respondents could not mention that they prefer not to answer to a question. As mentioned previously, one of the errors is that the respondent did not think the way researcher assumed he or she would think. This was also the case when some participants focused more on general safety while travelling and not on their personal safety.

Furthermore, the research was reliable in time and place. The results would differ in different time and place, for instance if the data was collected through interviews and in different country. On the other hand, the target group, female travellers, was specified from the beginning, and it was also planned from the beginning how the material would be gathered.

The data gathered from questions, where the answers were already given, was analysed by using cross tabulation method in SPSS. The open-end questions were analysed by making lists and separating main themes from those answers. The findings from the survey will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

6 Results

A point of view for the research is women travellers and how they can feel safer during their trips abroad. The research method was questionnaire in respondent-completion format, since like mentioned previously, respondent-completion format is suitable for a sensitive topic and when respondents want to stay anonymous.

6.1 Respondents

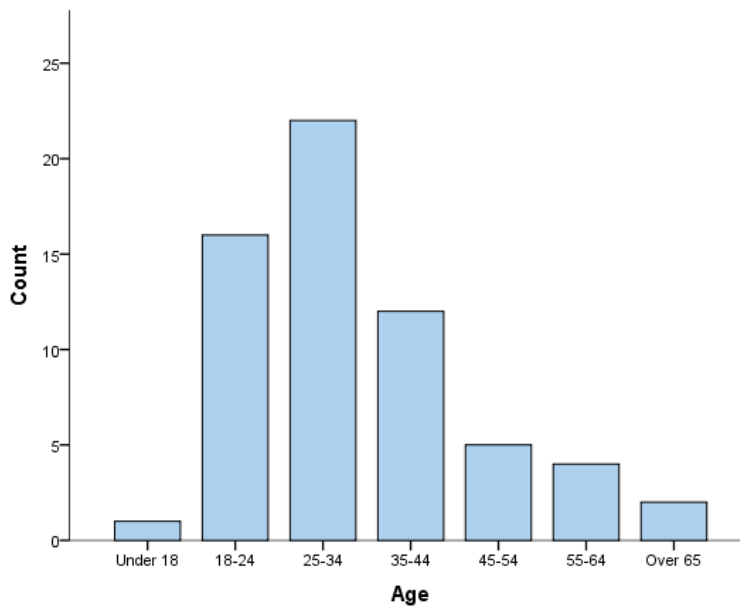


Figure 3. Age of the respondents. (N=62)

62 persons, who identify themselves as women, answered to the questionnaire. As illustrated by the figure 3, the two biggest age groups were 18-24 and 25-33. As much as 61,3% of the participants described their ethnicity as Caucasian. The Other group with 14,5% was the second biggest group. One reason for respondents choosing the other group can be explained by the fact that interviewees did not want to or did not feel comfortable to state their ethnicity. It is also possible that respondent did not find an ethnicity that was the most accurate for her. The other given alternatives for ethnicity were African, Caribbean, East Asian, Latino/Hispanic, Middle Eastern, South Asian and Mixed from which African and Caribbean were not chosen.

Most of the respondents saw themselves rather experienced, independent and curious travellers. When asked how much approximately participants have been travelling abroad in their whole life, almost a half (42,4%) estimated that they have travelled abroad either 10 to 25 or 25 to 50 times. 15 out of 62 participants were not able to estimate how often they had travelled. In addition, only a remarkable small number of respondents thought

that they were more timid than confident or more unadventurous than adventurous. The biggest diversity among the answers happened when participants were asked whether they like to plan everything ahead or go with flow. Almost every respondent travelled for leisure, only a one respondent did not travel for leisure. However less respondents travelled for business. Furthermore, those who travelled for business, were more likely to travel for leisure more than for work-related reasons.

“Female travelers shouldn't be scared of travelling alone. There is so many ways how you could travel and feel safe. In my experience, which is very crazy, if you are brave, don't like comfort and want to explore - it's can be a bit difficult, but just go on, it's very worth it and you'll not regret!”

72,6% of the participants preferred travelling with someone, whether it was a friend, a partner or a family. Travelling alone was one theme that emerged often in the answers of open questions, yet only 21% participants preferred travelling alone. However, the findings do not tell how many respondents had truly travelled alone before. Even a smaller number of respondents preferred travelling in a group.

6.2 Before the trip

37 out of 62 respondents had looked for information regarding safety before travelling. As mentioned before, one theme was travelling alone, was solo travelling this time also a reason to search information. Respondents were interested of knowing for instance, safety in certain neighbourhoods, cities or even countries. Political situations, terrorism, crimes and health issues were also often topics, that respondents wanted to know more about. Location of the accommodation was also a popular topic. In addition, respondents highly valued the opinions as well as tips from others, whether it was from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, guide books, other travellers or locals.

"If I am getting in late I check exactly how to get to the hotel or if I have to get a taxi whether they cheat and what it should cost. I play it safe if I am on my own."

“Safety of neighbourhood. If I am arriving at night and traveling by myself I want to make sure the place that I'm staying is in a safe area.”

“I usually buy Lonely Planet Guides for the places I travel to and I use the danger and annoyances section as a point of reference”

“I always check the web page of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Austria for possible threats, dangers, travel warnings. I also check the place I am going to for possible warnings.”

“Always look for reviews of other travelers , always look up crime rate , also I look at their local newspaper or tv if available online.”

In addition, some participants were interested on cultural differences. Respondents mentioned that they wanted to know, for example, what would be appropriate behaviour and what is the attitude towards to participant's nationality. Cultural differences linked to safety could also be seen in the answers when respondents were asked whether there is a destination they would like to visit but could not visit because they would not feel safe to travel. As many as 39 participants from 62 had destination or destinations on their mind. In addition to fear of terrorism and crimes, stated reasons for not travelling were significantly often related to gender and other personal reasons, such as religion and sexuality. Some respondents mentioned that they would not feel safe to travel alone as well as a woman. One reason given was that women are treated differently in different cultures.

"As frequent single traveller I do not want to risk visiting unsafe countries."

"I am primarily interested in the culture and the people therefore I need to be able to mingle without having to have any fears of being kidnapped, sexually harassed etc."

"Jewish lesbian US-American, so that leaves out the middle east, Pakistan, etc, and Israel too, all too dangerous for me. Plus India because of the rapes."

Surprisingly only 2 out of 62 had cancelled the whole trip because they did not feel safe to travel, although 3 out of 62 preferred not to answer. One respondent was compelled to cancel the trip during Arab Spring and another reason was overall danger of terrorism.

6.3 Travel behaviour

When asked whether respondents feel safe while travelling in general, the majority of the respondents (77,4%) answered that they feel safe and rest mentioned that they feel sometimes safe. Moreover, 36 out of 62 participants had felt unsafe while travelling. Yet, only 18 out of 62 had refrained from doing something while travelling because they have not felt safe to do so, and five participants preferred not to answer.

Respondents often avoided walking alone after dark due to unsafe neighbourhood they stayed. One did not feel comfortable to rely on strangers, if she got lost. Respondents also stated that they simple had gut feeling that it would not be safe, so they refrained themselves. In addition, some participants mentioned that they did not feel safe to travel further, whether it was to neighbouring city or even to a neighbouring country, even though they would have liked to do so. In this case too, respondents followed often suggestions and warnings from others, and refrained themselves from doing something they would have liked to.

"In the north of India, I didn't take a bus or train. I travelled between the places only with a friend and by car or plane. I've never walked in the street after dark."

"I wanted to visit another neighbouring country but did not feel safe stay a night in a train, which was the cheapest way."

"I was in Curacao and had an opportunity to travel to Venezuela. I did not do it, because that seemed to me kind of dangerous (thieves, women traffic etc)"

6.4 Travel experience

As mentioned previously, significant amount of participants estimated that they had travelled abroad either 10 to 25 times or 25 to 50 times. In addition, a considerable number of respondents could not estimate how frequently they had travelled abroad in their life. On the other hand, an average respondent travelled 3 to 5 times a year for leisure, and those 24 business travellers out of 62 respondents travelled on average 1 to 5 times a year. Participants also described themselves rather experienced travellers. Thus, one might argue, that in general participants were rather experienced travellers. When asked to describe the current situation regarding the safety of female travellers, one respondent mentioned that due to the age and experience, travelling for her was different today than it was 20 years ago when she was in her twenties. In addition to travel experience, change of life situation made some participants reconsider whether it is safe to travel or not. For instance, one respondent mentioned that after having a baby she felt more unsecure regarding safety and another one would not to travel to a certain destinations today because she has children. Negative travel experiences impacted to the preparation and destination choices for some of the participants. For example, one mentioned that she would not return to certain destinations alone.

"As I have a baby now I feel more unsecure regarding out safety there given our travel style – looking to explore and not have an all-inclusive vacation."

"I would love to go back to India or South America, but I would not go without a male companion, especially to India."

There was also some dispersion among travel habits. Some participants described themselves as couchsurfers and hitchhikers in the answers, and the accommodation was sometimes a hotel and occasionally a hostel. Furthermore, most of the participants described themselves as confident and curious travellers.

"I'm hitchhiker, couchsurfer and I like risqué things, btw, mostly, I'm travelling alone, so I can't feel safe for 100%, because all the time I can meet "bad" people."

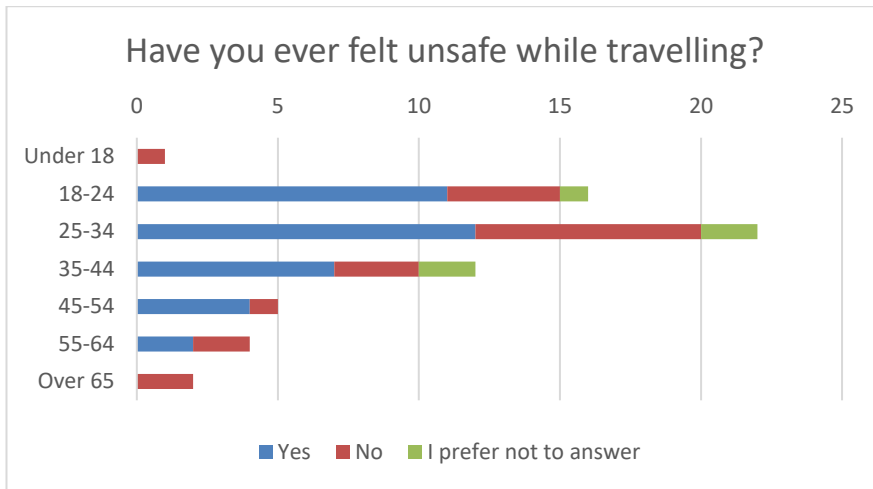


Figure 4. Unsafety while travelling classified by the age. (N=62)

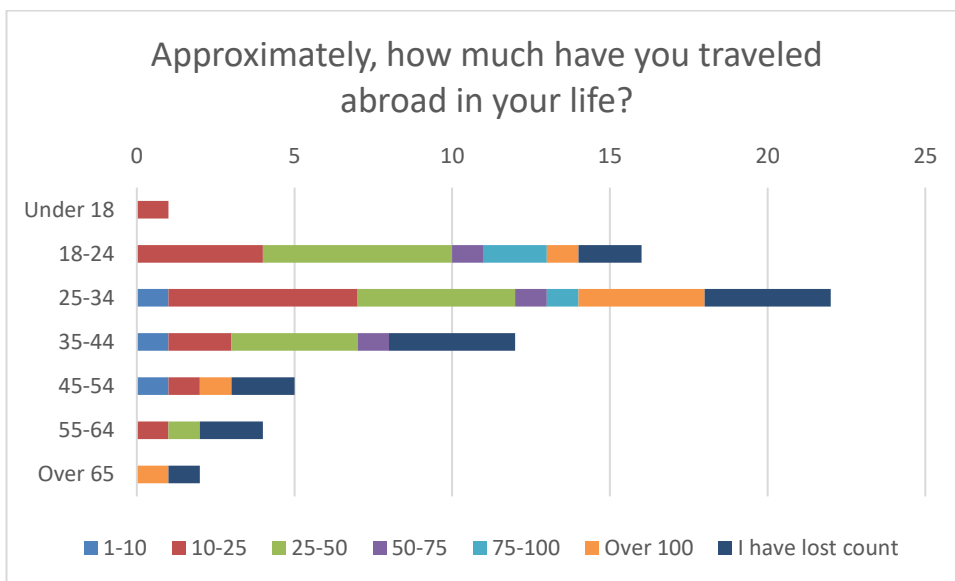


Figure 5. Travel frequency abroad classified by the age. (N=62)

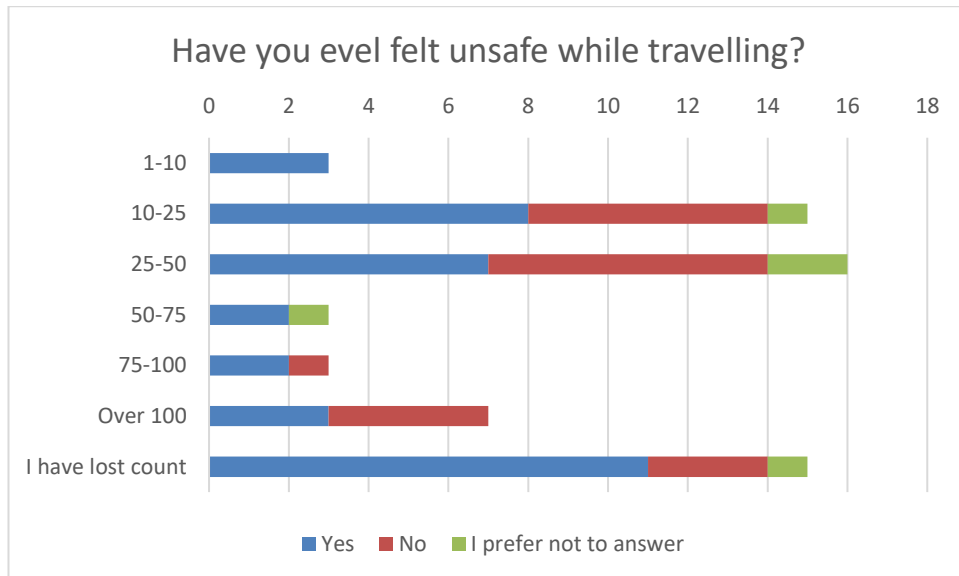


Figure 6. Unsafety while travelling, classified by how many times respondent had travelled abroad. (N=62)

As detailed in figure 4, the majority of many age groups had felt unsafe at one point during their travels. However, one respondent who was under 18 and two respondents, who were over 65, had not felt unsafe. The opinion was also divided among the 55- 64 year olds. When interpreting how travel frequency is divided among different age groups in figure 5, the variety of experiences was the widest in the biggest age group, which was 25- 34 year olds. However, older participants were not significantly experienced compared to younger ones. In addition, figure 6 demonstrates how much the sense of unsafety depends on travel frequency, meaning how many times respondent had travelled abroad. It appears that even though participant had travelled abroad often, she would still most likely feel unsafe at some point during the trip.

6.5 Reasons behind the sense of safety and insecurity

As mentioned previously, most of the participants felt safe while travelling. Participants were also asked to specify, what makes travelling safe for them. One theme was preparation before trip; doing background checks, getting travel insurance and necessary vaccinations, gathering as much as knowledge of the place and its cultural norms as well as knowing what destinations to avoid.

During travelling, participants valued the company of others as well health factors, such as access to clean water and food. Staying in safe neighbourhoods and safe accommodation were also the main reasons. In addition, being able to communicate in local language increased the sense of safety. Europe was often mentioned as a destination where participants felt safe to travel.

"Education beforehand. To me that is the biggest tool I have."

"Having a travel insurance makes me feel safe, as I know I'll be covered in case of urgency. Trying to identify the best place to sleep and which areas of the places I visit is better to go at what time of the day."

"I'm a sensible traveller, and if travelling alone, I always maintain a sense of awareness about me. I will take extra precautions of safety when alone and I always research about the cultural dos and don'ts of where I am going to."

"but I mostly travel in Europe where if I had a really bad problem I could get home in a few hours."

Safety was also linked often to overall confidence, awareness of the surroundings as well as believing that people are in general inherently good. Participants also mentioned that nowadays there is more awareness and information of the various dangers and risks which female travellers may face.

Moreover, lack of harassment and general unwanted attention, made also travelling safe. When asked to describe the unsafe situation(s) and how they reacted during those situations, respondents mentioned men as one reason for the sense of insecurity as well as danger. The same theme repeated when participants were asked the current situations regarding safety of female travellers as well as the difficulties female travellers face nowadays. For instance, respondents mentioned that when they had been followed as well as were threatened by a man, it made them change for instance their route and go to the nearest shop or pub to be safe.

Street harassment, such as staring, catcalling, were often described as a reason for unsafety and comfortability. One respondent noted while travelling with a male companion, street harassment decreased or even disappeared, and made the travelling more comfortable and freeing. In addition to street harassment, danger of assault, robbery, kidnap and rape were also themes that were repeatedly mentioned. On the other hand, some respondents agreed that it is not significantly safer to travel as man than it is as a woman, since the risks only differ.

"Street harassment happens all the time in those places and with a man it is extremely decreased in some cases becomes non-existent. It's not that I would feel unsafe going alone, it would just be so much more comfortable and freeing to go with a man because then I wouldn't have to worry about it."

"I was walking around Barcelona and there was a guy constantly following me and threatening me during the day. I walked into shops to get rid of him. He waited outside. He got tired eventually. "

"Walking alone at night in a country where i dont know the language not even the scritpature... the streets were empty till i saw a group of men standing ahead on my way so i turn at the corner to avoid to pass by, just in case..."

“The countries I am concerned about travelling to alone are those where the general view towards women is not equal to those in Western countries, and where violent sexual crimes towards women are more common place.”

Another theme for insecurity, was the time of the day. Significant number of participants mentioned that they had felt unsafe travelling during the night and evening. Respondents were more alert and cautious during night, and as mentioned before, avoided often walking during dark. Feeling unsafe was also linked to single situations, such as getting lost and events, that were not depended on the traveller. For instance, terror attack happening during the trip, a stranger knocking on the door middle of the night and train stopping in the middle of night without an explanation. As mentioned previously, respondents valued the opinions of others. Some participants stated that one reason why they felt unsafe in certain situation, was because they were advised it is unsafe.

“I can't remember exactly. But I have gotten lost in a lot of different places and felt unsafe, just because of the fact that I was lost and couldn't speak the language.”

“During a trip in a very remote location, in an arabic country, car got stuck in the mud. Had to walk for 2 km until we found some workers that agreed to help. The area was known, also by the locals, to be not so safe for tourists. It all ended well and people were nice and kind. But, during the time, given the location and lack of people around, it was a tense situation.”

“I felt unsafe to get out of hotel or student campus in India, after it got dark. We were told not to do that for safety reasons.”

6.6 Summary

In summary, 37 out of 62 respondents had looked for information regarding safety before travelling, for instance from authorities, guide books, previews or other travellers. Respondents were interested of the overall safety of the destination, for instance political situations, unrest, crimes and location of the accommodation. 62 percent of participants had a destination on their mind they would like to visit but could not because they were concerned of their safety. However, only 2 out of 62 had cancelled the trip because of the safety.

72,6 percent of participants preferred travelling with some, whether it was a friend, partner or family and 77,4 percent felt safe while travelling in general. Even though 36 out 62 participants indicated that they had felt unsafe at one point while travelling, only 18 out of 62 respondents had refrained doing something while travelling because they did not felt safe to do so. For instance, they did not walk alone during the night or did not visit neighbouring destinations.

Most of the respondents saw themselves rather experienced and independent travellers. There was also no remarkable difference between age and experience. Older participants were not significantly experienced that younger participants. In addition, the travel experience did not play a big role whether one would feel unsafe during trip.

One main reason for feeling safe was preparation, for instance having information about the destination, cultural norms and the language of the destination. Moreover, other people as well as safe neighbourhoods made participants feel safe. Feeling safe was also linked to confidence and awareness. In contrast, participants mentioned that street harassment and unwanted attention made them often feel unsafe, as well as time of day and danger of assault, robbery, kidnap and rape.

7 Conclusions

It is important to take into consideration the fact that the answers represent small group of women. Over a half of the respondents were Caucasian. Many respondents mentioned in the answers that they were either from European countries or Northern America. Perhaps this is one reason why answers were often rather Europe-centric, Europe against the rest of the world. In addition, second reason is that the survey was shared in online Viennese Facebook communities, whose members live as well as are strongly connected to Europe.

In addition, one should bear in mind the current location of many respondents. The location of Vienna is convenient for shorts trips abroad, since many countries are accessible only in couple of hours and in affordable way. This most likely had an impact on how often respondents have travelled abroad. It is possible that the findings of this research would have been different if the ethnical background were much wider and the participants were living in many different locations.

The aim of the thesis was to investigate how female travellers experience safety. Thus, one research question was what kind of impact does the safety has on decision-making process before the trip, for example choosing the destination and the time. Participants often expressed that they trusted as well as valued the opinion of others, whether it was from authorities, travellers, locals or guidebooks. However, only a bit over half of the respondents had looked for information regarding safety before. Safety was also rarely a reason to cancel a whole trip. Only if the danger was immediate, such a terrorism or unrest. On the other hand, there were many destinations, that participants wanted to avoid. For instance, Middle Eastern countries as well as India were regularly listed as destinations that participants did not want to visit.

To answer to research question, how the sense of safety has an influence on travel behaviour, the biggest influence on travel behaviour can be seen before the actual trip. As stated in previous paragraph, significant number of participants had destination on their mind, which they would like to visit but could not because they are concerned of their safety. On the other hand, a notable number of participants had felt unsafe while travelling. In fact, compared to how many participants had felt unsafe while travelling, few had refrained from doing something during their trip because they had felt unsafe. The majority stated that they had not refrained doing something during their trip because they had not felt safe. Safety can also have an effect whether to travel alone or with someone else. As stated in theoretical framework, female solo travellers are one growing market and was a repeating topic in the results, yet only 21,7% participants preferred travelling alone. One

reason for this can be the fact that respondents felt safer to travel with someone, and chose companion over travelling alone.

Most respondents described themselves experienced, none of the participants saw themselves extremely unexperienced travellers. 24 out of 62 travelled for leisure from 3 to 5 times per year. Whereas 61 out of 62 participants travelled for leisure, only 38,7 percent travelled for work. Consequently, the travel experiences were more focusing on leisure travel than on business travel. As demonstrated before, even though a participant had travelled remarkable amount, she would still feel unsafe. On the other hand, it can also mean that well-travelled participants had felt unsafe before but did not feel unsafe regularly or even not at all anymore. The fact that nevertheless 77,4 percent of participants felt safe while travelling supports this claim.

To answer to research question what kind of impact previous travel experience impact on the sense of safety, it appears that the quality of travel experience has often more impact on sense of safety than how often one has travelled. For instance, previous negative travel experiences made some participants feel unsafe and even some avoided travelling to the destinations, where the negative experience happened. One stated that she felt much more unsafe 20 years ago than now because of her age and travel experience. In addition, couch surfers and hitchhikers did feel safe in general even though they also mentioned that there had been situations they had felt uncomfortable.

One research was what are the reasons behind the sense of safety and insecurity. Confidence was repeatedly used as an example when asked what makes travelling safe. One reason for confidence can be a preparation before the trip, which was one topic of the findings. Gaining knowledge of the destination, such as local language, cultural norms and which places to avoid. In addition, having travel insurance and needed vaccinations. Respondents mentioned that there were nowadays more information and awareness regarding the dangers and risks. Multiple travel blogs were also offering information, and many respondents used travel blogs as their source in preparation. In addition to travel blogs, respondents valued the information for instance from authorities. During trip, travelling with somebody, having local guidance, and staying in safe neighbourhood increased the sense of safety among respondents.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, travellers are often more tempting targets for criminals than locals are. This can also be seen in the results. Participants often mentioned danger of various crimes a cause for their insecurity, for example robbery, assault, rape and kidnap. Whereas participants valued the opinions and information from others, it

also impacted on the sense of insecurity. For instance, one participant revealed that she had felt unsafe because she was advised that a certain neighbourhood would be dangerous. Gender played a big role in the sense of insecurity. One of the most discussed theme regarding sense of insecurity in the answers was men. The reasons stated for the insecurity towards men, were for example unwanted attention, sexism and threat. Some participants argued that there is still large gap between men and women, for instance how they are treated in different cultures. On the other hand, as couple of participants mentioned, it can be dangerous to anyone, regardless of their gender.

Unsafety and danger was often associated with certain destinations. Europe was described as rather safe continent for travelling whereas countries in South America and Middle East were unsafe destinations to travel by many respondents.

World Economic Forum's the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017 supports the previous claim. One part of report measures how enabling the environment is to tourism, such as from safety and security point of view. At the end of the list there were many South American, Central American and Middle Eastern countries, for instance Colombia was the least safe country of 136 countries from where data was collected. Other unsafe countries were for example Yemen and El Salvador. India, that was also often mentioned unsafe destination by the participants, were also one of the most unsafe country. However, United Arab Emirates and Oman, which are Middle Eastern countries were in top 4 being the safest countries to travel. (World Economic Forum 2017, 7; 35.)

As already previously stated, the point of view for this research is women travellers, and how they can feel safer while travelling abroad. One of the biggest theme in the results were awareness and knowledge. While interpreting the results, it appears that the information and knowledge is being shared as well as is much more reachable nowadays, whether it is for instance about reviews of accommodation, destination tips, information of cultural norms or safety guidelines from the authorities. The importance of locals and their knowledge was also one theme, that emerged from the answers. One way to connect with locals is to learn how to communicate in the local language, even if it means learning few sentences. Moreover, language barriers can create misunderstandings which can create unsafe situations.

As mentioned in previously in the theoretical framework, one motivator is to learn about different cultures and create relationships. Relationships is not only a motivator, it was a factor that increased regularly the sense of safety among participants. Whether it was

connecting with locals or other travellers, sharing the experiences and not being completely isolated can decrease the sense of insecurity. Even if one prefers to travel alone, one could for instance notify friends and family or other travellers, of the location and plans.

Furthermore, awareness and knowledge is strongly linked to the preparation before the trip. Preparation is indeed one key competent in safety. For example, doing research about the accommodation alternatives, how to travel around the destination and what to do in case of the emergency. Surprisingly few participants mentioned travel insurance when asked what makes travelling safe for them. It is possible that having a travel insurance is such an obvious part of the travelling for the experienced participants that they did not even consider it as a factor of the sense of safety. However, it is important to emphasize the importance of having a travel insurance and having all the needed medical necessities.

Some parts of the findings can be analysed further, such as investigating why certain destinations were repeatedly seen as unsafe countries by the participants. However, because this research focuses on how female travellers could feel safer while travelling abroad, and not for example on the safety image of the destinations, were the reasons behind the destinations' safety issues not interpreted any further.

As stated before, the aim of this research was to investigate how female travellers experience safety. Many participants were aware of different safety aspects, yet safety did not play significantly big role in travel behaviour as one might assume. Female travellers did travel and felt safe to do so, even though from time to time they felt unsafe. In the answers, there were discussions for and against whether it would ever be completely safe to travel. For instance, it is possible that in the future female travellers would still feel unsafe in certain situations during the trip, especially when the situations are out of their influence. Even though sense of safety is always a personal matter, can for instance thorough preparation and taking the advices into consideration help female travellers to feel more confident to travel and explore the world.

As mentioned previously, the results will benefit especially female travellers, who have not travelled often and/or are interested of travelling alone. In addition, the findings can be used for safety tips and recommendations for female travellers. These safety tips and recommendations are summarized in the following lists.

Preparation before trip:

- Check if the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or other authority offers any information, for instance your rights in the destination, guidelines, location of the embassy in the destination(s) as well as news and recommendations.
- Educate yourself by reading blogs written by female travellers as well as articles about female travelling.
- Use the power of social media. Look for reviews of the accommodations and the destination. Ask if anyone knows someone who is living in the destination or has travelled there before, and would be like share the knowledge or even meet during the trip.
- Write down the emergency numbers and what to do in a case of emergency.
- Learn few phrases of the local language and educate yourself about the cultural norms.
- Learn how to travel in the destination, for instance, how to use public transportation or taxi.
- Background checks, for instance the accommodation.
- Get a travel insurance that covers everything. Get needed vaccinations and have the needed medicines with you. Get copies of all the important documents.

During the trip:

- Tell someone back home about your plans, where are you planning to go. Especially if you are travelling alone. Keep people updated of your plans, for instance if you cannot be reached for a while.
- Respect the local culture and its people, be curious to learn more.
- Interact with locals and/or other travellers, even though you want to travel alone. They might have information that you were not able to gather before the trip. They also might be able to help you overcome your possible doubts of travelling.
- Do not do anything you do not feel comfortable of doing. Trust your instincts.
- Do not take unnecessary risks.

8 Reflection

Even though I found the topic of my thesis extremely interesting, writing this thesis was a challenge. This research was first the research that I implemented myself and the report was completely written by myself. This can be seen in several parts. For instance, even though the overall reason behind the thesis, safety, as well as the target, female travellers, stayed the same, the aim changed slightly along the writing process. It impacted on the research questions as well as the survey. According to the statistics given by Webropol, over 300 people had visited the survey, yet only 62 answered the survey. It can be argued that the topic of the thesis did attract interest but the questionnaire did not manage to keep participants motivated as well as interested to answer. It is possible that the questions were not clear enough, were repeating themselves or there were too many questions and participants felt answering too time-consuming.

One of the biggest challenges was finding the appropriate sources about female travellers, especially single female travellers. Even though there were multiple blog posts focusing on female travellers as well as articles about female travellers, there were few academic books and other publications focusing on female travellers. This was rather time-consuming and did affect for instance on the discourse in the theoretical framework. While searching for sources, I used multiple platforms provided by the library, such as Ellibs, EBL E-Book Library and EBSCOhost. Another challenge was the language. Writing the thesis in English was a goal that I had set from the beginning. I wanted to improve my written English, because I believed it would benefit my career and possible future studies.

I improved my information search skills and became more critical about what is an appropriate source and what is not. Furthermore, I now know more about the phenomenon of female travellers, especially how female travellers experience safety. One could argue that I reached my aim of this thesis, investigating how female travellers experience safety. In addition, my written English improved, for instance the vocabulary developed significantly.

Bibliography

BBC 2016. 'Yesterday I was killed but worse was the humiliation which came after'. URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-35756321> Accessed: 09.02.2017

Cann, C. 2016. Women on the move. Travel Trade Gazette UK & Ireland.

Cambridge dictionary 2017a. URL: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ethnicity> Accessed: 10.02.2017

Cambridge dictionary 2017b. URL: <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/nationality> Accessed 10.02.2017

Couchsurfing 2017. Safety basics. URL: <http://about.couchsurfing.com/about/safety/> Accessed: 29.03.2017

CTI 2015. Business Travel and the Lone Female Traveller – Are Companies Doing Enough? URL: <http://www.cti.co.uk/business-travel-and-the-lone-female-traveller-are-companies-doing-enough/> Accessed: 01.03.2017

Economist 2015. Plenty more space in the closet. URL: <http://www.economist.com/blogs/gulliver/2015/01/women-friendly-hotels> Accessed: 10.02.2017

Fearis, B. 2009. Ladies First? Buying Business Travel, 41.

Germann Molz, J. 2011. CouchSurfing and network hospitality: 'It's not just about the furniture'. *Hospitality & Society*, 1, 3.

Henderson, J. 2006. *Tourism Crises: Causes, Consequences and Management*. Elsevier Inc. Oxford.

Heimtun, B & Abelsen, B. 2014. Singles and solo travel: gender and type of holiday. *Tourism, Culture & Communication*, 13.

Holloway, J., Humphreys, C. & Davidson, R. 2009. *The business of tourism*. Pearson Education Limited. Essex.

Independent 2017. Air India to launch women-only seats after sexual harassment reports. URL: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/air-india-women-only-seats-groping-reports-sexual-harassment-a7528721.html> Accessed:16.02.2017

Junek, O., Binney, W. & Winn, S. 2006. All-female travel: What do women really want? *Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal*, 54, 1.

Kozak, M. & Kozak, N. 2016. *Tourist Behaviour An International Perspective*. CAB International. Oxfordshire.

Mansfeld, Y & Pizam, A. 2006. *Tourism, Security and Safety from Theory to Practice*. Elsevier Inc. Oxford.

McNamara, K & Prideaux, B. 2010. A Typology of Solo Independent Women Travellers. *International journal of tourism research*, 12.

Pitkäranta A, 2014. Laadullinen tutkimus opinnäytetyönä työkirja ammattikorkeakouluun. E-Oppi Oy. Jokioinen

Skift 2014. The Changing Dynamics of Female Travelers. URL: <https://skift.com/2014/05/19/the-changing-dynamics-of-female-travelers/> Accessed: 28.02.2017

Skift 2016. There's a Safety Gap Separating Female and Male Business Travelers. URL: <https://skift.com/2016/05/24/theres-a-safety-gap-separating-female-and-male-business-travelers/> Accessed: 23.02.2017

Skift 2017. Travel Megatrends 2017: This Is the Year of the Modern Female Traveler. URL: <https://skift.com/2017/01/30/travel-megatrends-2017-this-is-the-year-of-the-modern-female-traveler/> Accessed: 20.02.2017

Swarbrooke, J. & Horner, S. 2007. *Consumer behaviour in tourism*. Elsevier Ltd. Oxford.

The New York Times 2015. A Solo Traveler's Guide to Meeting People. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/08/travel/meeting-people-on-the-road.html> Accessed: 29.03.2017

Veal, A.J. 2006. Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism. Pearson Education Limited. Essex.

Vice 2016. How Hotels Are Capitalizing on Women's Fears of Traveling Alone. URL: https://broadly.vice.com/en_us/article/how-hotels-are-capitalizing-on-womens-fears-of-traveling-alone Accessed: 09.02.2017

Vilkkä, H. 2015. Tutki ja kehitä. PS-kustannus. Jyväskylä.

Wilson, E & Little, D. 2005. A 'relative escape'? The impact of constraint on women who travel solo. *Tourism Review International*, 9.

Wilson, E & Harris, C. 2006. Meaningful travel: Women, independent travel and the search for self and meaning. *Tourism*. 54, 2.

Wilson, E. & Little, D. 2008. The Solo Female Travel Experience: Exploring the 'Geography of Women's Fear'. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 11, 2.

Woodside, A. & Martin, D. 2007. *Tourism Management: Analysis, Behaviour, and Strategy*. CAB International. Oxfordshire.

World Economic Forum 2017. The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017. URL: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_TTCR_2017_web_0401.pdf Accessed: 24.04.2017

Appendices

Appendix 1. Covering letter for the link



Salla Ahokas shared a link.

16 February



Dear Ladies,

I have asked beforehand that this is okay to post here.

I am currently in the process of writing my thesis here in Vienna. Topic of my thesis is safety of female travellers (which can be quite suitable for this group?) so I thought I could share my survey here.

The answers will help me to understand the reasons behind the sense of safety and insecurity while travelling abroad. The survey should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. All the responses will be anonymous and confidential, and the participants will never be identified individually.

Thank you in advance! 😊

www.webpolsurveys.com

WEBPOLSURVEYS.COM

Appendix 2. Survey introduction

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this questionnaire.

I am tourism student from Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences and am currently in the process of writing my thesis. The purpose of the research is to investigate safety of female travellers. Your answers will help me to understand the reasons behind the sense of safety and insecurity while travelling abroad.

The survey should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Your responses will be confidential and anonymous, and you will never be identified individually.

If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact me by following email: [salla.ahokas\(at\)my.haaga-helia.fi](mailto:salla.ahokas@my.haaga-helia.fi)

Sincerely yours,

Salla Ahokas

Appendix 3. Questionnaire

Safety of female travellers

Travel background

1. Approximately, how much have you travelled abroad in your life? *

- 1-10
- 10-25
- 25-50
- 50-75
- 75-100
- Over 100
- I have lost count

2. How would you describe yourself as a traveler? *

- | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Inexperienced | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Experienced |
| Inflexible | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Flexible |
| Unadventurous | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Adventurous |
| You like to plan everything ahead | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | You like to go with the flow |
| Dependent | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Independent |
| Incurious | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Curious |
| Timid | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Confident |

3. How do you prefer to travel? *

- Alone
- Together with a friend, partner or family
- In a group

4. Do you travel for business? *

- Yes
- No

5. If answered yes, how often do you travel for business per year?

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-8
- 9-10
- Over 10

6. Do you travel for leisure? *

- Yes
- No

7. If answered yes, how often do you travel for leisure per year?

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-8
- 9-10
- Over 10

Before the trip

8. Have you ever looked for information regarding safety before trip? *

Yes

No

9. If answered yes, please specify what kind of safety aspects (such as dangers and annoyances in the destination) did you search for.

10. Is there a destination which you would like to visit but could not because you are concerned about your safety? *

Yes

No

I prefer not to answer

11. If answered yes, please specify the reason(s) why you are concerned about your safety.

12. Have you ever cancelled a trip because you have not felt safe to travel? *

Yes

No

I prefer not to answer

13. If answered yes, please specify the reason(s).

During the trip

14. Do you feel safe while travelling? *

Yes

No

Sometimes

15. If answered yes or sometimes, please specify what makes travelling safe.

16. Have you ever refrained from doing something during the trip because you have not felt safe to do so? *

Yes

No

I prefer not to answer

17. If answered yes, please specify the reason(s).

18. Have you ever felt unsafe while travelling? *

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to answer

19. If answered yes, please describe the situation(s) and/or your reaction(s).

20. How would you describe the current situation regarding the safety of female travellers?

*

21. In your opinion, what kind of difficulties female travellers may face nowadays? *

22. Age *

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- Over 65

23. Ethnicity *

- African
- Caucasian
- Caribbean
- East Asian
- Latino/Hispanic
- Middle Eastern
- South Asian
- Mixed
- Other