

TikTok Influences on Female Solo Travellers

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Abstract - This study investigates how TikTok influences female solo travellers by examining the platform's content characteristics, engagement features, and motivational messages that shape women travellers' perceptions and behavioural intentions. A qualitative content analysis was conducted using 70 TikTok short videos related to female solo travel. Data were collected from captions, hashtags, comments, likes, shares, and favourites, and analysed thematically through the Stimulus Organism Response Theory to explain how digital stimuli trigger psychological reactions and behavioural responses. The results indicate that TikTok significantly encourages female solo travel through empowering narratives, destination inspiration, and interactive community engagement. "Empowerment and motivation" was the most dominant theme, appearing in 48 posts and generating the highest average engagement of 4,196,794 likes, followed by self-identity and growth (25 posts) and destination highlights (13 posts). Caption tone analysis found empowering captions as the most frequent (22.42%), followed by excited (13.94%) and inspirational (11.52%). Hashtag analysis showed #solotravel as the leading tag (45%), while comment themes were dominated by empowerment (17.25%), desire to start (14.98%), and inspiration (11.75%), reflecting behavioural readiness among viewers. Tourism marketers and destination managers can leverage authentic female travel stories, empowering captions, and strategic hashtags to attract women travellers. This study contributes to emerging tourism literature by analysing real TikTok content rather than self-reported surveys, offering fresh insight into how short-form social media shapes contemporary female travel behaviour.

1. INTRODUCTION

TikTok has transformed contemporary tourism communication by reshaping how travellers search for information, evaluate destinations, and form travel intentions. Unlike earlier platforms that relied heavily on static images or long form narratives, TikTok combines short video storytelling, algorithmic visibility, music, captions, and interactive feedback that rapidly influence audience perceptions. Recent studies indicate that social media content increasingly functions as a major source of destination inspiration, particularly among younger travellers who prefer visually immersive and peer generated content (Dramićanin et al., 2023; Wu, 2024). Within this environment, travel decisions are no longer driven solely by official marketing campaigns, but by user generated experiences that appear authentic, relatable, and emotionally engaging.

Female solo travel has simultaneously emerged as a growing global tourism segment associated with independence, self discovery, flexibility, and empowerment. Prior studies show that women travellers increasingly pursue solo journeys for confidence building, personal growth, and meaningful experiences, while also navigating barriers such as safety concerns, social judgement, and travel constraints (Chen et al., 2023; Shukor & Kattiyapornpong, 2024). Although the broader solo travel literature has expanded, limited scholarly attention has examined how TikTok specifically shapes female solo travel aspirations and behavioural responses. Existing research often focuses on Instagram, travel blogs, or general influencer marketing, leaving TikTok's distinctive short video ecosystem underexplored. This gap is significant because TikTok's emotionally persuasive format may influence not only destination awareness, but also courage, readiness, and perceived feasibility of travelling alone.

Therefore, this study investigates how TikTok content influences female solo travellers through captions, hashtags, comments, and engagement cues, contributing fresh insight into digital tourism behaviour and gendered mobility in the platform economy.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

This study is guided by the -Organism-Response Theory, which explains how external environmental cues influence internal psychological states, which subsequently shape behavioural responses. In tourism and digital marketing research, the model has been widely used to explain how media content stimulates emotions, cognition, and decision making. Sohaib et al. (2022) applied the framework to social media marketing and found that online stimuli such as content quality, interactivity, and entertainment significantly affect users' emotional reactions and behavioural intentions. Within the present context, TikTok videos, captions, hashtags, comments, and engagement metrics act as stimuli. Female viewers then interpret these cues cognitively and emotionally through inspiration, confidence, trust, curiosity, or reassurance, which may lead to responses such as liking content, sharing videos, saving destinations, or deciding to travel alone. The framework is particularly suitable because solo female travel decisions are not based solely on rational information search, but also on emotional readiness, self-efficacy, and perceived safety.

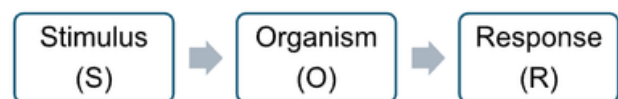


Figure 1. Theory of Stimulus Organism Response (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974)

2.2 Female Solo Travel Motivation and Constraints

Rather than being merely an emerging tourism segment, female solo travel represents a form of self development, independence, and identity construction. Previous studies consistently demonstrate that women increasingly choose solo travel to experience autonomy, personal growth, flexibility, and freedom from social obligations (Yang et al., 2019; Terziyska, 2021; Ejupi & Medarić, 2022). Similarly, Hamid et al. (2021) and Nguyen and Hsu (2023) argue that solo travel facilitates self reflection, confidence building, and psychological transformation, suggesting that the benefits extend beyond recreational travel into broader personal development.

Despite these positive outcomes, researchers also acknowledge that female solo travel remains constrained by safety concerns, social expectations, and perceived travel risks. Karagöz et al. (2020) reported that anxiety and perceived insecurity significantly reduce travel intention, while Ngwira et al. (2020) and Nematpour et al. (2024) found that Muslim female travellers additionally negotiate family expectations and cultural norms before travelling independently. Rather than preventing travel entirely, these constraints encourage women to seek reassurance through information searching, digital communities, and shared travel experiences. Consequently, contemporary female solo travel reflects a continuous negotiation between empowerment and perceived risk, highlighting the importance of online platforms that simultaneously inspire confidence and reduce uncertainty.

2.3 TikTok as a Digital Tourism Ecosystem

Recent tourism research increasingly recognises TikTok as more than a social networking application. It functions as a digital tourism ecosystem where destination information, personal storytelling, influencer communication, and peer

interaction coexist to shape travel behaviour. Dramićanin et al. (2023) and Belza et al. (2024) demonstrate that TikTok significantly influences destination awareness through emotionally engaging short videos, while Booking.com (2024) reports that travellers increasingly rely on TikTok for destination inspiration and travel recommendations.

Unlike conventional destination marketing, TikTok integrates multiple persuasive elements within a single platform. Influencers contribute credibility and social proof by documenting authentic travel experiences (Pop et al., 2021; Rajput & Gandhi, 2024), whereas user generated content increases perceived authenticity and trust (Gozali & Tunjungsari, 2024). Simultaneously, captions, hashtags, comments, likes, shares, and favourites reinforce social interaction and community participation, strengthening users' confidence in travel decisions. Cao et al. (2021) further explain that narrative immersion within short videos stimulates emotional transportation, making audiences more receptive to travel messages than traditional promotional materials.

These findings collectively suggest that TikTok influences travel behaviour through the interaction of visual storytelling, creator credibility, and community engagement rather than through isolated communication features.

2.4 TikTok and Female Solo Travel Behaviour

While studies have established the importance of TikTok in destination marketing and documented the growing popularity of female solo travel, relatively few studies integrate these two research streams. Existing research primarily examines influencer marketing (Pop et al., 2021), destination image (Dramićanin et al., 2023), or solo female travel motivations (Shukor & Kattiyapornpong, 2024) independently.

Furthermore, previous investigations largely rely on questionnaire surveys that examine travellers' perceptions after exposure to social media. Comparatively little attention has been given to analysing the actual content characteristics of TikTok posts, including captions, hashtags, comments, and engagement indicators, despite these features representing the primary communication mechanisms through which users experience the platform. Analysing naturally occurring TikTok content therefore offers an opportunity to understand how platform specific stimuli generate psychological responses associated with empowerment, confidence, and behavioural intention among female solo travellers. This perspective aligns with the Stimulus Organism Response framework adopted in the present study.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

This study employed a qualitative content analysis to examine how TikTok content influences female solo travellers. Content analysis was selected because it enables the systematic examination of naturally occurring digital communication, including videos, captions, hashtags, comments, and engagement metrics, thereby providing insight into how tourism-related meanings are constructed and communicated (Vespestad & Clancy, 2021).

A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to identify information-rich cases that aligned with the study objective (Dawadi, 2020). Seventy publicly accessible TikTok videos relating to female solo travel were selected using keywords and hashtags such as #solotravel, #femalesolotravel, and #solofemaletraveler. Videos were included if they focused on female solo travel, were publicly accessible, demonstrated visible audience engagement, and contained supporting textual elements such as captions or comments.

Data extracted from each post included the video's core message, captions, hashtags, likes, comments, shares, favourites, and audience interactions.

The data were collected from TikTok over a four-week period. Videos were retrieved using the TikTok search function with predefined keywords and hashtags, including #solotravel, #solofemaletravel, #solofemaletraveler, #solotravelwoman, and related search terms. To minimise algorithmic bias, searches were performed using multiple keywords and repeated on different days before compiling the final dataset.

Purposive sampling was employed to identify information-rich cases that directly addressed the research objective (Dawadi, 2020). Videos were included when they:

- focused primarily on female solo travel;
- were publicly accessible;
- were presented in English or contained English captions;
- contained captions or audience comments suitable for qualitative analysis; and
- displayed visible engagement indicators, including likes, comments, shares, or favourites.

Videos were excluded if they:

- promoted commercial advertisements without personal travel experiences;
- consisted solely of duplicated or reposted content;
- focused on group travel or family travel rather than solo female travel;
- contained insufficient textual information for analysis; or
- were inaccessible during the data collection period.

After the screening process, 70 videos met all inclusion criteria and formed the final dataset. The sample size was considered appropriate because thematic saturation was achieved, whereby

additional videos produced limited new thematic insights while recurring patterns became increasingly consistent. Similar sample sizes have been adopted in previous qualitative content analyses of social media tourism content.

For each selected video, the researchers extracted information relating to the video's core message, caption, hashtags, audience comments, likes, comments, shares, favourites, and visual characteristics. These data formed the basis for subsequent thematic coding and descriptive analysis.

3.2 Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Dawadi (2020), involving data familiarisation, initial coding, theme generation, theme refinement, and interpretation. Manual coding was conducted using Microsoft Excel to categorise recurring themes related to empowerment, self identity, destination highlights, safety, motivation, and community support. Descriptive summaries of content frequency and engagement metrics were subsequently produced to complement the thematic findings.

The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Dawadi (2020). Analysis consisted of five stages:

1. repeated familiarisation with all selected Tiktok videos;
2. open coding of captions, hashtags, comments, and visual and visual content;
3. grouping related codes into broader thematic categories;
4. reviewing and refining themes through repeated comparison across videos; and
5. interpreting the final themes in relation to the study objectives.

Manual coding was conducted using Microsoft Excel. Initially, each TikTok post was treated as one unit of analysis. Separate coding columns were created for core message, caption tone, caption theme, hashtag, comment theme, engagement metrics, and visual characteristics. During the first coding cycle, descriptive codes were assigned to recurring concepts identified within the content. Similar codes were subsequently merged into higher-order themes through constant comparison across all 70 videos.

The coding framework evolved iteratively throughout the analysis. For example, initial codes such as confidence, encouragement, self-belief, and independence were consolidated under the broader theme of Empowerment and Motivation, whereas codes relating to reflection, confidence building, and self-discovery were grouped under Self-Identity and and Growth. This iterative process continued until no substantial new categories emerged.

Table 1. Coding framework based on the S-O-R framework

S-O-R Construct	Operationalisation in This Study	Example
Stimulus	TikTok videos, captions, hashtags, creator narratives, destination visuals	Empowerment videos, destination highlights
Organism	Psychological reactions inferred from captions and audience comments	Confidence, inspiration, courage, reassurance, curiosity
Response	Behavioural expressions observed in comments and engagement	Desire to travel, trip planning, sharing, saving, liking

To enhance analytical consistency, all coded data were reviewed repeatedly, and earlier coding decisions were revisited whenever new patterns emerged. The final coding framework was applied consistently across all selected videos before descriptive summaries and thematic interpretations were produced.

Although Microsoft Excel was used as the primary coding platform, descriptive frequencies and engagement statistics were subsequently calculated to identify dominant themes across captions, hashtags, comments, and core content messages.

Word Cloud Generation

Word cloud visualisations were generated to complement the thematic analysis by illustrating the relative prominence of frequently occurring textual concepts. Separate word clouds were produced for content core messages, caption tones, hashtags, caption themes, and audience comment themes.

Following completion of the manual coding process, coded keywords and phrases were exported from Microsoft Excel into Network View at Atlas.ti. Prior to visualisation, duplicate words, punctuation, common stop words, conjunctions, and non-meaningful terms were removed to improve readability. Word size within each figure represents the relative frequency of coded terms rather than statistical significance. The word clouds were therefore used as visual summaries to support the thematic findings rather than as independent analytical techniques.

The interpretation of the findings was informed by the Stimulus Organism Response framework, which guided the analysis of how TikTok content characteristics function as digital stimuli that evoke psychological responses and

influence behavioural outcomes. The theoretical rationale for applying the framework has been established in the literature review and therefore is not repeated here.

3.3 Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To enhance credibility, all selected videos were reviewed repeatedly throughout the coding process, and coding decisions were cross checked across captions, hashtags, comments, and engagement indicators to ensure consistency. As the study analysed only publicly accessible TikTok content, no personal or private information was collected, and ethical principles relating to unobtrusive online research were observed (Vespestad & Clancy, 2021).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

THE TIKTOK CONTENT CORE MESSAGES FEATURE FEMALE SOLO TRAVEL

To understand their common traits, it is important to examine what makes TikTok posts on female solo travel attractive and influential. This section explores key attributes, including core content messages, emotional tones in captions, and hashtags used to reach a wider audience.

During thematic analysis, the coding framework was informed by the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) framework. Rather than coding only descriptive content categories, the analysis also identified textual indicators that reflected potential organism states and behavioural responses. Organism states were inferred from audience expressions of confidence, empowerment, inspiration, curiosity, reassurance, and reduced fear appearing within captions and user comments. Response categories were identified through explicit behavioural expressions such as intentions to begin solo travel, destination planning,

information seeking, content sharing, and engagement behaviours including likes, comments, shares, and favourites. These categories were interpreted qualitatively to understand how TikTok content may facilitate behavioural intention rather than to establish causal relationships.

CONTENT CORE MESSAGE

Table 2 presents the diversity of content core messages gathered from TikTok short videos. The second column displays the frequency of the content category. The table further encompasses the engagement data for these 10 content core messages, including the count of likes, comments, shares, and favourites.

The study finds that "Empowerment and Motivation" is the most prominent core message, appearing in 48 posts and receiving the highest engagement, including likes, comments, shares, and favourites. This supports previous research by Umur (2024) and Asri et al. (2024), showing that female travellers seek strength and encouragement from travel vlogs, trusting content creators more than traditional marketing.

"Self-Identity and Growth" follows with 25 posts, showing that female travellers use TikTok for inspiration and personal development. Silva et al. (2020) and Ghadhan et al. (2023) suggest that solo travel fosters self-reflection and growth, enhancing identity and decision-making.

"Destination Highlights" (13 posts) and "Personal Experiences" (10 posts) receive moderate engagement, emphasizing travel inspiration and authenticity. As Asri et al. (2024) mention, social media helps users discover new places and trust travel stories from creators. Other core messages include "Challenges and How to Overcome Them" and "Social Connection" (9 posts each) with lower engagement. "Travel Tips and Hacks" (7 posts) is

valued for decision-making, aligning with Pop et al. (2021), showing users rely on creators' travel experiences.

Less frequent but impactful topics include "Cultural Immersion" (5 posts), "Budget and Cost Management" (2 posts), and "Safety and Security" (2 posts). These reflect key concerns for female solo travellers, such as cultural experiences, financial planning, and safety. Silva et al. (2020), Ghadhan et al. (2023), and Yozukmaz (2024) confirm that safety influences destination choices, as females may be more vulnerable to risks like theft and harassment.

Empowerment Emerges as a Collective Digital Narrative Rather than an Individual Travel Motive

The findings demonstrate that empowerment extends beyond a personal motivation for female solo travel and instead functions as the dominant narrative constructed within the TikTok ecosystem. Empowerment consistently appeared across the platform's core content messages, caption themes, caption tones, and audience comments, indicating that the discourse surrounding female solo travel is collectively reinforced through both content creators and viewers. This suggests that empowerment is socially reproduced through repeated digital interaction rather than communicated solely through individual travel experiences.

Previous studies have primarily conceptualised empowerment as an internal motivation driving women to travel independently (Silva et al., 2020; Hamid et al., 2021; Terziyska, 2021). In contrast, the present findings indicate that TikTok transforms empowerment into a shared community narrative where viewers actively validate and reinforce one another's travel aspirations through comments, engagement, and emotional support. This extends existing

Table 2. Table of descriptive content core messages

Content Core Message	Frequency	Average Likes	Average Comments	Average Shares	Average Favourites
Empowerment and Motivation	48	4196794	22569	337913	96577
Self-Identity and Growth	25	982733	7592	126872	22656
Destination Highlights	13	260351	3044	39627	15409
Personal Experiences	10	675934	5900	55620	15071
Challenges and How to Overcome Them	9	585305	4752	72121	9373
Social Connection	9	683797	4667	65424	11674
Travel Tips and Hacks	7	1146893	5840	409450	33059
Cultural Immersion	5	550303	3688	51109	13362
Budget and Cost Management	2	800937	3554	353760	29507
Safety and Security	2	822437	3012	355860	26020

knowledge by demonstrating that empowerment within social media operates simultaneously as personal motivation and collective social influence.

Practically, these findings suggest that tourism organisations should move beyond destination promotion by developing communication strategies that emphasise confidence, independence, and authentic female travel experiences. Such narratives appear more effective in encouraging behavioural intention than purely promotional destination content.

The findings align with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory, explaining how TikTok content influences female solo travellers. Subiakto (2023) engaging travel videos act as stimuli (S), triggering emotions and perceptions (O), leading to responses (R) like engagement, sharing, or travel decisions. Empowerment content boosts confidence, while safety-related content helps females make informed travel choices, shaping their solo travel experiences.

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE TIKTOK CONTENT CORE MESSAGES FEATURING

FEMALE SOLO TRAVEL

CAPTION TONE

Table 3 presents the descriptive data that examines the tone of different captions from the TikTok posting. The most common tone in TikTok captions is “Empowering,” making up 22.42% of all captions. This tone fosters a sense of belonging among female travellers by creating a supportive community. Asri et al. (2024) highlight that TikTok influencers significantly shape travel desires, with 11.52% of captions using an “Inspirational” tone to motivate travellers.

The second most common tone is “Excited” (13.94%), influencing female travellers’ solo travel decisions. Other notable tones include “Reflective,” “Encouraging,” and “Adventurous” (5% to 10%), while less frequent tones like “Vulnerable,” “Reassuring,” and “Independent” appear in under 5% of captions.

These findings suggest that TikTok captions encourage female solo travel by emphasizing empowerment and independence. This aligns with Abad and Borhon (2021), who found that positive

Table 3. Table of descriptive of caption tone

Caption Tone	Frequency	Percentage
Empowering	37	22.42
Excited	23	13.94
Inspirational	19	11.52
Reflective	18	10.91
Encouraging	12	7.27
Adventurous	12	7.27
Confident	8	4.85
Motivational	7	4.24
Supportive	6	3.64
Inclusive	3	1.82
Informative	3	1.82
Positive	3	1.82
Engaging	3	1.82
Vulnerable	2	1.21
Reassuring	2	1.21
Appreciative	1	0.61
Relaxed	1	0.61
Proud	1	0.61
Humorous	1	0.61
Sentimental	1	0.61
Independent	1	0.61
Emotional	1	0.61
Total	165	100

and engaging tones enhance a destination's appeal and strengthen travellers' emotional connections.

Using the SOR theory, caption tones act as stimuli (S), triggering emotional and cognitive responses (O) like empowerment and excitement, leading to behavioural outcomes (R) such as engagement, sharing, or travel plans. An “Empowering” caption can boost confidence, while an “Excited” tone may encourage trip planning. Overall, caption tones shape perceptions, emotions, and behaviours related to solo travel on TikTok.

HASHTAG

Table 4 shows the frequency and percentage of

TikTok hashtags associated with solo female travel.

The most used TikTok hashtag for solo travel is #solotravel (45%), followed by #solotravelwoman (11%), #solofemaletraveller (7%), #solofemaletravel (6%), and #solotraveling (6%). Other hashtags like #solotraveller and #solotrip (5%) highlight solo travel as a major topic on TikTok.

These hashtags mainly focus on solo female travellers, appealing to females seeking relatable and inspiring travel content. Polson (2021) noted that hashtags help create virtual communities where travellers share experiences and support each other, making solo travel more social. The

Table 4. Table of descriptive of hashtag

Hashtag	Frequency	Percentage
#solotravel	45	45.00
#solotravelwoman	11	11.00
#solofemaletraveler	7	7.00
#solofemaletravel	6	6.00
#solotraveling	6	6.00
#solotraveler	5	5.00
#solotrip	5	5.00
#femalesolotravel	2	2.00
#destinasisol	1	1.00
#femalesflyingsolo	1	1.00
#solo	1	1.00
#solobackpacker	1	1.00
#solobalapan	1	1.00
#sologirl	1	1.00
#sologirltravelling	1	1.00
#sololeveling	1	1.00
#solotravelmalaysia	1	1.00
#solowomentravel	1	1.00
#tipssolotravel	1	1.00
#women	1	1.00
#womenwhotravel	1	1.00
#solotraveltips	1	1.00
#alone	1	1.00
#beingalone	1	1.00
#solorreise	1	1.00
#solotravelquotes	1	1.00
Total	100	100.00

rise in female solo travel aligns with Talukdar and Tripathi (2023), showing it as a growing trend, challenging traditional views that link travel to masculine bravery.

Less common hashtags include #femalesolotravel (2%), #sologirltravelling, #femalesflyingsolo, and #solo (each 1%). Despite their lower popularity, they highlight diverse solo female travel experiences and foster smaller, meaningful communities. According to the SOR theory, hashtags act as a stimulus (S), triggering

emotions like curiosity and motivation (O) and leading to responses (R) such as engagement and solo trip planning. #solotravel may evoke thoughts of freedom, while #solotravelwoman fosters empowerment and community, ultimately influencing travel behaviour.

Hashtags function as digital communities rather than search labels

Although hashtags are commonly viewed as tools for content categorisation, the present findings

suggest that they perform a broader social function within TikTok. The dominance of hashtags such as #solotravel and #solofemaletravel indicates the formation of highly visible digital communities where women collectively exchange experiences, encouragement, and practical travel advice. Rather than simply increasing discoverability, hashtags appear to normalise female solo travel by creating repeated exposure to positive travel narratives.

Earlier studies primarily describe hashtags as mechanisms for organising online information (Shkvorchenko & Koltsova, 2019). The present study extends this understanding by demonstrating that hashtags simultaneously facilitate community identity, reinforce social norms, and reduce perceived travel uncertainty among prospective female solo travellers.

CAPTION

Table 5 describes the frequency and percentage of distribution of themes identified in TikTok video captions. This data demonstrates the significance of motivational and self-empowering content captions.

The most common theme in TikTok captions is "Empowerment" (28.13%, 27 times), highlighting how captions motivate female solo travellers to challenge societal norms and embrace independence. Largo (2024) stated that TikTok's algorithm supports this by promoting content that inspires females to travel alone, aligning with the idea that social media fosters female empowerment through travel.

"Encouragement" follows at 21.88% (21 times), emphasizing the role of motivational captions in boosting confidence among hesitant female travellers. Umur (2024) stated that social media fosters global connections, allowing females to seek support and inspiration from others,

aligning with the notion that online communities create a sense of belonging for female travellers.

Other key themes include "Personal Growth" (13.54%, 13 times) and "Independence" (12.50%, 12 times). Ghadhan et al. (2023) and Silva (2020) stated that solo travel helps females build confidence and break societal limitations, aligning with the idea that independent travel contributes to self-discovery and empowerment. Travelers report feeling inspired, free, and willing to leave their comfort zones.

"Self-Accomplishment" and "Positive Experience" each appear 7 times (7.29%), while "Travel Advice" is noted 6 times (6.25%). Riggert (2020) stated that these themes reinforce the idea that captions foster a sense of unity and empowerment, aligning with research on the role of social media in shaping travel motivations.

The least common theme is "Emotional Escape" (3.13%, 3 times). While less frequent, it still affects personal growth and self-discovery. Somasiri et al. (2022) stated that emotional escape in captions highlights the importance of solitude for personal fulfilment, aligning with findings that solo travel is a form of self-care.

Using SOR theory, caption themes act as a stimulus (S), triggering emotions like motivation and empowerment (O), leading to responses (R) such as engagement and solo travel decisions. "Empowerment" captions promote strength and independence, while "Encouragement" captions foster confidence and connection, ultimately influencing travel behaviour.

Table 5. Table of descriptive of caption

Caption Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Empowerment	27	28.13
Encouragement	21	21.88
Personal growth	13	13.54
Independence	12	12.50
Self-accomplishment	7	7.29
Positive experience	7	7.29
Travel advice	6	6.25
Emotional escape	3	3.13

COMMENT

The following Table 6 displays 16 themes of comments derived from 70 videos focused on female solo travel. The frequency and percentage are also presented in the table.

The table highlights "Empowerment" as the most prevalent theme, appearing 182 times (17.25%). This reinforces the idea that empowerment is a key motivator for female travellers, enabling them to assert independence and break societal norms. Silva et al. (2020) emphasized that autonomy is a crucial factor driving females to explore new destinations, while Umur (2024) found that empowerment plays a significant role in their travel choices. These findings align with how TikTok content often showcases personal strength and resilience in solo travel experiences.

Following closely, "Desire to Start" appears 158 times (14.98%), reflecting the influence of TikTok in encouraging hesitant travellers to embark on their journeys. Research by Asri et al. (2024) suggests that social media influencers shape travel motivation by presenting visually appealing destinations. This supports the notion that aspirational content on TikTok inspires viewers to transition from passive observers to active travellers.

"Inspiration", ranking third with 124 mentions (11.75%), underscores TikTok's dual role as an informational and emotional catalyst. Gozali and Tunjungsari (2024) observed that TikTok effectively portrays authentic travel experiences, influencing viewers' travel intentions. Similarly, their findings resonate with the idea that engaging content fosters a sense of wanderlust and adventure among female travellers.

Another notable theme, "Self-Discovery and Personal Growth", appears 101 times (9.57%), illustrating the transformative impact of solo travel. Hamid et al. (2021) identified that many females embark on solo trips to rediscover themselves, overcome challenges, and gain confidence. This perspective reinforces the idea that solo travel is more than just exploration. It is also a path to self-realization.

Meanwhile, "Travel Constraints", mentioned 87 times (8.25%), highlight challenges like financial limitations, safety concerns, and societal expectations. According to Nematpour et al. (2024) and Ngawira et al. (2020), female travellers often adopt strategies such as forming online support networks and leveraging digital tools to navigate these obstacles. Their research suggests that despite these constraints, females continue to push boundaries and redefine solo travel experiences.

Less common themes such as "Emotional Escape" (28 mentions, 2.65%), "Personal Development" (22 mentions, 2.09%), "Emotional Fulfilment" and "Travel Preference" (20 mentions each, 1.90%), and "Freedom" (14 mentions, 1.33%) provide additional insight into personal motivations for solo travel. Zhang et al. (2024) pointed out that many females seek solo travel to escape daily stress, a perspective echoed by Hamid et al. (2021), who highlighted the therapeutic nature of travel for emotional relief and renewal.

From a SOR theory perspective, comment themes act as a stimulus (S), triggering emotional reactions such as motivation, inspiration, and empowerment (O), ultimately leading to responses (R) like engagement, interactions, and the decision to travel solo. For instance, "Empowerment" comments evoke strength and autonomy, while "Inspiration" and "Desire to Start" encourage action, illustrating how social media influences female travel behaviour.

Table 6. Table of descriptive of comment

Comment Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Empowerment	182	17.25
Desire to start	158	14.98
Inspiration	124	11.75
Self-discovery and Personal Growth	101	9.57
travel constraint	87	8.25
Positive experience	63	5.97
Safety concern	54	5.12
Overcoming fear	49	4.64
Seeking courage	46	4.36
Social connection	45	4.27
Independence	42	3.98
Emotional escape	28	2.65
Personal development	22	2.09
Emotional fulfilment	20	1.90
Travel preference	20	1.90
Freedom	14	1.33

**THE ATTRIBUTES OF TIKTOK POSTS
FEATURING FEMALE SOLO TRAVEL**

To understand TikTok's influence on female solo travellers, it's essential to examine key attributes in related posts. These include core content messages, caption tones, hashtag usage, and themes in captions and comments, all shaping viewers' perceptions of solo travel. This section analyses these attributes, focusing on content categories, emotional tones in captions, audience-reaching hashtags, and engaging themes.

**THE DOMINANT CONTENT CORE
MESSAGE IN THE SHORT VIDEO POSTS IN
TIKTOK FEATURING SOLO FEMALE
TRAVELLERS**

The analysis shows that “Empowerment and Motivation,” “Self-Identity and Growth,” and “Destination Highlights” are the main themes in TikTok posts about female solo travel. These themes reflect travellers’ aspirations, personal growth experiences, and interests in various destinations.

Using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory, these themes act as external stimuli (S) that trigger emotional and cognitive responses (O) through video captions, hashtags, and comments, influencing perceptions and travel decisions (R). Engagement metrics on TikTok reflect these effects.

Wang et al. (2022) found that TikTok's short-form videos drive higher engagement than text-based content, making user-generated content (UGC) a powerful and authentic influence on travel choices. Doni et al. (2022) highlighted that TikTok's focus on empowerment and motivation appeals to travellers seeking confidence and self-reliance, generating emotional responses that encourage female viewers to pursue solo travel.

Similarly, studies by Samuel et al. (2024) and Thelwall et al. (2022) show that videos of females overcoming fears create strong emotional connections, increasing engagement and inspiring viewers to develop confidence and independence.

The "Self-Identity and Growth" theme highlights how solo travel fosters self-discovery and independence. Nguyen and Hsu (2023) linked solo travel to transformative experiences, influencing behaviour and personal growth. Naor and Mayseless (2020) also emphasized that solo travel offers an escape from routine, encouraging deep reflection and self-awareness.

Meanwhile, "Destination Highlights" attract travellers by showcasing unique locations. Cheng et al. (2023) noted that TikTok helps female travellers research destinations by offering diverse and reliable insights. This content reduces uncertainty (S), creates positive impressions (O), and enhances travel interest (R). Asri et al. (2024) observed that TikTok influencers significantly shape young travellers' destination preferences.

Overall, the SOR theory provides a framework for understanding how TikTok content influences female solo travellers by triggering emotional and cognitive responses that shape travel attitudes and decisions.



Figure 1. World Cloud Analysis for the Content Core Messages

CAPTION TONE AS A MOTIVATIONAL FACTOR

Empowerment and inspiration are key themes in TikTok videos about female solo travel, emotionally resonating with viewers and reinforcing the reasons for travelling alone. Encouraging captions like "You are stronger than you think" urge females to embrace independence and challenge societal norms, boosting their confidence. Saleh et al. (2023) highlight that such captions are essential for promoting empowerment, especially among females.

Using the SOR theory, these captions act as stimuli (S) that shape cognitive responses (O), leading to behavioural changes (R), such as an increased desire for solo travel. By emphasizing bravery, determination, and self-reliance, they inspire viewers to take action.

Similarly, inspirational captions like "Sometimes, the best company is your own" or "Solo travel taught me to love myself" promote self-discovery and transformation. These messages encourage introspection and personal growth,

motivating individuals to embrace new experiences. Chen et al. (2023) noted that such tones provide encouragement and validation for solo female travellers. Through the SOR framework, these captions create positive emotions (O), leading to actions (R) like planning solo trips. Overall, empowering and inspirational captions act as strong stimuli, driving engagement and influencing behaviour, ultimately boosting confidence and encouraging solo travel.

HASHTAGS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON TRAVEL DECISIONS

Popular TikTok hashtags like #solotravel and #solotravelwoman helps female solo travellers connect, categorize content, and boost engagement by making posts more discoverable. Shkvorchenko and Kolysova (2019) noted that hashtags act as content facilitators, allowing users to find relevant topics easily. These hashtags create a sense of community, uniting solo female travellers with shared goals, experiences, and challenges.

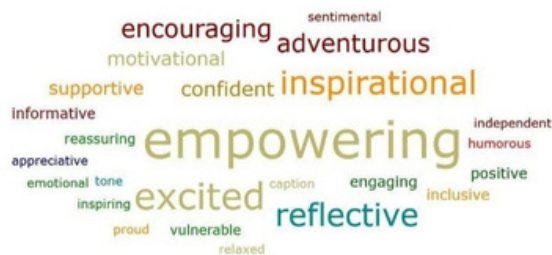


Figure 2. World Cloud Analysis for the Caption Tones

Using the SOR theory, hashtags serve as stimuli (S) that attract viewers to specific content, sparking emotions of connection and inspiration (O). Increased hashtag visibility helps normalize female solo travel, reducing stigma and fostering confidence in its safety. This internal response (O) often leads to behavioural outcomes (R), such as planning solo trips.

Additionally, females use hashtags to discuss travel experiences and highlight the lack of female travel influencers, offering a platform for engagement and support. Polson (2021) emphasized that TikTok, like other social media, allows users to share experiences with a global audience, promoting solo travel. Sebova et al. (2021) stated that hashtags help normalize female solo travel, making it more accepted.

Through the SOR framework, hashtags act as stimuli (S) that spark interest and emotional engagement, prompting internal reflection (O) and leading to actions (R) such as engaging with solo travel content, joining female travel communities, or embarking on solo trips.

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL FACTOR IN SHORT VIDEOS TIKTOK POSTS INFLUENCING FEMALES TO TRAVEL SOLO

Analysing TikTok posts on female solo travel shows that captions and comments are key in influencing this behaviour. Captions often focus on empowerment, encouragement, and personal growth, while comments highlight empowerment, the desire to start, and inspiration, all motivating females to travel solo.

VISUAL OF THE SHORT VIDEO TIKTOK POSTS

The table lists the most important parts of content about travel alone by females, starting with the Core Message, which is the main topic of each post. The visual description accompanies the primary message, offering a succinct summary of the visual information in the TikTok posts. Table 7 also presents the engagement metrics, which include frequency (FREQ), likes (L), comments (C), shares (S) and favourites (FAV), indicating the level of user interaction with the content.

TikTok content significantly influences female solo travellers through three key themes, which are Empowerment and motivation, Self-Identity and growth, and Destination Highlights. These themes shape decision-making by evoking emotions, fostering connections, and inspiring action. Using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory, TikTok videos act as stimuli (S) that capture attention through engaging visuals and sounds. Captions, hashtags, and comments represent the organism stage (O), where viewers interpret content, shaping their thoughts and emotions. The response (R) is reflected in user engagement, such as likes, shares, comments, and travel decisions.

Among these themes, Empowerment and Motivation are the most prominent, showcasing adventurous female travellers and emphasizing resilience, independence, and confidence. These visuals attract attention (S), create emotional connections (O), and inspire viewers to step out of their comfort zones (R). With an average of 4,189,794 likes, this theme highly encourages solo

4,189,794 likes, this theme highly encourages solo travel. Similarly, Self-Identity and growth highlight personal development and self-discovery, often depicted through peaceful landscapes and cultural interactions. The content stimulates aspirations for self-exploration (S), encourages reflection (O), and motivates solo travel (R), supported by an average of 982,733 likes. Meanwhile, Destination Highlights showcase scenic locations and cultural experiences, generating curiosity and excitement (S). Captions and hashtags add context (O), increasing the inclination to explore new places (R), as reflected in an average of 260,351 likes.

Applying SOR theory reveals how TikTok posts influence female solo travellers by engaging them emotionally and cognitively, leading to behavioural responses such as content engagement and actual travel decisions. The findings highlight the power of visual and narrative elements in shaping travel behaviour, aligning with the study’s objective of identifying the most influential factors in TikTok travel content.

Table 7. Table of content core messages

Content Core Message	Visual Description	FREQ	L	C	S	FAV
Empowerment and Motivation	Posts that encourage solo female travellers to embrace independence, face challenges with confidence, and push beyond their comfort zone.	48	4196794	22569	337913	96577
Self-Identity and Growth	Post that often document cultural immersion, reflection, and self-identity	25	982733	7592	126872	22656
Destination Highlights	Posts that highlight tourist destination's scenic landscapes, iconic landmarks, and local cultures, including recommendation	13	260351	3044	39627	15409

COMMENT THEME: EMPOWERMENT, DESIRE TO START, AND INSPIRATION

TikTok's comment sections are crucial in showcasing motivational factors for solo female travellers. The Empowerment theme is evident as many viewers express how TikTok posts boost their

confidence and capability to travel alone. Comments like “This is exactly what I need to hear” and “I feel empowered to start planning my first solo trip” highlight the positive impact of empowering content. This aligns with Regita and Muttaqien (2023), who found that female travel influencers on TikTok empower others by sharing

their solo travel experiences. Content creators often emphasize freedom and self-discovery, appealing to females seeking empowerment through travel.

Beyond empowerment, many comments reflect a strong interest in starting a solo travel journey. Users frequently share how TikTok content has influenced their decision-making, with remarks like “I am booking my first solo trip after seeing this” and “I have always wanted to travel alone, now I am ready.” This supports Gozali and Tunjungsari (2024), who note that TikTok's emphasis on authenticity plays a key role in motivating travel intentions. These comments show that TikTok posts inspire many females to begin solo travelling.

The theme of Inspiration is also prominent, with viewers expressing how TikTok content has encouraged them to overcome fears and believe in their ability to travel alone. Comments such as “You inspired me to overcome my fears” and “Your journey makes me believe I can do this too” illustrate the power of shared experiences. From the SOR theory perspective, these inspirational themes serve as stimuli (S) that evoke emotions of bravery and ambition (O), leading to action (R), such as planning a solo trip. This aligns with CB et al. (2023), who emphasize that social media is key in inspiring and connecting female travellers, influencing their travel decisions through shared experiences and success stories.



Figure 3. World Cloud Analysis for the Comment Hemes

**CAPTION THEME: EMPOWERMENT,
ENCOURAGING AND PERSONAL GROWTH**

TikTok captions about female solo travel act as strong motivators, focusing on Empowerment, Encouragement, and Personal Growth. These captions serve as stimuli (S) that influence thoughts and emotions (O), leading to actions (R) such as considering or starting solo travel, aligning with the SOR theory.

Empowering captions like “You are stronger than you think” and “Solo travel is about discovering yourself” boost confidence and encourage independence. They engage viewers by reinforcing the idea that females can travel alone safely and boldly. This supports CB et al. (2024), who found that young travellers rely on e-WOM (electronic word-of-mouth) to shape their travel perceptions. Positive social media messages can enhance female travellers' confidence, making them feel safer and more empowered to explore new places. Through the SOR lens, these captions (S) foster confidence and reduce anxiety (O), leading to the motivation (R) to embark on solo travel.

Encouragement captions challenge social norms, urging females to embrace solo travel. Phrases like “This is your sign to book the trip” and “Leave the fear behind, the world awaits” push viewers to step out of their comfort zones. Umur (2024) highlights that solo travel symbolizes independence and a challenge to gender norms, promoting broader societal change. These captions (S) encourage females to overcome societal barriers (O) and take action (R) by starting their solo travel journeys.

Personal Growth is another key theme, emphasizing that solo travel is not just about visiting places but also about self-discovery. Many captions align with females' aspirations for independence and personal development, increasing their motivation to travel alone. Hamid

et al. (2023) note that empowering captions indirectly highlight the benefits of solo travel, inspiring females to pursue it as a path to growth. In SOR theory, these captions (S) encourage self-reflection (O), leading to a response (R) of deciding to travel solo.

Although the SOR framework has traditionally been applied in quantitative studies to examine causal relationships between external stimuli, psychological states, and behavioural responses, the present study adopts the framework as an interpretive lens rather than a causal model. The objective is not to statistically test the S→O→R sequence but to interpret how naturally occurring TikTok content reflects potential stimuli, inferred psychological reactions expressed by users, and behavioural intentions embedded within audience interactions. Accordingly, the framework provides conceptual guidance for organising and interpreting qualitative findings rather than empirically validating causal pathways.

5. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined how TikTok influences female solo travel by analysing naturally occurring content from 70 publicly accessible TikTok videos through qualitative content analysis. The findings demonstrate that empowerment, self identity, destination storytelling, and community engagement consistently dominate TikTok communication related to female solo travel. Across captions, hashtags, audience comments, and engagement metrics, empowerment emerged as the central narrative, suggesting that TikTok functions not only as a destination information source but also as a digital community that reinforces confidence, independence, and travel aspirations among women.

Unlike previous studies that primarily relied on questionnaire surveys to investigate travel

intention, this study analysed actual social media content generated by creators and audiences. This approach provides direct insight into how travel narratives are constructed, shared, and reinforced within the TikTok environment. The findings therefore contribute a richer understanding of the digital communication processes that shape female solo travel beyond traditional self-reported behavioural measures.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

The present study makes several theoretical contributions to tourism and digital communication research. First, it extends the application of the SOR framework by demonstrating how qualitative social media content analysis can be interpreted through the model. While previous SOR studies have predominantly employed survey or experimental designs to examine causal relationships between digital stimuli and behavioural intentions, the present study adopts the framework as an interpretive lens for understanding naturally occurring interactions within social media environments. This broadens the methodological application of the SOR framework beyond its conventional quantitative use.

Second, the findings contribute to the growing literature on female solo travel by demonstrating that empowerment is not simply an internal travel motivation but also a socially constructed digital narrative. Empowerment appeared consistently across content creators' messages and audience interactions, indicating that confidence and independence are collectively reinforced through online communities rather than experienced solely at the individual level.

Third, the study extends research on TikTok tourism by shifting attention from influencer effectiveness or destination promotion towards the broader communication ecosystem of the platform.

Rather than examining creators alone, the study highlights the combined influence of captions, hashtags, audience comments, and engagement indicators in shaping travel-related perceptions and behavioural intentions.

Collectively, these findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of how short-form social media contributes to female solo travel by integrating digital storytelling, community participation, and user engagement within a single analytical framework.

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