

The meanings of solo travel for Asian women

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Abstract

Purpose – This study explores the meanings of solo travel for Asian women, focusing on how Asian women construct and negotiate their identities in the heteronormalised, gendered, and Western-centric tourism space.

Design/methodology/approach – In-depth interviews were conducted with 35 Asian solo female travellers from 10 Asian countries/societies and analysed using constructivist grounded theory. The interpretation was guided by a critical stance and intersectionality lens.

Findings – The findings show that solo travel provides a means for self-discovery but the path was different for Asian women, for whom the self is constructed by challenging the social expectations of Asian women. Western-centric discourse was identified in the participants' interactions with other (Western) travellers and tourism service providers, as well as in the ways these Asian women perceive themselves in relation to Western travellers. In addition to gendered constraints and risks, the findings also reveal the positive meaning of being Asian women in the gendered tourism space.

Research limitations/implications – By labelling Asian women, the study risks adopting an essentialised view and overlooking the differences within the group. However, this strategic essentialism is necessary to draw attention to the inequalities persist in contemporary tourism spaces and practices.

Originality/value – This study investigated Asian solo female travellers, an emerging but under-researched segment. It provides a critical examination of the intersectional effect of gender and race on identity construction for Asian solo female travellers. This study shows the need for a more inclusive tourism space.

Keywords

Solo travel, female traveller, Asian, gender, identity, intersectionality, Western-centrism

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Introduction

Due to the changing family structure and the increasingly individualised lifestyle, the number of people living alone has increased by 33% in the past decade (Klinenberg, 2012). More people now live alone and spend leisure time alone – “Spending singles” was identified by Euromonitor as one of the top ten global consumer trends in 2016 (Kasriel-Alexander, 2016). A similar trend is observed in the holiday market where VISA’s global report found that 1 in 5 people travelled alone in 2015 (Brown, 2015). Hostelworld (2018) revealed a 42% increase in bookings made by solo travellers between 2015 and 2017. According to Google Trends (2019), the search on “solo travel” has increased by 500% since 2009 with the highest search volume coming from Asia. Within the solo travel market, women have been identified as a strong growing segment compared to male travellers (Cann, 2016; Hostelworld, 2018; My Travel Research, 2018). TripAdvisor’s recent surveys also pointed to the rise of solo travel in Asia, in which 79% of women from Southeast Asia has shown an interest in travelling alone (TripAdvisor, 2015) and in 2016, solo travel was rated as one of the most popular new activities for Asian travellers in general (TripAdvisor, 2016).

In this regard, an understanding to the emergent phenomenon of solo travel is critical to the tourism industry to make necessary adjustments to cater to the needs of solo travellers. Existing literature suggests that the contemporary tourism spaces and practices have yet to be ready for the social changes, as the common assumption of leisure travel is to spend time with friends and families (Heimtun, 2010). The tourism industry has continued to prioritise group over solo travellers, which is exemplified in the discriminatory operational and marketing practices against solo travellers (Bianchi, 2016; Goodwin and Lockshin, 1992). Prior research has also highlighted the amplifying effect of gender on the marginalisation of solo travellers, which reifies in unsolicited attention (Jordan and Aitchison, 2008), pitying gaze (Heimtun, 2012), and safety risk (Yang et al., 2018a) experienced by women when they travel alone. Within the solo travel literature, the experience of non-Western travellers has been mentioned sparingly with few exceptions (see, for examples, Seow and Brown, 2018; Yang et al., 2018b). Past studies on backpacking, a form of independent travel akin to solo travel albeit backpacking does not necessarily indicate travelling alone, has revealed the presence of Western-centric practices in certain destinations (Broocks & Hannam, 2016; Muzaini, 2006; Teo and Leong, 2006). As such, it is important to study the experience of non-Western solo travellers independent to that of Western travellers.

In response to the rise of solo female travel market in Asia and the lack of research on this specific segment, this study explores the meanings of solo travel for Asian women. To be specific, the study asks the following questions: (1) What does it mean to travel alone as an Asian woman? (2) How do Asian solo female travellers construct and negotiate their identities in the gendered and Western-centric tourism space? By drawing on the theory of social identity, the feminist lens of intersectionality, and concepts from cultural geography, the study seeks to provide a critical and in-depth understanding of how different social identities are included and excluded in the heteronormalised, gendered, and Western-centric tourism space.

Literature Review

Heteronormalised Tourism Space

Aloneness, for a long time in the gregarious human history, was perceived as deviant while togetherness was encouraged for survival and reproduction needs (Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Goodwin and Lockshin, 1992; Liu and Mattila, 2015). While there have been a growing number of people living alone and an increasing normalisation of public display of aloneness, being alone is still often linked to the stigma of

lacking social connection (Heimtun, 2010), and such stigma is likely have a greater effect in collectivist cultures. The convention of heteronormativity offers an explanation to the normalised discourse of family as a dominant social structure in consumption, in which the experience of heterosexual couples and families are prioritised (Lai et al, 2006). The discourse of heteronormativity is also evident in tourism, a discretionary undertaking that assumes a familial and sociable habitus (Heimtun, 2010). This is to say holiday is socially associated with spending time with people and in particular, with family, and holiday space is characterised as “familial, heterosexual and sociable . . . as potential spaces for social exclusion when visited alone” (Heimtun, 2010: 176). Solo travellers are among other marginalised groups who do not conform to the norms and therefore, are likely to experience discriminatory practices, negative stereotypes, and social exclusions. Tourism practices that discriminate against solo travellers are evidenced by single supplement commonly practiced in the tour, cruise and accommodation sectors where the default unit of consumption is two, and marketing practices that overemphasises togetherness (Goodwin and Lockshin, 1992). When travellers surmount the discriminatory practices and undertake solo holidays, their conspicuous solo status can lead to poorer service (Bianchi, 2016; Goodwin and Lockshin, 1992) and unsolicited attention, especially if they are women (Jordan and Aitchison, 2008).

Gendered Aloneness

The negative connotation associated with aloneness is amplified by gender (Heimtun, 2010). The heteronormativity convention promotes the binary gender identities where women are assumed traditional feminine roles associated with domestic, caring, and child-rearing work central to heterosexual marriage (Oswald, Blume, & Marks, 2011). Women who are single and/or alone are negatively inferred with unwantedness or “left on the shelf”, more so compared to men whose aloneness or “bachelor” status is glamorised (Heimtun, 2010; Lai et al., 2015). The stigmas of lone women are felt more strongly in certain cultures. For instance, in China, single women are denounced as “剩女” (*sheng nü*, which literally means leftover women) in a government-led propaganda (Fincher, 2013). The “leftover” stigma is also evident in Japan, where labels such as “parasite single” and “loser dog” are used to stigmatised unmarried women (Maeda, 2008). In predominantly Muslim Indonesia, single women, labelled as “perawan tua” (which means old maid), are subject to a greater stigmatization as premarital sex is not socially acceptable and those who married will receive God’s rewards (Himawan, Bambling, & Edirippulige, 2017; Situmorang, 2007). When navigating alone in the tourism space, solo female travellers are likely to encounter challenges that are more prone to women, such as the feeling of vulnerability and concerns about how their solo presence is perceived by other people (Wilson and Little, 2008; Yang et al., 2018b) as they do not fit into the “correct” or heteronormalised gender roles. Furthermore, women’s status of aloneness can be misinterpreted as promiscuous or sexually available in the liminal tourism space, which leads to solo female travellers perceiving a greater risk of sexualised gaze and gender-based violence compared to male travellers (Jordan and Aitchison, 2008; Yang et al., 2018a). The effect of risk may be felt more strongly among Asian solo female travellers due to the social stigmas associated with singleness in Asia. Despite these negative inferences, some women choose to travel alone in search of self-discovery (Cockburn-Wooten et al., 2006; Wilson and Harris, 2006). However, this very concept of self-searching is highly Western-centric.

Western-centrism in Independent Travel

To search for one’s self requires one to overcome some forms of challenges from which the self is discovered (Elsrud, 2001; Yang et al., 2018a). In the backpacking discourse, the self is usually searched in

the Third World, in which (male) travellers leave the comfort of Western civilisation and travel to the untouched, primitive, and exotic destinations in the East and South for transformative experiences (Bui et al., 2013; Elsrud, 2001; O'Reilly, 2005; Teo and Leong, 2006). Independent travel, to some extent, exemplifies a form of neo-colonialism that perpetuates Western domination and subjugation of past colonies and developing countries (Chung, 1994; d'Hautesserre, 2004). Until today, a majority of independent travellers remain to be Westerners (O'Reilly, 2005). Asian travellers, coming from a collectivist culture with a strong emphasis on “we-ness” (Huang, 2008: 173), are more inclined to group travel in general (Lee, 2009; Meng, 2010; Pizam and Sussmann, 1995). Although there has been a growing interest in independent travel from Asia (TripAdvisor, 2016), only a handful of studies have problematised the experience of Asian independent travellers in the Western-centric tourism space (see, for examples, Bui et al., 2013; Huang, 2008; Muzaini, 2006; Teo and Leong, 2006), and much less from a gender perspective. The lack of research on the experience of Asian female travellers is not surprising as recent reviews have critiqued the continuing essentialised conceptualisation of Westerners as guests and people from the rest as hosts (Jeffrey, 2018).

Albeit not focusing on the experience of Asian solo female travellers, prior research has offered insights on Western-centrism in the tourism spaces and practices. For instance, Teo and Leong (2006) investigated the experience of Asian backpackers in Khao San Road, Bangkok and identified a Western-centric spatial distribution in which restaurants and bars catering to Western backpackers are concentrating on the main street, while businesses targeting on Asian travellers are located in ancillary lane ways. The spatial practices embody the power relations underlying the socio-cultural dynamics (Aitchison and Reeves, 1998) and in this case, Western travellers appeared to have a greater power. This is further exemplified in the attitudes of tourism operators and local businesses who were found to have a more favourable preference for Western over Asian travellers, while Asians reported the feeling of exclusion or “out of space” when travelling in some Asian destinations (Muzaini, 2006; Teo and Leong, 2006). The experience of Asian female travellers can be extracted from prior research, in which the findings have pointed to the sexualisation or erotic representation of Asian women in destinations where sex tourism prevails. Teo and Leong (2006) aptly described the experience of Asian female backpackers as “double beating” (p. 125) because of their race and gender that fail to meet the presumed image of a White and male independent traveller.

In Search of Identity

The literature review has thus far raised the question of what construct a self-discovery journey for Asian solo female travellers from the “exotic Third World”. According to social identity theory, the self is constructed with reference to the social groups to which the individual belong (Her and Seo, 2018). The conceptualisation of self is an evolving and reflexive process that involves continuous appraisal between oneself and others (Giddens, 1991; Hogg and Abrams, 1988), and can be defined by whom or which social group the individuals aspire to be affiliated with (Morgan, 1993). Tourism provides a platform for individuals to construct, transform, and express identity through the choices of holiday and behaviours while on holidays (Heimtun, 2012; Hibbert et al., 2013; Noy, 2004). In the case of Asian solo female travellers, the search for self is convoluted by the intersectional effect of multiple identities (i.e., Asian, women, and solo travellers) available in tourism space. On one hand, this group of travellers do not fit into the identity of conventional Asian tourists who prefer group travel over solo travel. On the other hand, they fall short on the identity of independent travellers dominated by Western and male-centric discourses.

Existing research has cautioned the lack of a non-Western identity in the backpacking literature and suggested that the identity of Asian backpackers are “caught in between and betwixt” (Teo and Leong, 2006: 127). Bui et al. (2014) also found a contradictory identity in the narratives of Asian backpackers who were motivated to escape home but found a stronger connection with their Asian identity during the journey. While these studies have alluded the contested identity formation for Asian independent travellers in the Western-centric tourism space, what seems lacking is the perceived inferences from others (Her and Seo, 2018; Ratner and Hamilton, 2015) and the amplifying effect of gender (Heimtun, 2010) on self-concept, as suggested in solo consumption literature. This study intends to fill the knowledge gaps by exploring the meanings of solo travel for Asian women in the heteronormalised, gendered, and Western-centric tourism space, with a focus on identity formation. To be specific, this study seeks to identify how Asian women perceive themselves in relation to the in-group (i.e., Asian women) and out-groups (i.e., male travellers and Western female travellers), and how the perception of others shape their self-concept.

Methodology

This study espoused a critical stance to research in which the travel experiences of Asian women were situated in the wider social and cultural contexts (Small et al., 2017) and were problematised using the feminist lens of intersectionality (Heimtun, 2012). Constructivist grounded theory was employed as the guiding data collection and analysis approach (Charmaz, 2014). In contrast to the classic grounded theory that is characterised by a positivistic outlook with rigid guidelines, this interpretive approach acknowledges the existence of multiple socially constructed realities, and values knowledge that is situated and context-specific (Charmaz, 2014). The main purpose of constructivist grounded theory is to generate interpretive understandings of an under-researched social phenomenon, rather than claiming an objective and generalisable theory.

This study is part of a larger project that investigates solo travel experiences of Asian women, focusing on risk perceptions and risk mitigation strategies. This study reports the findings from 35 interviews (lasted 1.5 hours on average) that are related to the meanings of solo travel and how Asian solo female travellers construct and negotiate their identities. An initial pool of participants was recruited from various online travel forums and Facebook travel groups. A non-probability purposeful sampling method was employed to identify participants who could “purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem” (Creswell, 2013, p. 156). To be qualified for the research, the person had to be an Asian woman and had at least one solo travel experience. Additional participants were recruited through snowball sampling where references were sought from existing participants. The participants consisted of 35 Asian women, ranging from 21 to 49 year-old. A majority of the participants are singles and three participants are mothers, of which two are married. The participants come from 10 Asian countries/societies – China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Most of the participants are avid solo travellers; only five participants are first-time solo travellers. The narratives of the participants are based on travel experiences within and beyond Asia. The researchers were aware that the study might invoke memories of negative experiences, contacts of counselling and other support services were provided to the participants shall they become distress as a result of the interviews.

To ensure consistency, all interviews were conducted and analysed by the first author, with findings cross-checked by the co-authors. The data collection and analysis stages were iterative, and a *constant comparative method* was used in coding the data where codes were compared within and across transcripts

(Charmaz, 2014). In response to the evolving, interactive, and open-ended nature of qualitative research, a flexible approach to coding was used rather than following a stringent coding procedure advocated by classic grounded theorists (Goulding, 2005). The analysis process was initiated by line-by-line *initial coding*, followed by *focused coding* where the most prominent and recurrent codes were selected to synthesise larger segments of data (Charmaz, 2014). Based on the emerged findings, further information was collected through theoretical sampling, either by conducting additional interviews or referring back to existing participants. Detailed memos were recorded throughout the research process, which enabled the researcher to be conscious of the influence of her thoughts and preconceived knowledge, especially in abstracting theoretical concepts and in interpreting findings. The data collection ceased when theoretical saturation was achieved. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were used when presenting the findings.

Findings and Discussion

The Search for Self

The narratives of the participants indicate that solo travel allows time for self-reflection. For instance, Esther, who was in her mid-forties, described, “I like travelling alone. I think it gives me time to think and reflect”. Esther’s view was shared by other women in different stages of their lives. Chun in her twenties found solo travel “a good time for me to think about myself or my future” while Aranya in her thirties used solo holiday to look back: “I would look back at myself and see what kind of person I am . . . just stay with myself and don’t lose myself with all emotions around me.” While some participants found solitude away from home an opportunity to engage in “self-introspection” (Shani, 49 year-old), others discovered the self on the road. Thien (25 year-old) described, “There is something inside me and when I travel, I can see it.” The search for self is consistent with prior research on backpackers (Elsrud, 2001) and solo female travellers (Cockburn-Wooten et al., 2006; Wilson and Harris, 2006). The narratives of these Asian women, however, suggest that the self was not found through conquering the hardship arising from travelling to the romanticised Third World, as suggested in the literature (Elsrud, 2001; Teo and Leong, 2006). Rather, the self was constructed for some participants and reaffirmed for others by challenging the social expectations of Asian women. The distance between the participants’ self-identities and the social identities of Asian women were unravelled into two layers: race and gender.

On Asian (female) Identity

The participants felt that their decision to undertake solo holiday did not match the collectivist Asian identity. Aishah from Singapore declared, “I’m definitely different because I like being alone”. Also from Singapore, Esther explained, “Asians are very collectivistic. They love hanging out with people, they love spending time with friends and family.” Katsumi offered a Japanese perspective where she described, “If you are travelling by yourself, that means you do not have friends, so people might be concerned about what other people think of you.” Caught between the self and social identities, Narisa from Thailand shared her struggle: “I am not really sure which culture or group I belong to, I already have a problem with identity issue.” For Mei, she has acclimatised to a fluid identity: “I can be collective and I can be solo. I am very flexible. I don’t think I’m a very typical Malaysian.” Mei’s fluid identity and Narisa’s identity struggle are a result of their embodied experience (Crouch, 2000) where these women tried to grasp their identities through their Asian (and female) bodies in the different contexts.

While the participants might perceive themselves less of an Asian compared to other Asian women in their home societies, they also considered themselves different from Western solo female travellers, whom they perceived as more independent, experienced, and gutsy. Li, a first-time solo traveller from Malaysia, described the feeling of inferiority she felt at the beginning of her solo journey: “Somehow you feel it at beginning, you feel that the non-Asian are more superior to the Asian because they travel so far away and you are just Asian in Southeast Asia.” Yee, an avid solo travellers from Taiwan explained the difference between Asian and Western travellers based on the duration of the trip: “Western backpackers travel longer like few months. Sometimes they will ask you, ‘How long have you been in X?’ and my answer was maybe a week or two weeks [laughing embarrassedly].” It appears that the distance and length of travel have contributed to the perceived difference between Asian and Western solo travellers.

The participants’ Asian identity, as projected externally by their appearance, seem to have affected their travel experience. Zhang, an intermediate solo travellers from Taiwan observed, “No matter how well Asians speak English, people will still perceive you as a foreigner. But, if you are Whites, for example, I met many English, French, and German travellers . . . they won’t feel they are outsider. I think our race disadvantages us.” Chun, a first-timer from China, echoed with a similar observation: “When you travel alone, you meet more Westerners, and they at least share some similar cultural background . . . When they talk about movies, songs, and TV dramas, I’m like, ‘what are they talking about?’ I struggle a lot.” The participants’ feeling of marginalisation extends to the dealing with tourism service providers, in which Rui, also a beginner solo traveller from China, expressed her bewilderment: “I think I am same with them [Western travellers], but in some places, some owners served us differently.” In addition to the perceived differences in identity, two participants reported to have experience direct verbal discrimination when travelling in Western destinations where they were told to go back to Asia. The narratives of these Asian female travellers provides further evidence to the argument of Western-centrism in tourism (Muzaini, 2006; Teo and Leong, 2006).

On (Asian) Female Identity

The participants also pointed to the gender implication on their solo travel experience. Ting summarised the common perception Chinese people have on women and solo travel: “Don’t travel alone, it is not good for young lady, you need a partner, you need friends”. Also coming from a Chinese background, Yue casted light on the gender paradox: “I’m not sexist, just from my observation, no matter how strong or successful a woman is, she still needs to be protected by the society . . . because they feel somehow insecure and [this sense of] insecure causes the needs to be protected.” Yee shared a similar view: “Typical Taiwanese society thinks [that] women, you get marry, take care of the children, and just stay with your family. Don’t venture out.” Ning wondered if her Malaysian parents would be more approved if it was her brother who travelled alone. She said,

Maybe they expect him [her brother] to be more ambitious, more decisive, more adventurous, maybe they wish that I am more domesticated and he is more crazy travelling out there. Maybe they would have been happier if this... I think my dad would not have been so surprised if my bother said, okay I am going to quit my job and travel to Myanmar. My dad will probably okay, but to me, he will be like, are you crazy?

These Asian women felt that they do not fit into the gender identity expected by Asian societies. Trista from Hong Kong outright declared, “I don’t think I’m normal girl because I’m like a boy.” Katsumi shared the same identity crisis: “As a Japanese woman, obviously I don’t fit into their expectation.” Nonetheless, the narratives of these travellers also showed evidence where they benefited

from their female identity. For instance, Cheryl from Taiwan commented, “I think Asian female travellers are more likely to receive help or friendly treatment than male.” Choi from South Korea recounted, “I think people like Asian girls more than Asian guys. . . . My [Asian male] friends whom I know travel alone, they don’t have good experience with people. Always alone.” The offers of help received by Asian female travellers to some extent reinforce the gender and racial stereotypes where Asian women are seen as vulnerable who “need to be protected” (Yue). The friendly treatment could also be explained by the rarity of Asian solo female travellers as several participants described how the locals and hosts were surprised to see them alone. Fen recalled when she travelled within her home country, Malaysia, the reaction from the locals was “very curious and they asked a lot of questions, just want to know why [she travelled alone].”

Most participants reported that they encountered more Asian solo male travellers than female on their solo trips. When asked if they perceived any differences between them and male travellers, the participants unanimously agreed that male travellers are less likely to encounter safety risks such as sexual harassment and assault. Jia imagined if she was a male traveller, she would “just hook up with some girls [laughing]. I will go to strippers.” Her comments allude the effect of gender identity on sexuality in the liminal tourism space. Other participants also discussed how they felt uncomfortable when using the mixed-gender dorms and their concerns about the gender of their hosts when using services such as AirBnb, Uber and Couchsurfing. Resonating prior literature (see, for examples, Wilson and Little, 2008; Yang et al., 2018b), the participants’ accounts have pointed to gendered risks and constraints that are associated with their female identity. The findings add to this stream of literature by revealing the positive meaning of being a female when navigating the gendered tourism space alone.

Conclusions and Implications

This study was set out to explore the meanings of solo travel for Asian women. In line with existing literature, solo travel provides a means for self-discovery (Cockburn-Wootten et al., 2006; Elsrud, 2001; Noy, 2004; Wilson and Harris, 2006), but the path was slightly different for Asian women. Unlike Western travellers whose self-discovery journey often involves overcoming hardship arisen from travelling to the less developed East and South (Elsrud, 2001; Noy, 2004), the participants interviewed in this study negotiate and construct their identities by challenging the social expectations of Asian women. The narratives of the participants reveal their identity struggle as they were caught in between their self and social identities, and how the perception of others (e.g., parents and home societies) contributed to that struggle. The findings suggest that the identity work of Asian solo female travellers, a relatively new group of travellers, is an ongoing process.

The investigation into the experience of Asian solo female travellers lends support to the critique of Western-centrism in tourism (Muzaini, 2006; Teo and Leong, 2006), which was evidenced by the discrimination from service providers. This study expands the critique by revealing Western-centrism in the participants’ interaction with other travellers who are predominantly Whites, where the participants reported feeling of otherness due to their Asian appearance and the lack of cultural capital. Further research is required to substantiate this finding. The participants also expressed their sense of inferiority where they regarded Western travellers as more experienced as they travelled farther and longer. This finding adds a temporal dimension to Teo and Leong’s (2006) description of the “geographical imagination in identity formation” (p. 111).

Gender contributes further ramifications to the meanings and experiences of solo travel for the participants. Echoed with prior literature (Wilson and Little, 2008; Yang et al., 2018b), the participants' female identity has caused concerns about safety risks. Nevertheless, this study elucidates the positive meaning of being women and in particular, Asian women in the gendered tourism space. The rarity and the vulnerability projected onto Asian female travellers have resulted in more help, well-intentioned attention and friendly treatment received by the participants, which they believed were not available to Asian male travellers. As such, this study adds a positive light to existing solo female travel literature that has accentuated on the dark side (e.g., constraint, fear and risk). Future research is encouraged to investigate the perspectives of Asian male as the accounts of the participants imply that this group of travellers might experience a further marginalisation entwined by the intersectional effect of their male but non-Western identities. Future research is also recommended to consider the effect of class in addition to gender and race identities investigated in this study in order to fully understand the complexity of solo travel resulted from a diverse range of socio-economic realities in the fast-growing Asia.

By labelling Asian women, the study risks adopting a simplistic essentialised view and overlooking the differences within the group. However, as Jeffrey (2018) argued, there is a room for strategic essentialism if the intention is to divulge the inequalities between groups and across contexts, and to give voices to marginalised groups. This study was set out to investigate the meanings of Asian solo female travellers, a growing but under-researched segment. In particular, this study is one of few that have considered the perspectives of female travellers from traditional (Western) tourist-receiving countries, such as Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia. The voices of women from these countries have been heard from the host perspective but their voices as travellers have been marginalised. The findings of this study has shown the need for a more inclusive tourism space. Further research is needed to expand the understanding of Asian solo female travellers in order to produce knowledge that will facilitate the industry to better cater to this emerging segment and more importantly, disseminate such knowledge to a wider audience beyond the academia to raise awareness and create actual changes.

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