

## Solo vs Group: A comparative analysis of LGBTQ+ travel experience among Spanish tourists

Mar Algueró-Boronat <sup>1\*</sup>, Miguel Angel Moliner-Tena <sup>2</sup> and Rosa María Rodríguez-Artola <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitat Jaume I, Avinguda de Vicent Sos Baynat, s/n, 12006 Castelló de la Plana, Castelló, Spain.; Email: [alguero@uji.es](mailto:alguero@uji.es) ORCID: 0000-0003-0797-1531

<sup>2</sup> Universitat Jaume I, Avinguda de Vicent Sos Baynat, s/n, 12006 Castelló de la Plana, Castelló, Spain.; Email: [amoliner@uji.es](mailto:amoliner@uji.es) ORCID: 0000-0001-9274-4151

<sup>3</sup> Universitat Jaume I, Avinguda de Vicent Sos Baynat, s/n, 12006 Castelló de la Plana, Castelló, Spain.; Email: [artola@uji.es](mailto:artola@uji.es) ORCID: 0000-0001-7087-1109

\* Corresponding author

### Abstract

This study explores the differing experiences of LGBTQ+ Spanish travellers when travelling solo versus in groups. By examining how these contexts affect tourist satisfaction, perceived value for money, and word-of-mouth behaviours, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of LGBTQ+ travellers dynamics. Through an online survey of 510 LGBTQ+ Spanish travellers, our research identifies significant differences between solo travellers and group travellers. The results reveal the complexities of LGBTQ+ travel and suggest directions for future research to encompass more diverse and comprehensive perspectives, ultimately fostering a deeper understanding of LGBTQ+ travellers' experiences.

**Keywords:** LGBTQ+ tourism, solo travel, group travel, tourist satisfaction, LGBTQ+ travel experience.

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## 1. Introduction

LGBTQ+ acronym include individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, as well as other identities and sexual orientations (Wongsunopparat & Hu, 2023). Research on tourism within the LGBTQ+ communities has flourished in recent years, emerging as a prominent area of study in mainstream discourse (Ong *et al.*, 2022). The market for LGBTQ+ tourism stands out as one of the most rapidly expanding segments within the global tourism sector (Zhou *et al.*, 2021). However, much of the academic literature has traditionally approached this group through a narrow focus on gender identity and sexual orientation as defining features (Monaco, 2022), often overlooking the diversity of experiences shaped by intersecting factors such as class, age, ethnicity, travel context, or companionship. As several scholars have noted, LGBTQ+ tourists do not constitute a homogeneous category (Hattingh & Spencer, 2020), they travel alone or in groups, for leisure or necessity, in ways shaped by personal motivations, social conditions, and cultural constraints. Therefore, studying LGBTQ+ tourists is not only a matter of representation or inclusivity, but also offers valuable insights into how identity, social belonging, and vulnerability shape tourist behaviour. Their experiences challenge normative assumptions in tourism theory and offer a critical lens for rethinking how travel is structured, perceived, and valued.

Recent studies on travel companions are shedding new light on this area, as researchers are now starting to differentiate between solo experiences and those in group or accompanied settings (Wu *et al.*, 2021; Khoa & Chan, 2023). Khoa and Chan (2023) define solo experiences as consumption behaviours carried out independently, without the presence of travel companions. In contrast, shared experiences involve activities that are jointly planned and undertaken by two or more individuals simultaneously (Wu *et al.*, 2021). Solo travel has witnessed a steady and remarkable rise in popularity, particularly in recent years, with the appeal of independent journeys surging by an impressive 42% between 2015 and 2018 (Karantzavelou, 2018). These statistics underscore the increasing importance of solo experiences, particularly in industries such as hospitality, giving rise to the concept of the "solo traveller" (Yang *et al.*, 2022).

The aim of this research is to delve into the nuanced differences between solo and shared LGBTQ+ tourist experiences, exploring their impacts on value-for-money, tourist satisfaction, and word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations. By scrutinizing the post-decision journey (Hamilton *et al.*, 2021) of LGBTQ+ tourists, this study seeks to illuminate the distinctive consequences of embarking on travels alone versus with companions. In particular, we will compare the experiences of LGBTQ+ solo travellers with those who journey accompanied, whether as couples, friends, or with family. The study employs Construal Level Theory (CLT) and Social Impact Theory (SIT) as its theoretical framework to explain how experiences, satisfaction, word-of-mouth, and perceived value for money emerge for both individual and group LGBTQ+ travellers. This not only contributes to the academic understanding of LGBTQ+ tourism dynamics but also offers practical implications for businesses and destinations aiming to cater to the specific needs and preferences of LGBTQ+ travellers.

Analysing the differences between solo and group travel is particularly significant for LGBTQ+ tourists, whose travel experiences are often shaped by their gender identity and sexual orientation, and may also be influenced by factors such as inclusion (Baudinette, 2016), perceptions of safety (Beeth & Schänzel, 2024), and the management of social stigma (Logie *et al.*, 2019). These travel choices influence how LGBTQ+ tourists evaluate their satisfaction, particularly in relation to how well the experience aligns with their identity and personal expectations. Understanding how they assess value for money in relation to their travel experiences also offers insight into how perceived effort relates to satisfaction. Finally, their willingness to share experiences through word-of-mouth reflects their individual

evaluation of the trip and highlights the relevance of social interaction in shaping tourism behaviour within LGBTQ+ communities.

## **2. Literature review: The context of LGBTQ+ tourism**

### **2.1. Tourist experience and post-decision**

Tourist experiences are characterised by their intangible, unique, and deeply personal nature, manifesting as ongoing and subjective evaluations of travel events (Kim & Chen, 2020). This concept encompasses the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural reactions that tourists have before, during, and after their travels (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Forming a comprehensive and multidimensional construct that impacts both their satisfaction and subsequent behaviours (Kim *et al.*, 2024). Understanding these experiences is crucial for the tourism sector, as they directly influence the perceived value for money (Suhartanto *et al.* 2020), tourist satisfaction and post-decision behaviours, such as word-of-mouth and recommendations (Zhang *et al.*, 2018).

LGBTQ+ travellers are particularly attuned to the inclusivity and acceptance they encounter at destinations, which significantly impacts their overall travel experience (Ram *et al.*, 2019). The quality of these experiences can influence post-decision behaviours such as satisfaction and word-of-mouth (Caber *et al.* 2020), which are fundamental for the sustained growth of LGBTQ+ tourism. The experiences of LGBTQ+ travellers are different from those of traditional travellers and can be influenced by their LGBTQ+ characteristics, such as their identity and sexuality (Lewis *et al.*, 2021).

In marketing and tourism contexts, satisfaction is strongly linked to emotional bonds and social identity processes. According to Hahm, Ro, and Olson (2018), affective bonds formed in LGBTQ+ spaces significantly influence both satisfaction and behavioural intentions, such as revisiting and recommending. This aligns with the broader literature suggesting that emotionally meaningful and identity-affirming experiences enhance consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Therefore, in the case of LGBTQ+ tourists, satisfaction is not only a response to service quality, but also to the sense of belonging and recognition experienced during travel.

The experiences of LGBTQ+ tourists are typically shaped by the stigma they face, which stems from societal prejudices surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity, frequently resulting in external discrimination (Logie *et al.*, 2019). This stigma not only affects their perceptions of the destination during travel, but also influences their satisfaction, decision-making, and post-travel behaviours. The experiences of LGBTQ+ travellers are crucial for shaping not only their travel satisfaction but also their reflections and decisions after the journey. Community connections formed in these spaces enhance mutual support and belonging, further driving positive outcomes such as perceived value (Atuk, 2022).

This study analyses how the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ travellers impact solo versus group travel, where group travel regularly provides a sense of protection. By addressing these dynamics, the research fills a gap in understanding how identity, sexual orientation, and travel context influence LGBTQ+ tourists' experiences and satisfaction.

### **2.2. Travel companion: solo and group**

The travel experiences of modern solo travellers are likely to differ from those of traditional solo travellers. As a result, the concept of solo travel has evolved over time (Yang, 2021). Solo experiences are characterised as tourist behaviours without companions (Khoa & Chan, 2023), while shared experiences encompass activities that two or more individuals decide to undertake together (Wu *et al.*, 2021).

Solo travel has emerged as a relatively recent trend among average travellers (Yang *et al.*, 2019). The current landscape of tourism spaces and travel options has traditionally been tailored for couples and families, failing to adapt to evolving social trends such as the growing single population (Klinenberg, 2012). Solo travellers engage in a diverse array of travel activities, often incorporating a mix of experiences within a single trip. These experiences may include train journeys, self-drive adventures, visits to friends and family, participation in volunteer programmes, backpacking excursions, packaged tours, day trips, and short city escapes (Yang, 2021).

Within the realm of research on group or solo travel, few studies have focused on investigating based on gender characteristics (Bianchi, 2016; Pung *et al.*, 2020) and much less on their gender identity or the sexuality of travellers. While some studies touch upon opinions and preferences within this sector, there remains a notable absence of investigation into whether differentiation exists between individuals who travel in groups and those who travel solo. LGBTQ+ tourists have been largely omitted from these analyses. The difference between travelling companions and solo travellers can influence post-decision experiences, like value for money, satisfaction and word-of-mouth (Hamilton *et al.*, 2021), which remain largely unexplored and open for investigation. Within the literature on LGBTQ+ tourism, there are no studies that analyse the experiences of LGBTQ+ tourists based on the type of companionship they have during their travels, the value for money they experience when travelling, the tourism satisfaction, or the word-of-mouth impact depending on the type of companionship during the trip. Existing studies on LGBTQ+ tourists have often failed to examine LGBTQ+ travellers' preferences regarding travel companionship in depth. This gap persists because orientations and identities within the LGBTQ+ spectrum are frequently marginalised in traditional studies (Ong *et al.*, 2022).

In LGBTQ+ tourism research, it has been observed that young LGBTQ+ individuals exhibit a strong inclination towards solo travel, reflecting a desire for a more intimate and subjective form of mobility (Monaco, 2022). Additionally, studies focusing on gay Asian male tourists indicate a preference for travelling accompanied by friends (Wong & Tolkach, 2017). Conversely, Hughes and Deutsch (2010) suggest that single gay men might feel motivated to travel with the prospect of meeting new people or engaging in social and romantic interactions. One factor that may encourage solo travel among LGBTQ+ individuals is the use of mobile applications for sexual purposes (e.g., Grindr, Bumble, Tinder). These apps provide a way to connect with locals through interactions, and relationships. This could involve receiving advice through Grindr chats or finding social companionship while travelling alone (Katz, 2023). Meanwhile, transgender women prefer not to travel alone for tourism purposes (Monterrubio *et al.*, 2020). It is important to highlight that while adverse patterns within LGBTQ+ communities have been reported, no analysis has been conducted on how travelling solo or in groups influences their experiences and satisfaction, potentially shaped by their identities or sexual orientations.

Recent research highlights that travel companions play a significant role in shaping the experiences and choices of LGBTQ+ tourists (Szabó & Sümeghy, 2024). The experiences of LGBTQ+ travellers can vary significantly depending on whether they are travelling solo or in a group (Wong & Tolkach, 2017). LGBTQ+ individuals may feel more vulnerable when travelling alone, especially in destinations where acceptance is not guaranteed (Hughes, 2002).

While research into solo versus group travel among LGBTQ+ individuals remains limited, these travel modes have been more extensively explored within gender-based tourism literature, particularly in relation to women's experiences, autonomy, and safety (Beeth & Schänzel, 2024). Such studies highlight how solo travel can empower but also expose individuals to gendered risks, while group travel may offer social support and protection. However, these findings cannot be directly generalised to LGBTQ+

travellers, whose experiences are shaped by intersecting factors such as sexual orientation, gender identity, and the social acceptance of queer identities in different destinations. In this context, solo travel may amplify exposure to discrimination or harassment, whereas group travel can offer both a sense of safety and community connection. Our study addresses this gap by examining these travel experiences specifically within LGBTQ+ communities, providing insights grounded in their unique identities and social realities.

### 2.3. Theoretical framework: Construal Level Theory and Social Impact Theory

To better understand the travel behaviours of LGBTQ+ individuals and the dynamics of solo versus group travel, the authors draw upon Construal Level Theory (CLT) (Trope & Liberman, 2010) and Social Impact Theory (SIT) (Latané, 1981). These two theoretical frameworks offer complementary perspectives on how psychological and social distance influence tourist perceptions, experiences, and behavioural responses.

CLT posits that the psychological distance of an event, object, or person affects how individuals mentally construe it (Trope & Liberman 2010). Psychologically proximal phenomena are perceived in concrete, detailed terms, while psychologically distant ones are represented more abstractly (Trope & Liberman 2010). CLT identifies four dimensions of psychological distance: temporal, spatial, social, and hypothetical. In tourism, this means that travellers' mental representations of their journeys vary depending on how personally connected they feel to the context (Hamilton *et al.*, 2021).

Applied to this study, solo LGBTQ+ travellers may construe their experiences in more abstract terms, prioritizing self-reflection, identity exploration, or emotional autonomy. In contrast, LGBTQ+ individuals travelling with others may perceive their experience in more concrete terms, emphasising shared enjoyment, immediate social interactions, and collective safety (Hamilton *et al.*, 2021). These construal levels help explain how different travel contexts (solo vs. group) shape satisfaction, the perceived value of the experience, and the likelihood of engaging in word-of-mouth.

SIT explains how individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are influenced by the presence or actions of others. According to Latané (1981), the magnitude of social influence is determined by three main factors: i) Size (the number of people in the group); ii) Immediacy (physical or temporal proximity); and iii) Strength (the importance of the group to the individual).

In the context of LGBTQ+ tourism, group travel tends to increase social immediacy and group size, which can enhance feelings of belonging, validation, and safety (Hamilton *et al.*, 2021). These effects are especially relevant in environments where LGBTQ+ identities may not be widely accepted. On the other hand, solo travellers may lack this social reinforcement and therefore experience greater vulnerability, uncertainty, or perceived risk, elements that can reduce satisfaction or alter behavioural intentions.

By combining CLT and SIT, this study bridges the psychological and social dimensions of LGBTQ+ travel. While CLT helps explain how travellers internally frame their experiences, SIT sheds light on how external social dynamics affect their behaviours and perceptions. Together, these frameworks provide a nuanced understanding of how travel context (solo vs. accompanied) moderates the relationship between tourist experience, perceived value for money, satisfaction, and word-of-mouth.

### 2.4. Hypotheses development

This section reviews recent literature on tourist experience and its implications for LGBTQ+ tourism, focusing on the concepts of value for money, tourist satisfaction, and word-of-mouth.

The tourist experience is considered a crucial factor as it directly impacts value for money (Suhartanto *et al.* 2020), satisfaction and word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations (Wang *et al.*, 2017).

Value for money is one of the key factors associated with the overall tourist experience (Suhartanto *et al.*, 2020). For LGBTQ+ travellers, perceived value is not only linked to service quality, but also to whether the experience allows them to express their identity freely and feel respected throughout their journey. Previous literature notes that LGBTQ+ tourists are recognised for their higher spending (Madinga *et al.*, 2023), which has been linked to their pursuit of affirming and respectful travel environments (Ram *et al.*, 2019), often prioritised over cost.

Several studies have found that tourist satisfaction regularly precedes positive intentions to share their experiences (Prayag *et al.*, 2017). Tourism experience can have a significant positive influence on various aspects of their travel satisfaction (Stavrianea & Kamenidou, 2022). The relationship between experience and satisfaction has also been empirically confirmed in recent studies focused on LGBTQ+ tourism (Algueró-Boronat *et al.*, 2024a). According to SIT, individuals derive emotional benefits from contexts where their social identity is affirmed (Latané, 1981). This affirmation reinforces a positive social self-concept, which is a core motivation in SIT. For LGBTQ+ tourists, travel experiences that foster inclusion, recognition, and shared identity can reduce minority stress and strengthen their sense of belonging. These dynamics enhance positive affect and identity congruence, which are key psychological pathways through which satisfaction arises.

Tourism experiences trigger visitor word-of-mouth to the destination, positively influencing tourists' loyalty and their intention to revisit and recommend the destination (Chen & Rahman, 2018). Recommendations from friends, family, and online sources have a profound impact on LGBTQ+ individuals (Wongsunopparat & Hu, 2023). For LGBTQ+ travellers, word-of-mouth acts as a form of informal validation, helping to reduce uncertainty and perceived risk by highlighting destinations where others have had a positive experience. This guidance enables more informed and confident travel decisions, which can ultimately enhance the overall tourist experience. Word-of-mouth among LGBTQ+ individuals reinforces shared identity and encourages participation in meaningful tourist activities (Madinga *et al.*, 2023). This exploration provides insights into the unique factors driving their perceptions and decision-making processes, offering valuable implications for creating targeted strategies to enhance inclusivity, improve satisfaction, and encourage positive advocacy through word-of-mouth.

Thus, it is reasonable to hypothesize that:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *The experience of LGBTQ+ tourists positively influences (a) value for money, (b) tourist satisfaction, and (c) word-of-mouth.*

Researchers have established that value for money is a crucial determinant of tourist satisfaction (Boshoff & Gray, 2004). Value for money refers to a consumer's perception of the utility of a product or service relative to its opportunity and acquisition cost (Turel *et al.*, 2007). Numerous studies have consistently shown that perceived value for money significantly influences tourist satisfaction (Jeong & Kim., 2020). Petrick (2004) demonstrated that perceived value of money is a key antecedent of satisfaction. Recent research confirms that higher perceived value of money enhances tourist satisfaction (Caber *et al.*, 2020). Waitt and Markwell (2014) suggest that when LGBTQ+ tourists feel they are getting good value for their money, their overall satisfaction with the trip increases significantly. Guided by CLT, environments perceived as psychologically closer or more personally meaningful can enhance value perceptions and increase satisfaction. For LGBTQ+ travellers, this may occur when the

travel experience resonates with their identity, allowing them to feel comfortable and authentically engaged, factors that help justify the overall cost and contribute to a stronger sense of value. This relationship highlights the importance of balancing cost with quality and inclusivity to meet the unique needs of this segment and ensure a positive overall travel experience. Based on this literature, we hypothesize that the value for money positively influences tourist satisfaction among LGBTQ+ tourists:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** *The value for money of LGBTQ+ tourists positively influences tourist satisfaction.*

Tourist satisfaction is a key predictor of loyalty and word-of-mouth in tourism literature (Chen & Chen, 2010). Satisfied tourists are more likely to recommend the destination to others and share positive word-of-mouth, while dissatisfied tourists are less likely to return and may engage in negative word-of-mouth (Bigne *et al.*, 2001). Research shows that high satisfaction leads to positive recommendations and repeat visits (Chen & Chen, 2010). Following SIT, when individuals experience satisfaction in a socially affirming context, they are motivated to share those experiences as a means of reinforcing their group identity (Latané, 1981). Word-of-mouth thus becomes a tool not only to inform others, but to affirm one's belonging and promote the group's positive image. This effect is particularly strong in the LGBTQ+ communities, where personal recommendations play a significant role in travel planning and destination choice (Monterrubio *et al.*, 2020). Previous studies confirm that positive tourist satisfaction significantly influences word-of-mouth (Caber *et al.* 2020). For LGBTQ+ tourists, this relationship is particularly important because their satisfaction often stems from factors like safety (Beeth & Schänzel, 2024), inclusion (Baudinette, 2016), and acceptance at a destination (Ram *et al.*, 2019). Sharing their experiences through word-of-mouth not only validates their travel decisions but also empowers other LGBTQ+ individuals by promoting destinations where they have felt satisfied and had meaningful experiences.

Hence, it is reasonable to hypothesize that:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** *LGBTQ+ tourist satisfaction positively affects word-of-mouth.*

In the realm of tourism research, a discussion has emerged surrounding the distinctions between individuals who travel alone and those who travel accompanied (Hamilton *et al.*, 2021). Recent studies show that tourist experiences can differ significantly depending on whether the trip is solo or accompanied (Khoa & Chan, 2023). Caprariello and Reis (2013) indicated that shared experiences can increase consumer happiness compared to solo experiences, while Ratner and Hamilton (2015) found no significant differences in this aspect. On the other hand, Hamilton *et al.* (2021) pointed out that solo travellers tend to share their experiences more frequently due to the lack of pressure to align evaluations with companions, which can influence how these experiences impact WOM. Recent trends indicate that tourists travelling with companions tend to have lower levels of tourist satisfaction and do not feel as gratified with their experiences (Wu *et al.*, 2021). This contrasts with previous studies which suggested that solo travel resulted in lower satisfaction levels and less positive experiences compared to group travel (Ratner & Hamilton, 2015). Khoa and Chan (2023) add another layer of complexity, suggesting that solo customers, unable to satisfy the need to communicate their experiences with travel companions, may have a stronger urge to disseminate their experiences through WOM. Tourist satisfaction can be perceived differently depending on the type of trip (Khoa & Chan, 2023). Since solo and accompanied travellers can experience and evaluate their satisfaction differently, it is plausible that the type of trip moderates this relationship (Hamilton *et al.*, 2021). All the studies mentioned previously were conducted with non-LGBTQ+ tourists.

The variability in experience, satisfaction, and perceived value, according to the trip context, justifies the need to explore how the type of trip can influence these relationships in a more specific and nuanced manner. Given that previous studies have shown mixed results and the influence of trip type on these factors is not fully defined, it is reasonable to assume that the trip context for LGBTQ+ tourists could act as a moderator in the relationship between tourist experience and the variables of interest.

Studying the differences in tourist experiences, satisfaction, and perceived value for LGBTQ+ travellers based on trip context is essential because this group faces distinct vulnerabilities that directly affect their travel decisions and outcomes (Logie *et al.*, 2019). Provides a valuable framework to interpret how solo versus group travel shapes their perceptions and behaviours, helping to explain how psychological distance and social dynamics influence their evaluation of travel experiences. Solo travellers may experience heightened vulnerability, making their comfort in expressing their identity and orientation at the destination a key factor in how they evaluate satisfaction and willingness to recommend it. In contrast, group travel may provide a buffer, reducing individual concerns and altering the perception of value for money and overall satisfaction. Previous studies, such as Hamilton *et al.* (2021), highlight that travel context influences behavioural outcomes like word-of-mouth, yet these nuances remain underexplored in LGBTQ+ tourism.

This research, through the following hypotheses, seeks to determine if significant differences also exist within LGBTQ+ communities regarding shared versus individual experiences in terms of satisfaction, word-of-mouth, and perceived value for money:

**H4:** *Solo vs accompanied travel moderates the relationship between tourist experiences, tourist satisfaction, value for money and word-of-mouth in LGBTQ+ tourists.*

Figure 1 depicts the relationships among the variables explored through the hypotheses. The blue lines represent the moderating effect of solo travel compared to travelling with companions on the tourist experience.

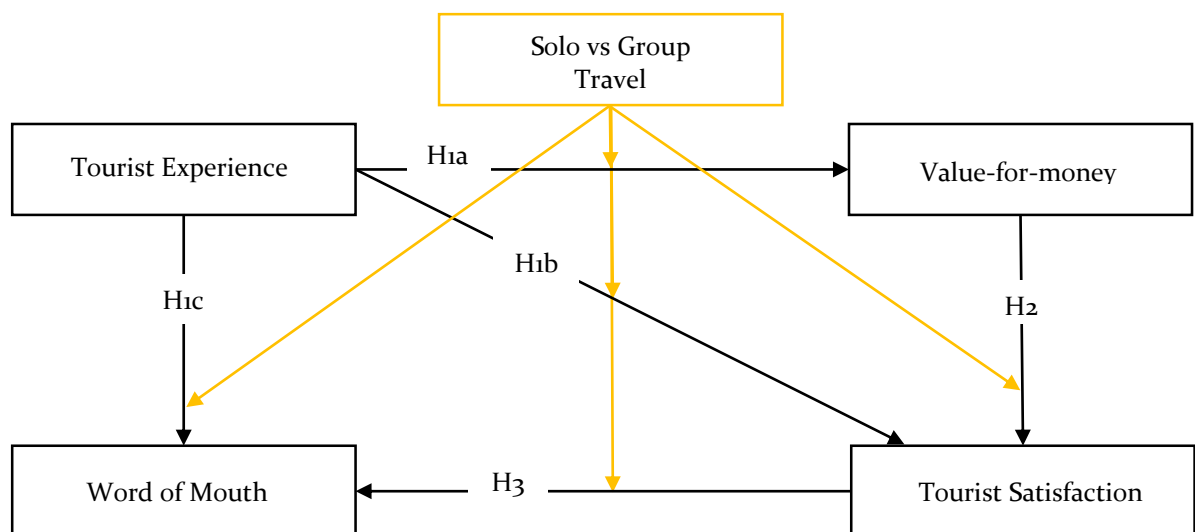


Figure 1. Research model

### 3. Research methodology

#### 3.1. Measurement instrument

The research involved the creation of an online questionnaire using scales validated by the literature to measure the variables. The study received a favourable report from the university's ethics committee (CEISH/73/2023), which certifies its compliance with the required ethical standards. Tourist experience was measured using the scale by Kim *et al.* (2012), which captures core emotional and cognitive dimensions of travel experiences, including enjoyment, renewal, and cultural immersion. Word-of-mouth was measured using the scale developed by Klaus and Maklan (2012). Tourist satisfaction was evaluated using the scale by Moliner, Monferrer, Estrada, and Rodríguez (2019), and the value for money of the tourist destination was measured using the scale by Iniesta-Bonilla, Sánchez-Fernández, and Jiménez-Castillo (2016). The five-point Likert scales used ranged from [1] "Strongly disagree" to [5] "Strongly agree". All scales are detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Sources of items.

| Construct            | Source                                                          | Items                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tourist experience   | Kim <i>et al.</i> (2012)                                        | Do any of the following statements represent the experience of your last trip?<br>I really enjoyed the tourist experience<br>I was revitalised (recharged my batteries) thanks to the tourism experience<br>I learned things about myself during the tourist experience<br>I had the opportunity to closely experience the local culture<br>Experience something new (food, activities) during the tourist experience                                     |
| Tourism satisfaction | Moliner, Monferrer, Estrada and Rodríguez (2019)                | Do any of the following statements represent satisfaction with your last trip?<br>My expectations were met while visiting the destination<br>I am satisfied with the services (accommodation, food, attractions) provided at the destination<br>Price was in line with the quality offered<br>My feelings about the destination are very positive<br>Overall, I am satisfied with my last visit                                                           |
| Value for money      | Iniesta-Bonilla, Sánchez-Fernández, and Jiménez-Castillo (2016) | Is the perceived value of your last trip represented in any of the following statements?<br>Considering the money I spent, it was worth visiting the destination<br>Considering the time I spent, it was worth visiting the destination<br>Considering the efforts I made, it was worth visiting the destination<br>Overall, the destination was well worth a visit                                                                                       |
| Word-of-mouth        | Klaus and Maklan (2012)                                         | After the visit to your last destination did you make any of the following statements?<br>I said positive things about this destination<br>I uploaded photos and videos of this destination to social networks<br>I recommended this destination<br>I encouraged family and friends to visit this destination<br>After my visit, I consider the destination as an option to repeat in the future<br>I uploaded my ratings and comments to online channels |

#### 3.2. Data collection

To conduct this research, we chose an online survey using the Qualtrics platform, without providing any incentives. Participants were asked to reflect on their most recent trip, whether domestic or international, to provide insights into their travel experiences and satisfaction. The survey targeted individuals residing in Spain, regardless of their nationality or origin, ensuring a consistent context for the study while capturing a diverse range of perspectives. The survey was distributed nationwide in Spain through a multi-faceted approach that included LGBTQ+ associations, influencers on social media, and via newsletters targeted at academic professionals specializing in LGBTQ+ topics in Spain. This multichannel approach was selected to ensure the participation of a heterogeneous and representative sample of the LGBTQ+ communities. The data collection phase took place from March to August 2023. A sample of 510 participants was used as the basis for the analysis and interpretation of

the results in this study. The main focus of this study was on this classification of travel companionship, where travellers were categorised as Individual or Solo (16.97%) or Group (Couples, friends, family, and others) (83.03%) (Table 2). To ensure data quality, a preliminary screen informed participants about the study's objectives, guaranteed the confidentiality and anonymity of their data, and requested informed consent. Completed surveys were individually reviewed, screening for inconsistencies, incomplete responses, and illogical answering patterns, resulting in the exclusion of any unreliable responses.

**Table 2.** *Sample's characteristics*

| Category                                     | %     | Category                      | %     |
|----------------------------------------------|-------|-------------------------------|-------|
| <b>Travel Company</b>                        |       | <b>Sexual Orientation</b>     |       |
| Individual or Solo                           | 16.97 | Lesbian                       | 25.15 |
| Group (Couples, friends, family, and others) | 83.03 | Gay                           | 27.16 |
|                                              |       | Bisexual                      | 33.00 |
| <b>Gender identity</b>                       |       | Heterosexual                  | 5.23  |
| Cis Women                                    | 47.92 | Demisexuality, autosexuality, | 9.46  |
| Cis Men                                      | 27.53 | monosexuality, aegosexuality, |       |
| Trans Women                                  | 4.99  | polysexuality, and asexuality |       |
| Trans Men                                    | 6.24  |                               |       |
| Non-Binary                                   | 9.16  |                               |       |
| Other and Prefer not to say                  | 4.16  | <b>Age range</b>              |       |
|                                              |       | <18                           | 2.41  |
| <b>Education level</b>                       |       | 19-24                         | 38.51 |
| Secondary School                             | 5.23  | 25-39                         | 42.45 |
| Upper secondary education                    | 10.67 | 40-49                         | 9.63  |
| Advanced vocational training                 | 13.60 | 50-59                         | 5.69  |
| Undergraduate degree                         | 36.40 | 60>                           | 1.31  |
| Postgraduate studies                         | 34.10 |                               |       |

Previous studies on LGBTQ+ tourism have often focused on LGBTQ+ tourists from a narrow perspective, predominantly portraying them as affluent white gay men (Monterrubio *et al.*, 2020; Ong *et al.*, 2022; Dixon, 2024). Although this exclusionary viewpoint has historically dominated the literature, more recent research has started to differentiate between gender identities and sexual orientations. In line with this growing body of work, our study aims to broaden the scope by including a diverse range of identities without excluding any member of the LGBTQ+ communities. Following Alguero-Boronat *et al.* (2024b), this study includes individuals whose gender identity or sexual orientation places them outside cisheteronormativity, such as heterosexual-identifying transgender people. This inclusive approach reflects the diversity of LGBTQ+ communities, avoids excluding relevant travel experiences, and ensures that no subgroup (no matter how numerically small) is left out of the analysis. Acknowledging and valuing the diversity of experiences within LGBTQ+ communities is essential for a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of LGBTQ+ tourism (Lewis *et al.*, 2021). Including all gender identities and sexual orientations, regardless of their representational percentage or their position on the gender identity spectrum, is crucial for advancing LGBTQ+ tourism research and promoting a more inclusive and representative approach to tourism studies.

#### 4. Results

In order to evaluate the theoretical model depicted in Figure 1, the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) technique was applied using SmartPLS version 4, a tool recommended for the analysis of complex theoretical models (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The data analytical procedure was as follows: First, the measurement model was evaluated using SmartPLS, considering indicators such as  $\alpha$ ,  $\rho_a$ ,  $\rho_c$ , AVE, and HTMT. Second, the structural model was assessed and hypotheses were tested

through beta coefficients (B), standard deviation (SD), t-statistics, and p-values. Lastly, a multi-group analysis was conducted to identify differences and P values between participants travelling alone and those travelling with companions during their tourist activities. These steps were carried out in line with the approach described by Hasan *et al.* (2020).

**Table 3.** *Measurement Model*

| Sample   | Construct                 |                               |                               |                               |                                  |       |       |       |
|----------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Complete |                           | Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) | Composite reliability (Rho_a) | Composite reliability (Rho_c) | Average variance extracted (AVE) | HTMT  |       |       |
|          |                           |                               |                               |                               |                                  | TS    | TE    | VM WM |
|          | Tourist satisfaction (TA) | 0,874                         | 0,883                         | 0,909                         | 0,667                            |       |       |       |
|          | Tourist experience (TE)   | 0,728                         | 0,778                         | 0,818                         | 0,531                            | 0,559 |       |       |
|          | Value for money (VM)      | 0,91                          | 0,91                          | 0,937                         | 0,788                            | 0,857 | 0,513 |       |
|          | word-of-mouth (WM)        | 0,818                         | 0,845                         | 0,878                         | 0,645                            | 0,688 | 0,609 | 0,656 |
| Solo     |                           | Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) | Composite reliability (Rho_a) | Composite reliability (Rho_c) | Average variance extracted (AVE) | HTMT  |       |       |
|          |                           |                               |                               |                               |                                  | TS    | TE    | VM WM |
|          | Tourist satisfaction (TA) | 0,919                         | 0,927                         | 0,94                          | 0,758                            |       |       |       |
|          | Tourist experience (TE)   | 0,798                         | 0,839                         | 0,864                         | 0,614                            | 0,705 |       |       |
|          | Value for money (VM)      | 0,889                         | 0,907                         | 0,925                         | 0,756                            | 0,792 | 0,66  |       |
|          | word-of-mouth (WM)        | 0,835                         | 0,888                         | 0,889                         | 0,671                            | 0,79  | 0,472 | 0,693 |
| Group    |                           | Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) | Composite reliability (Rho_a) | Composite reliability (Rho_c) | Average variance extracted (AVE) | HTMT  |       |       |
|          |                           |                               |                               |                               |                                  | TS    | TE    | VM WM |
|          | Tourist satisfaction (TA) | 0,857                         | 0,868                         | 0,898                         | 0,638                            |       |       |       |
|          | Tourist experience (TE)   | 0,713                         | 0,752                         | 0,81                          | 0,518                            | 0,517 |       |       |
|          | Value for money (VM)      | 0,92                          | 0,921                         | 0,944                         | 0,807                            | 0,878 | 0,474 |       |
|          | word-of-mouth (WM)        | 0,812                         | 0,827                         | 0,876                         | 0,639                            | 0,646 | 0,644 | 0,641 |

#### 4.1. Measurement model assessment

The structural equation model analysis encompasses both the assessment of the measurement model and the structural model. Initially, we confirmed that the outer loading values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.600 (Keshavarz & Jamshidi, 2018). Following this, we evaluated Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values, both of which surpassed the suggested threshold of 0.70, as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2019), indicating strong internal consistency. Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE), with a minimum threshold of 0.500 (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The AVE for the constructs in the complete sample exceeded this threshold, thereby affirming convergent validity. Discriminant validity was established by examining the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT), ensuring that all HTMT values were under 0.900 (Henseler *et al.*, 2015), suggesting that the measurement model achieved discriminant validity. These criteria were met by the samples, as shown in Table 3 ( $\alpha$ , Rho\_a, Rho\_c, AVE, and HTMT).

#### 4.2. Structural model and hypothesis testing results

To validate the hypotheses, we began with the analysis of the variance inflation factor (VIF). This value should not exceed 5.000, with values below 3.000 being ideal, indicating the absence of multicollinearity issues in our study (Hair *et al.*, 2019). In the hypothesis testing, all assumptions were supported except for the individual sample in H1c: Tourist experience  $\rightarrow$  word-of-mouth, which showed a p-value of 0.582.

This indicates that, for travellers who travel individually, the tourist experience does not have a significant impact on word-of-mouth (Table 4). These analyses confirmed that all hypotheses were supported, including H1a, H1b, H1c, H2, and H3, except for hypothesis H1c in the solo traveller sample, which was not confirmed.

**Table 4. Hypothesis testing**

| Sample   | Paths Direct                                    |            |        |       |        |       |               |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|-------|--------|-------|---------------|
| Complete |                                                 | VIF values | B      | S.D.  | T      | P     | Results       |
|          | H1a: Tourist experience -> Value for money      | 1,000      | 0,465  | 0,052 | 8,865  | 0,000 | Supported*    |
|          | H1b: Tourist experience -> Tourist satisfaction | 1,276      | 0,205  | 0,036 | 5,620  | 0,000 | Supported*    |
|          | H1c: Tourist experience -> word-of-mouth        | 1,364      | 0,266  | 0,051 | 5,265  | 0,000 | Supported*    |
|          | H2: Value for money -> Tourist satisfaction     | 1,276      | 0,670  | 0,038 | 17,468 | 0,000 | Supported*    |
|          | H3: Tourist satisfaction -> word-of-mouth       | 1,364      | 0,478  | 0,049 | 9,752  | 0,000 | Supported*    |
| Solo     |                                                 | VIF values | B      | S.D.  | T      | P     | Results       |
|          | H1a: Tourist experience -> Value for money      | 1,000      | 0,580  | 0,119 | 4,892  | 0,000 | Supported*    |
|          | H1b: Tourist experience -> Tourist satisfaction | 1,536      | 0,390  | 0,104 | 3,740  | 0,000 | Supported*    |
|          | H1c: Tourist experience -> word-of-mouth        | 1,734      | -0,081 | 0,147 | 0,551  | 0,582 | Not Supported |
|          | H2: Value for money -> Tourist satisfaction     | 1,536      | 0,490  | 0,107 | 4,572  | 0,000 | Supported*    |
|          | H3: Tourist satisfaction -> word-of-mouth       | 1,734      | 0,788  | 0,095 | 8,321  | 0,000 | Supported*    |
| Group    |                                                 | VIF values | B      | S.D.  | T      | P     | Results       |
|          | H1a: Tourist experience -> Value for money      | 1,000      | 0,432  | 0,057 | 7,517  | 0,000 | Supported*    |
|          | H1b: Tourist experience -> Tourist satisfaction | 1,232      | 0,161  | 0,037 | 4,309  | 0,000 | Supported*    |
|          | H1c: Tourist experience -> word-of-mouth        | 1,283      | 0,336  | 0,046 | 7,245  | 0,000 | Supported*    |
|          | H2: Value for money -> Tourist satisfaction     | 1,232      | 0,711  | 0,041 | 17,296 | 0,000 | Supported*    |
|          | H3: Tourist satisfaction -> word-of-mouth       | 1,283      | 0,412  | 0,056 | 7,422  | 0,000 | Supported*    |

Note. \*Relationships are significant at  $P < 0.05$ ; B: Beta Coefficient; SD: Standard deviation; T: t-statistics; P: p-values.

Regarding the indirect effects of the variables, the analysis reveals that all indirect relationships are supported across all sample group, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Indirect effects**

| Sample   | Indirect paths                             |       |       |       |       |            |
|----------|--------------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|
| Complete |                                            | B     | S.D.  | T     | P     | Results    |
|          | Tourist experience -> Tourist satisfaction | 0,312 | 0,044 | 7,078 | 0,000 | Supported* |
|          | Tourist experience -> word-of-mouth        | 0,247 | 0,037 | 6,595 | 0,000 | Supported* |
|          | Value for money -> word-of-mouth           | 0,320 | 0,041 | 7,835 | 0,000 | Supported* |
| Solo     |                                            | B     | S.D.  | T     | P     | Results    |
|          | Tourist experience -> Tourist satisfaction | 0,284 | 0,099 | 2,883 | 0,004 | Supported* |
|          | Tourist experience -> word-of-mouth        | 0,532 | 0,096 | 5,535 | 0,000 | Supported* |
|          | Value for money -> word-of-mouth           | 0,386 | 0,101 | 3,824 | 0,000 | Supported* |
| Group    |                                            | B     | S.D.  | T     | P     | Results    |
|          | Tourist experience -> Tourist satisfaction | 0,307 | 0,049 | 6,211 | 0,000 | Supported* |
|          | Tourist experience -> word-of-mouth        | 0,193 | 0,039 | 4,963 | 0,000 | Supported* |
|          | Value for money -> word-of-mouth           | 0,293 | 0,048 | 6,173 | 0,000 | Supported* |

Note. \*Relationships are significant at  $P < 0.05$ ; B: Beta Coefficient; SD: Standard deviation; T: t-statistics; P: p-values.

### 4.3. Multi-group analysis

In the multi-group analysis, we investigated the significant differences between travellers travelling with companions (Group) and those travelling alone (Solo), aiming to identify if there are notable distinctions between the two groups within the LGBTQ+ communities.

Table 6 presents these differences between the two groups (Group vs Solo). The first column, labelled "Difference (Group vs Solo)", shows the extent to which the coefficient estimates vary between the groups for each specific relationship. The second column, "p-value (Group vs Solo)", indicates the statistical significance of these differences in both directions.

Table 6 shows that, in relation to the tourist experience, there are significant differences between the two groups in terms of both tourist satisfaction and word-of-mouth. Similarly, a group-based difference was observed between tourist satisfaction and word-of-mouth, which confirms the distinction between solo and accompanied travel acts as a relevant moderating variable. Nevertheless, not all relationships exhibit significant differences between travellers based on whether they are accompanied or travelling alone. In particular, no significant differences were found in the relationship between the tourist experience and value for money, as well as in the relationship between value for money and tourist satisfaction. This suggests that the value for money variable is consistent across both groups, without generating significant differences in the results.

**Table 6.** Multi-group analysis

|                                                        | Difference<br>(Group vs solo) | P value<br>(Group vs solo) |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>H1a:</b> Tourist experience -> Value for money      | -0,148                        | 0,264                      |
| <b>H1b:</b> Tourist experience -> Tourist satisfaction | -0,229                        | 0,045*                     |
| <b>H1c:</b> Tourist experience -> word-of-mouth        | 0,417                         | 0,011*                     |
| <b>H2:</b> Value for money -> Tourist satisfaction     | 0,221                         | 0,066                      |
| <b>H3:</b> Tourist satisfaction -> word-of-mouth       | -0,376                        | 0,002*                     |

Note. \*Relationships are significant at  $P < 0.05$

## 5. Discussion

The aim of this study is to examine whether travel experiences differ between solo and group travellers within LGBTQ+ communities. Understanding these dynamics is particularly important, as previous studies highlight how sexual orientation and gender identity uniquely shape travel behaviours and experiences (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2016, 2021; Vorobjovas-Pinta & Pearce, 2024). Although existing literature has examined the preferences and motivations of LGBTQ+ tourists, it has not sufficiently addressed how different travel companionships, solo versus group, shape their experiences and perceptions. This study addresses this gap by offering a more nuanced understanding of travel patterns within LGBTQ+ communities.

Current trends in traveller studies show a significant increase in solo travellers (Yang *et al.*, 2022) and differences between solo and group travel (Hamilton *et al.*, 2021). Our study demonstrates that there are indeed differences between LGBTQ+ tourists who travel in groups and those who travel solo, particularly in the relationship between the tourist experience and tourist satisfaction. Our study on LGBTQ+ communities' experiences aligns with the most current trends, showing that overall satisfaction with the tourist experience is more favourable and positive for solo travellers (Wu *et al.*, 2021). This finding not only supports the growing trend of solo travel (Karantzavelou, 2018) but also highlights a greater level of satisfaction and a better experience for LGBTQ+ travellers who choose to travel alone. This aligns with CLT, where solo travel may prompt a more introspective and emotionally meaningful construal of the experience, leading to heightened satisfaction.

In the relationship between tourist experience and the perception of value for money, there were no significant differences found between solo LGBTQ+ travellers and those travelling in groups. This suggests that both groups perceive the expenditure as proportional to the quality and quantity of experiences received. Although the perception of value for money is similar across both groups, LGBTQ+ tourists travelling in groups perceive a higher and more favourable value for money.

Regarding the relationship between tourist experience and word-of-mouth, the results show that, for solo LGBTQ+ travellers, this relationship is not significant. This indicates that for individuals travelling alone, there is no significant association between the tourist experience and the propensity to share it through word-of-mouth. In contrast, for group travellers, the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship is supported. The multi-group analysis reveals important differences: group travellers tend to engage in more word-of-mouth activities compared to solo travellers. This finding aligns with Caprariello and Reis (2013), who indicated that people who share experiences are more likely to communicate with them than those who have individual experiences. Supports the premise of SIT, which suggests enhanced social influence in group contexts, where immediacy and interaction foster collective expression. However, this differs from more recent trends suggesting that solo travellers share their experiences more due to the need to communicate their travel experiences (Khoa & Chan, 2023).

The lower propensity to share experiences while travelling alone may be related to the search for authenticity and self-discovery, where the personal experience carries more weight than the influence of others' opinions (Karantzavelou, 2018). In line with CLT (Trope & Liberman, 2010), solo travellers may engage with their experiences in more abstract, internalised ways, which reduces the social need to externalise them via word-of-mouth.

In the context of LGBTQ+ travellers, the tourist experience itself does not significantly influence word-of-mouth among those travelling alone. However, when analysing the relationship between tourist satisfaction and word-of-mouth, a significant difference between solo travellers and group travellers is observed. This may be due to the fact that while tourist experience refers to new activities undertaken, and services enjoyed during the trip (Kim & Chen, 2020), tourist satisfaction refers to the emotional and evaluative response to these experiences (Stavrianea & Kamenidou, 2022). CLT suggests that when travellers perceive their experiences as personally meaningful, psychological distance is reduced, increasing satisfaction and engagement. In turn, SIT explains how group interactions may strengthen social influence, encouraging travellers to share their experiences. Therefore, word-of-mouth is more likely when the experience resonates emotionally with the individual, rather than being solely shaped by its objective features. Word-of-mouth allows LGBTQ+ travellers to share meaningful experiences, helping others navigate similar choices with greater confidence. The satisfaction of solo travellers is closely linked to their perceptions of the tourist experience, and the desire to share these experiences may be driven by a need to empower other LGBTQ+ travellers. Solo travellers rely more on their own perceptions and experiences, often share specific details they consider valuable for others in similar situations (Karantzavelou, 2018), thereby increasing the visibility of inclusive destinations and activities. Group travellers, by sharing experiences and forming bonds during the trip, are less likely to externalise their experiences (Khoa & Chan, 2023). Within the LGBTQ+ communities, word-of-mouth significantly influences travel decisions due to trust in the personal recommendations of other communities members. Positive experiences shared through word-of-mouth help foster supportive networks within the LGBTQ+ communities, fostering an environment where LGBTQ+ travellers feel more confident in exploring new destinations.

Our results confirm a significant and consistent relationship between value for money and tourist satisfaction, aligning with previous literature (Caber *et al.*, 2020). This relationship holds for both solo

and group LGBTQ+ travellers, suggesting that perceived value is a shared determinant of satisfaction across travel contexts. One possible explanation is that identity-based travel motivations, such as seeking authenticity, comfort, or recognition, may shape how LGBTQ+ individuals assess value (Alguero-Boronat *et al.*, 2024b), regardless of whether they travel alone or with others. In line with previous literature, such shared experiences may reflect a desire for destinations where travellers feel comfortable expressing their identity, (Ong *et al.*, 2022), key aspects of LGBTQ+ traveller satisfaction.

## 6. Contributions and implications

### 6.1. Theoretical contributions

This study offers two main theoretical contributions. First, it provides new empirical insight into the differences between solo and group travel among LGBTQ+ tourists, an area previously underexplored. By comparing these two travel contexts within the same framework, the study highlights how travel mode influences perceptions of safety, emotional fulfilment, satisfaction, and word-of-mouth intentions. This comparative perspective enriches the understanding of how social context shapes tourist behaviour in identity-relevant groups.

Second, the study advances theoretical integration by applying Construal Level Theory (CLT) and Social Impact Theory (SIT) to the field of LGBTQ+ tourism. It extends CLT by suggesting that solo LGBTQ+ travellers may engage with their experiences through higher-level, emotionally meaningful construals shaped by identity salience and marginalisation. It also refines SIT by showing that group travel enhances communicative behaviours, such as word-of-mouth, through mechanisms of identity validation and social immediacy. Together, these insights connect psychological and social dimensions to explain how LGBTQ+ tourists evaluate and express their travel experiences.

### 6.2. Managerial Implications

Our study highlights key managerial implications for the tourism sector based on the experiences of LGBTQ+ travellers. First, it highlights the importance of acknowledging the diversity of identities within LGBTQ+ communities when designing tourist experiences, as these identity-related factors influence how travellers assess satisfaction and value. This involves not only training staff in LGBTQ+ sensitivity but also promoting inclusive practices in marketing efforts (Ong *et al.*, 2022; Dixon, 2024). Marketing practices must strive to be as authentic as possible, as genuine efforts have the greatest impact on LGBTQ+ tourists, avoiding rainbow-washing (Alguero-Boronat *et al.*, 2024a), a term used to describe the use of LGBTQ+ symbols or messages for marketing purposes without a genuine commitment to the communities (Tressoldi *et al.*, 2023). To ensure authenticity in the tourism sector, it is essential to train staff in diversity, including proper pronoun usage, understanding identities, and creating respectful environments (Alguero-Boronat *et al.*, 2024a). Additionally, tourism managers can encourage positive word-of-mouth by offering incentives for travellers to share reviews and testimonials, particularly from solo LGBTQ+ tourists whose experiences can inform others with similar profiles. Maintaining ongoing relationships post-visit through personalised communication, such as follow-up emails or loyalty programmes, can strengthen connections and foster trust. Furthermore, managers should ensure that tourists perceive a clear relationship between the cost and benefits of their experiences. This can be achieved through transparent communication about pricing, offers, and the quality of services provided (Caber *et al.*, 2020). Key practical implications for supporting LGBTQ+ travellers also include partnering with local LGBTQ+ organisations to provide resource guides or applications providing information on safer spaces, events, emergency contacts, and health services. Tourism providers should also develop and promote explicitly LGBTQ+-friendly venues and accommodations, highlighting them in marketing to attract travellers seeking security and comfort. Moreover, creating digital platforms where LGBTQ+ travellers can share reviews, experiences, and safety tips will be especially valuable for solo travellers. Additionally, tailored programmes and activities

that promote social interaction may enhance the overall experience of solo LGBTQ+ travellers, who often value opportunities to connect with others during their trip. Lastly, the study suggests that enhancing a positive tourist satisfaction among solo LGBTQ+ travellers can lead to more effective and positive word-of-mouth. Tourism managers should focus on creating enriching experiences that meet the emotional needs of solo travellers to boost their satisfaction and likelihood of sharing positive reviews (Khoa & Chan, 2023).

### 6.2. Social implications

The creation of studies that value and address all gender identities and sexual orientations within LGBTQ+ communities is crucial for the advancement of academic knowledge and the promotion of social inclusion. Traditionally, many studies in the field of LGBTQ+ tourism have tended to focus on a narrow and homogeneous profile of LGBTQ+ tourists: white, affluent men (Monterrubio *et al.*, 2020; Ong *et al.*, 2022; Dixon, 2024), recent literature has increasingly incorporated more inclusive approaches that reflect the plurality of these communities. In line with this progression, our study seeks to contribute to a broader and more representative understanding by including a wide range of gender identities and sexual orientations, offering a model that can inform future research in the field. The inclusion of trans individuals who identify as heterosexual, alongside other diverse identities within the LGBTQ+ spectrum, offers a broader and more accurate picture of the experiences and needs of these communities (Alguero-Boronat *et al.*, 2024a). This approach not only enriches the theoretical framework of LGBTQ+ tourism but also provides an example of how academic studies can evolve to reflect the complex and multi-faceted reality of LGBTQ+ identities. Thus, this research contributes to SDG 5: Gender Equality by promoting a more inclusive tourism environment for all gender identities and sexual orientations. It also aligns with SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities, as it seeks to reduce inequalities and foster inclusion in the tourism sector, advocating for equal opportunities and the promotion of inclusion for everyone.

### 7. Research limitations and future research

Although this study provides valuable insights into the experiences of LGBTQ+ tourists and the differences between solo and group travel, there are several limitations that must be acknowledged. Despite the study's efforts to encompass a broad range of LGBTQ+ identities and orientations, the sample may still not fully represent the full spectrum of LGBTQ+ experiences. A limitation of this study is the grouping of diverse identities within the LGBTQ+ acronym, which may overlook smaller subgroups. Future research should aim to explore these identities individually as representation increases. The study predominantly focused on specific geographical regions, which may not capture the experiences of LGBTQ+ travellers from diverse cultural or regional contexts. Future research should aim to include a more geographically diverse sample to enhance the generalizability of the findings. While the study explored various aspects of LGBTQ+ travel experiences, it primarily concentrated on tourist satisfaction, perceived value for money, and word-of-mouth behaviour. Other dimensions of the travel experience, such as emotional well-being, the impact of travel on self-identity, or personal growth, were not examined. Future research could investigate these additional aspects to provide a more comprehensive understanding of LGBTQ+ travel experiences. Additionally, future research could further examine how different LGBTQ+ identities experience solo versus group travel, particularly considering the role of perceived safety in shaping travel behaviour.

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