

# Sense of security in LGBT+ tourism

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## Abstract

The present study analyses user-generated content from Tripadvisor to identify critical factors influencing LGBT+ tourists' sense of security. A total of 34,658 relevant online reviews were collected in September 2024 through the Outscraper platform. The ROBERTA language model was then used to categorise the reviews into positive, negative, or neutral sentiments and examine keywords. Security emerged as a key factor in LGBT+ tourists' satisfaction, which was primarily influenced by quality of service and accommodation infrastructure. Terms such as "friendly" and "welcoming" were frequently found in positive reviews, whereas words like "fear," "risk" and "discrimination" appeared in negative ones. The paper concludes that, in contrast to common assumptions, LGBT+ tourists' sense of security is not a static attribute but rather a negotiated outcome of the complex interaction of symbols and social signals.

## Keywords

LGBT+, perceived safety, security, user-generated content, sentiments, online reviews

## Introduction

LGBT+ tourism has emerged as a significant segment of the global travel industry, not only for its role in promoting inclusion and diversity, but also due to its increasing economic relevance. Recent projections suggest that the value of the global LGBT+ tourism market will reach approximately US \$ 604.3 billion by 2032 – up from US \$ 357 billion in 2025 – representing a compound annual growth rate of 7.8% (Coherent Market Insights, 2025). This growth is driven by rising demand for destinations that offer genuinely inclusive environments, supported by broader social advancements in LGBT+ rights and by the increasing visibility of safe and welcoming tourism experiences. The LGBT+ segment is also characterised by more frequent travel and a higher spending propensity, making it a strategic focus for the global tourism industry (Wongsunopparat and Hu, 2023). The supply of tourism products and services tailored to LGBT+ travellers has responded and grown to meet this increasing demand (Litwack, 2018). Destinations and hospitality businesses have been actively investing in creating hospitable environments, establishing themselves as preferred choices for this segment (Muñoz et al., 2025). Cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro in Brazil exemplify this trend, leveraging events and infrastructure to reinforce their

position in the international LGBT+ tourism scenario (Neves, 2021). Events such as Gay Pride and themed festivals such as Gay Ski Week in New Zealand celebrate diversity and provide participants with transformational experiences that reinforce their identity, sense of belonging to the LGBT+ community, and psychological comfort in inclusive environments (Dixon, 2024). In this study, we use the term LGBT+ to refer to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people, with the '+' symbol acknowledging the wider range of sexual

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and gender identities that extend beyond these core categories. We adopt the LGBT + acronym because it offers conceptual clarity while remaining inclusive, and because it is widely used across tourism studies and international policy documents. Although variations such as LGBTQ + or LGBTQIA + exist, the use of LGBT + provides a consistent and analytically parsimonious umbrella term that aligns well with the scope of this study and with the structure of large-scale data analysis.

For LGBT + travellers, the ideal travel experience goes beyond the universal expectations of good service: it requires destinations that actively recognise, respect, and affirm their identities, fostering a sense of emotional safety and social inclusion that is often not guaranteed in general hospitality standards (Xiang and Cheah, 2024). Authentic welcoming practices, particularly evident in employee-customer interactions and through genuine LGBT+-friendly branding, become a key differentiator (Jin et al., 2024; Ro and Kang, 2024). However, it has been argued that it is crucial that the tourism industry avoids superficial marketing strategies, such as tokenism or illusive inclusion, as these can negatively impact perceptions among LGBT + tourists and hospitality professionals (Dixon, 2024).

Recent scholarship has also emphasised that experiences of safety, vulnerability and spatial negotiation among LGBT + travellers must be understood through a broader queer lens. Usai et al. (2022) demonstrate that heteronormative practices continue to shape how LGBT + travellers interpret destinations and everyday interactions, revealing persistent tensions in the way safety is perceived. Similarly, Beeth and Schänzel (2024) argue that queer placemaking and the production of inclusive spaces are intrinsically linked to feelings of protection, belonging and resistance, indicating that the sense of safety is co-constructed across both tourism settings and wider social contexts. Complementing these perspectives, the systematic review by Muñoz et al. (2025) highlights that, despite significant advancements, safety remains one of the most under-examined yet essential dimensions in LGBT + tourism research, identifying it as a critical gap that demands further empirical and theoretical attention.

A sense of belonging can be a pivotal factor influencing LGBT + travellers' destination choices, shaping travel decisions and contributing to overall well-being for many individuals (Neves and Brambatti, 2022). This emotional connection is intrinsically reinforced by the perceived welcoming environment, transforming genuine hospitality efforts into a competitive advantage that fosters tourist loyalty (Jin et al., 2024; Ro and Kang, 2024). Reviews from fellow LGBT + tourists – especially those found on user-generated content (UGC) platforms like Tripadvisor – play a crucial role in

providing authentic insights into a destination's safety, hospitality, and overall travel experience (Wongsunopparat and Hu, 2023). These not only serve to guide new travellers but also offer invaluable feedback for tourism businesses, enabling them to identify areas for improvement and refine their services (Jin et al., 2024).

While traditional service-quality models such as SERVQUAL provide valuable insights into general service performance, they do not explicitly capture dimensions that are particularly relevant to minority travellers, such as symbolic safety, emotional comfort and inclusive staff behaviours. These aspects are central to the travel experience of LGBT + tourists, who often rely on subtle social cues and interpersonal sensitivity to assess whether a destination is welcoming and safe. In contrast, TOURQUAL (Mondo, 2017) was developed specifically for tourism environments and incorporates dimensions—such as safety, the human element and experience—that align more closely with the concerns documented in LGBT + tourism research. These characteristics make TOURQUAL an appropriate analytical basis for examining how LGBT + tourists negotiate their sense of security and how existing indicators might be refined or expanded to include diversity and inclusion criteria.

Its six dimensions – access, environment, security, experience, technical quality, and the human element (Mondo, 2017) – offer a broad analytical basis that can be extended or refined to incorporate diversity and inclusion criteria. Although the current version of TOURQUAL does not include specific items for LGBT + safety, the security dimension could be expanded to consider protective measures relevant to this group, as discussed in studies that highlight the importance of safety in hospitality contexts (e.g., Khalilzadeh, 2021), while the human element dimension underscores the critical importance of staff training to enhance sensitivity and promote inclusive employee-customer interactions (Jin et al., 2024). By diligently implementing such practices, destinations and businesses can gain a significant competitive edge and consistently offer more genuinely welcoming and safer experiences (Ro and Kang, 2024). The analysis of UGC on digital platforms is particularly valuable in that it can provide actionable insights that help significantly enhance LGBT + travellers' satisfaction and loyalty (Wongsunopparat and Hu, 2023).

Despite the expansion of research on LGBT + tourism, limited attention has been paid to how perceptions of safety are articulated at scale through real-world travel experiences. Existing studies typically rely on interviews or small-scale surveys, resulting in valuable yet narrow accounts. However, large datasets of user-generated content (UGC) have not been

systematically analysed to understand how safety—both physical and emotional—is negotiated in everyday tourism encounters. Furthermore, no studies to date have integrated these large-scale insights into established service-quality frameworks such as TOURQUAL, leaving an important methodological gap concerning how safety perceptions can be operationalised for minority travellers.

Accordingly, this study aims (1) to identify the main determinants of safety perception among LGBT + tourists through the large-scale analysis of UGC, and (2) to explore how these determinants may inform the adaptation of TOURQUAL indicators to better reflect inclusion and safety concerns relevant to this segment. Armed with such knowledge, the study's second aim is to explore how such factors can best be integrated as indicators in the TOURQUAL quality-management framework. The ultimate objective is to provide tourism businesses with an analytical framework that supports the enhancement of practices and the creation of service environments that are genuinely safe and welcoming for LGBT + customers.

## Literature review

### *Service quality in the context of tourism*

Service quality in the tourism industry refers to the ability of businesses to meet or exceed customer expectations (Habeeb et al., 2025; Ro and Kang, 2024). This is especially relevant in tourism, where services are predominantly intangible and cannot be evaluated before consumption (Adiningtyas and Millanyani, 2024). Perceived quality derives from both tangible aspects—such as infrastructure and equipment—and intangible elements, including friendliness, reliability and safety (Jin et al., 2024). Because of this combination, perceived quality plays a decisive role in shaping satisfaction, loyalty and the overall competitiveness of tourism businesses (Habeeb et al., 2025; Sánchez et al., 2025).

Among the theoretical models created to assess service quality, SERVQUAL remains one of the most influential (Habeeb et al., 2025). Proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), the model is structured around five dimensions—tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy—and is grounded in the measurement of the gap between customers' expectations and perceptions. While SERVQUAL has proven to be a valuable diagnostic tool, its application to tourism has been challenged because its dimensions were originally designed for general service environments and do not fully reflect the experiential complexity of tourism settings (Adiningtyas and Millanyani, 2024; Habeeb et al., 2025; Ong et al., 2020). In

particular, tourism encounters often involve emotional, social and contextual factors that extend beyond what the five SERVQUAL dimensions capture, especially in segments where safety, interpersonal interactions and symbolic aspects of the environment can influence the quality of the experience.

To respond to these sector-specific needs, TOURQUAL was developed as a framework specifically tailored to the tourism industry (Mondo and Fiates, 2017). While SERVQUAL offers a broad assessment of service performance, TOURQUAL incorporates dimensions such as hospitality, hygiene, cost-benefit, safety and infrastructure, which reflect the unique characteristics of tourism consumption. Because these dimensions are directly related to the tourism environment, TOURQUAL is able to capture aspects of visitor experience—such as emotional comfort, perceptions of safety and interactions with staff—that may be especially relevant for travellers who evaluate service quality based on subtle cues of welcome and acceptance. Its application in different tourism contexts has shown the importance of dimensions such as hospitality and hygiene in shaping perceptions of quality (Mondo and Fiates, 2023).

Thus, both SERVQUAL and TOURQUAL contribute meaningfully to the evaluation of service quality in tourism. SERVQUAL offers a broad foundation for identifying expectation–perception gaps, whereas TOURQUAL provides a tourism-specific structure that aligns more closely with the experiential, operational and emotional characteristics of tourism environments. Maintaining high levels of service quality remains essential for competitiveness, customer satisfaction and market differentiation in tourism (Adiningtyas and Millanyani, 2024; Sánchez et al., 2025). Identifying gaps through these models enables managers to refine operations, better meet visitor expectations and reinforce the long-term success of tourism businesses (Habeeb et al., 2025).

### *LGBT + tourism*

LGBT + tourism has its roots in the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, which played a crucial role in increasing visibility and advocating for safe spaces for the LGBT + community (Valcuende Del Río et al., 2023). Initially marginalised, this type of tourism was served by only a limited number of destinations and business organisations. However, as societal acceptance grew, LGBT + tourism emerged as a promising and expanding market segment, increasingly entering the mainstream (Burchiellaro, 2024). The emergence of dedicated LGBT + tourist zones – such as Reguliersdwarsstraat in Amsterdam and specific neighbourhoods in Torremolinos, Spain – has played a

fundamental role in creating visibly safe and welcoming spaces. These areas foster a sense of community and social inclusion, allowing LGBT+ travellers to feel accepted, respected, and connected to spaces where their identities are celebrated (Valcuende Del Río et al., 2023). Globalisation has also played a key role in shaping diverse queer mobility circuits – ranging from organised travel routes to informal networks on social media platforms – that enable LGBT+ individuals to identify and access destinations perceived as safe and welcoming, especially for those experiencing repression or discrimination in their countries of origin (Burchiellaro, 2024).

A recurring theme in LGBT+ tourism research concerns the economic framing of this segment. Concepts such as DINKs (Dual Income, No Kids) and “pink money” have been widely used to highlight the perceived purchasing power of LGBT+ travellers and to justify targeted marketing strategies. However, this economic appeal is often accompanied by concerns about superficial or selective inclusion, a phenomenon referred to as pinkwashing, in which destinations and businesses adopt LGBT+-friendly imagery without implementing meaningful structural or cultural changes. Such dynamics illustrate how LGBT+ tourism can simultaneously be positioned as a lucrative niche market while still being constrained by heteronormative assumptions that limit authentic inclusion.

While the fundamental travel needs of LGBT+ travellers are similar to those of any other tourist (e.g., physical comfort, enjoyment, and good service), they are inherently shaped by additional factors such as physical safety, acceptance, and identity recognition, which play a crucial role in their travel decisions and overall well-being (Xiang and Cheah, 2024). For many LGBT+ tourists, destination choice is strongly influenced by perceived safety and generally low levels of discrimination, as they seek places where they can express themselves more freely and connect with a visibly welcoming local community (Valcuende Del Río et al., 2023; Wongsunopparat and Hu, 2023). For example, Clift and Forrest (1999) emphasise that LGBT+ tourists prefer locations where they can express themselves freely and where the presence of an openly LGBT+-friendly local community is evident and socially accepted. In an earlier study, Hughes (2002) observed that fear of rejection or hostility could significantly impact travel decisions, prompting many LGBT+ tourists – particularly at the time – to favour destinations recognised for their welcoming and inclusive hospitality. As a result, elements such as the social environment, targeted marketing, and staff sensitivity are essential in ensuring a tourism experience that is both fulfilling and emotionally comfortable for LGBT+ travellers. In addition, offering high-quality services to LGBT+ travellers involves creating

welcoming spaces that respect and celebrate diversity (Burchiellaro, 2024; Monaco, 2022). For example, Pritchard et al. (2002) analyse Manchester’s Gay Village, one of the best-known LGBT+ destinations, where a sense of safety – signalled by visible LGBT+ symbols, inclusive signage, a strong community presence and community visibility – create a hospitable atmosphere. In another study, Waitt et al. (2008) examine the Sydney Mardi Gras, emphasising how inclusive tourism events can remodel service offerings and delivery to meet LGBT+ travellers’ expectations. During the event, businesses personalise their offerings to provide safe and festive environments, enhancing visitors’ sense of belonging to the LGBT+ community and to an inclusive, celebratory space. Today, LGBT+ tourism has transitioned from a marginalised niche to a high-potential economic and social market (Ong et al., 2020; Wongsunopparat and Hu, 2023). Destinations that successfully meet LGBT+ travellers’ expectations stand out by demonstrating cultural sensitivity, specialised marketing, and the creation of hospitable and secure spaces (Burchiellaro, 2024; Jin et al., 2024; Ro and Kang, 2024; Valcuende Del Río et al., 2023).

### *User-generated content on digital platforms and sentiment analysis*

UGC refers to content voluntarily created by consumers without direct involvement from marketing companies (Chu et al., 2022). It has become one of the primary sources of information for travellers who use platforms like Tripadvisor to decide on destinations, accommodations, and activities (Adiningtyas and Millanyani, 2024). The relevance of UGC in tourism lies not only in its perceived authenticity and its power to influence the reputation of destinations and services, but also in the fact that tourism products cannot be sampled before purchase – making peer reviews an essential resource to reduce uncertainty (Ro and Kang, 2024; Sánchez et al., 2025). According to Chu et al. (2022), UGC can serve as a rich source of data for managerial decision-making, being particularly valuable for representing a spontaneous and non-institutional view of tourism services. According to Xiang and Gretzel (2010), UGC plays a crucial role in shaping opinions and travel decisions, often replacing traditional information sources such as printed guidebooks and travel agencies. In another study, Munar and Jacobsen (2014) assert that UGC allows tourists to participate in co-constructing the reputation of destinations, shaping the public perception of tourist spots based on their individual experiences.

Tripadvisor is one of the most influential UGC platforms, enabling millions of tourists to share reviews

about accommodations, restaurants, and attractions worldwide (Sánchez et al., 2025). For example, O'Connor (2010) emphasises that Tripadvisor functions as a strategic marketing tool for tourism businesses, as reviews directly influence other consumers' decisions. In another study, Filieri and McLeay (2014) note that reviews on the platform are frequently used as informal indicators of quality and reliability. Although UGC is a valuable information source, the credibility, and reliability of the content can be questioned due to potential manipulations or biases (Filieri, 2016). The consistency of reviews and the perceived competence of the reviewer are also considered essential for UGC to be trustworthy (Filieri, 2016). Moreover, Ayeh (2015) adds that trust in UGC is linked to the perceived authenticity of the content, warning that suspicious reviews, such as identical and overly positive comments, can generate scepticism.

Sentiment analysis can be used to analyse such aspects of UGC. Sentiment analysis is a methodology used in UGC that identifies and classifies emotions expressed in texts, such as tourist reviews (Park et al., 2018). Pang and Lee (2008) explain that this technique, which employs natural language processing and machine learning, captures opinion nuances that go beyond merely counting positive and negative words. For tourism businesses, this analysis is crucial for identifying areas for improvement based on customer perceptions (Adiningtyas and Millanyani, 2024). It is common to use data extraction and categorisation tools, such as web scraping, to effectively analyse UGC (Sánchez et al., 2025). This is especially so on global platforms such as Tripadvisor as it allows large volumes of reviews to be collected for subsequent analysis (Sánchez et al., 2025). In the LGBT+ context, sentiment analysis of reviews can uncover specific concerns, such as discrimination and safety, which are fundamental for understanding the perceived quality of LGBT+ travellers in tourist destinations.

In this study, specific attention was paid to the terms *safe*, *secure*, *welcome*, and *comfort*, which frequently appeared in user-generated content. While these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, they represent distinct dimensions of service quality. Here, *safe* refers to the absence of physical risks or hazards within the resort; *secure* relates to measures for protection against crime or harm, including surveillance and staff presence; *welcome* captures the feeling of hospitality and being well-received by staff; while *comfort* encompasses both physical and emotional ease during the stay, including aspects such as room temperature, furniture, and ambiance. These definitions guided our coding and interpretation of the textual data.

## Method

This study adopts an inductive approach, wherein the analysis of specific reviews is employed to develop broader inferences about the LGBT+ tourist experience. Such a methodology is essential in view of the challenges of isolating perceptions and statements of this segment amid a vast and heterogeneous volume of tourist reviews. Separating comments that genuinely reflect the experiences and concerns of LGBT+ tourists requires specific techniques, as traditional analyses may fail to capture relevant nuances of this group. In this context, the inductive approach aims to overcome this barrier, allowing for a deeper understanding of the dynamics of safety and satisfaction among LGBT+ tourists in global tourism.

Secondary data analysis was conducted using reviews collected from the Tripadvisor website, employing automated tools to extract reviews published by tourists. Data collection was carried on the Outscraper platform, which allowed the application of filters for specific keywords such as gay and LGBT in various languages, aiming to identify reviews directly related to attractions and services targeted at the LGBT+ audience. This step was crucial to ensure that the collected data focussed on the LGBT+ segment, differentiating from more generalised comments. Initially, a global list of locations and attractions potentially of interest to LGBT+ tourists was generated, serving as a basis for detailed extraction of reviews. The API Curious\_coder/Tripadvisor-Scraper facilitated the retrieval of specific data, enabling precise and targeted segmentation of this audience.

Data collection took place in September 2024 and encompassed all available reviews at the previously selected locations, resulting in an initial total of 35,325 reviews. After a careful filtering process, a final sample of 34,658 valid reviews was obtained, containing information on location, language, and textual content directly related to tourism services for the LGBT+ audience. Linguistic diversity was an essential element in capturing perceptions from tourists of different nationalities and cultural contexts, enriching the analysis by incorporating a representative range of LGBT+ backgrounds and experiences. To ensure analytical consistency, all reviews were pre-processed and normalised in English, including translation where necessary. This step involved cleaning the data, removing duplicates, and standardising textual fields and metadata to maintain focus on the LGBT+ audience and enhance the reliability of subsequent analyses. Quantitative analysis of the reviews was performed using the Robustly Optimized BERT Approach (ROBERTA) natural language processing model, developed by Facebook's AI team in 2019. This model was chosen for

its robustness and high precision in multilingual sentiment analysis, allowing for an accurate reading without losing the context of the original reviews. Applying the ROBERTA model to identify the polarity of reviews – positive, negative, or neutral – was particularly important, ensuring that perceptions of safety and hospitality were analysed in the original language of the comments, maintaining the authenticity of the expressed emotions. To ensure compatibility with the research context, the Google Translate library was subsequently used to automatically translate the reviews in Python, normalising the texts for keyword analysis. This process enabled the isolation of recurring terms related to the safety and inclusion of the LGBT+ people, aiding in the categorisation of perceptions and behaviours in a targeted manner. This approach was designed to overcome the barrier of obtaining specific data on safety and quality for the LGBT+ community, which would not be feasible with conventional methodology.

Following sentiment analysis, a qualitative analysis of the keywords was conducted, focusing on terms related to the safety of LGBT+ tourists. This stage enabled the identification of behavioural patterns and specific concerns reflecting the safety (or lack thereof) in the experiences of these tourists. Mapping positive and negative words and expressions revealed important contextual aspects, such as specific safety factors for the LGBT+ community, which may not be immediately perceived in general tourist reviews. This is essential for extracting meaningful and specific information about

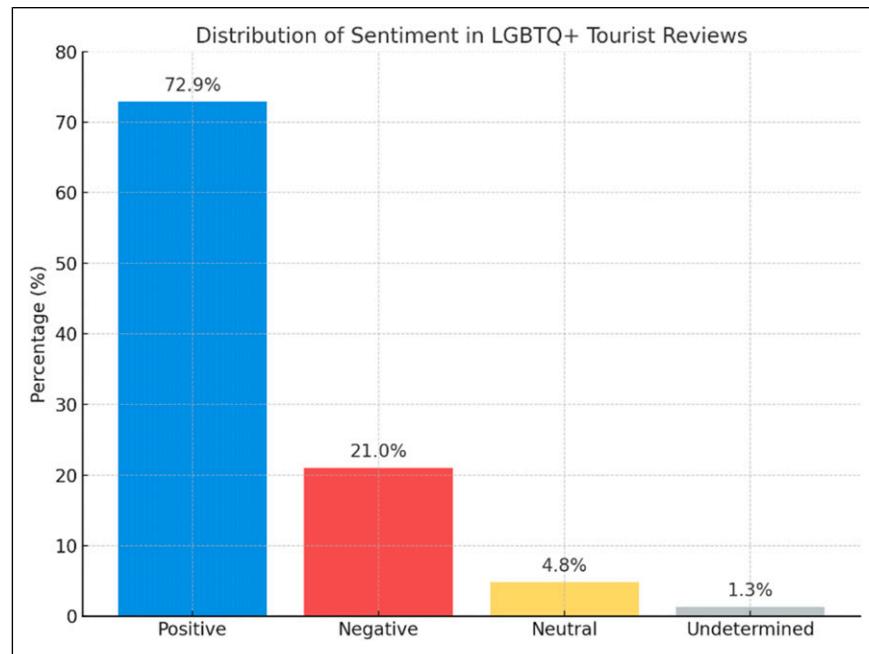
the experiences and safety concerns of the LGBT+ audience in tourism. The combination of sentiment analysis and keyword analysis provides valuable initial insights into this audience's perceptions regarding destinations and tourism services; however, to fully understand the context and nuances behind these perceptions, such analysis should ideally be complemented by qualitative approaches. This innovative approach offers insights for formulating policies and practices that promote safer and more welcoming environments, effectively meeting the needs of this segment in the tourism sector.

## Results

### *Sentiment of the reviews*

With the comments pre-processed, the ROBERTA model was applied for sentiment analysis. The model indicated that 72.9% (25,256 comments) were positive regarding the experience, while 21.0% (7,269 comments) exhibited negative sentiment and 4.8% (1,658 comments) were neutral. In addition, in just over 1% of cases (475 comments) ROBERTA could not identify the sentiment (see [Figure 1](#)).

These results directly address Research Question 1 by showing that the majority of LGBT+ tourists express broadly positive experiences, which aligns with the growing visibility of LGBT+-friendly destinations. However, the predominance of positive sentiment must be interpreted cautiously: positivity often reflects



**Figure 1.** Sentiment distribution of reviews.

satisfaction with general tourism attributes rather than explicit feelings of inclusion. In many cases, tourists only comment on LGBT+-specific issues when something goes wrong, meaning that neutral or positive sentiments do not necessarily imply the absence of subtle forms of discrimination. This makes contextual interpretation essential when analysing perceptions of safety and inclusion.

Regarding the security of categorisations, [Figure 2](#) shows the confidence distribution of the ROBERTA model in identifying sentiment polarities in the comments. The model demonstrates high confidence when identifying negative sentiments, which is significant, as such sentiments may serve as warnings related to service quality or safety. Neutral comments show moderate confidence levels, possibly due to their descriptive and less emotionally charged nature. In contrast, positive sentiments exhibit greater variability in the model's confidence scores. This may indicate that positive experiences – particularly those related to feelings of safety – are expressed in a variety of ways, making them less uniform and more context-dependent. The diversity in language used to convey positive sentiments could explain this variation in confidence.

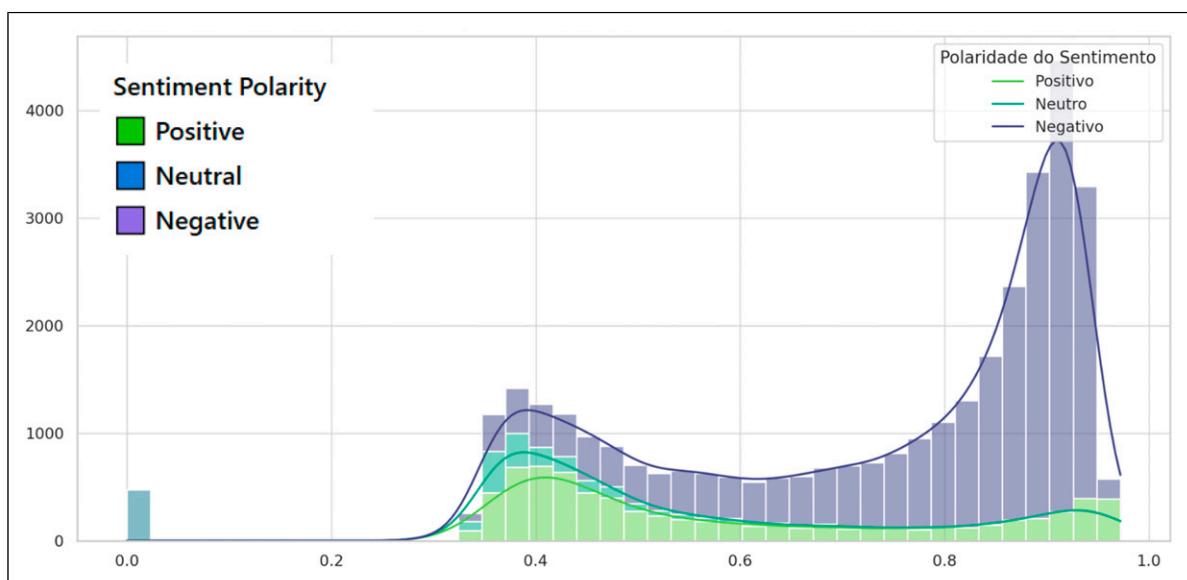
To analyse LGBT + tourists' perception of safety – both physical and emotional – during their travel experiences, a list of words with positive and negative connotations was applied, allowing the identification of whether tourists felt safe or unsafe based on their own narratives. From the comments analysed, 89.5% (31,028 comments) revealed a neutral perception, while 8.3% (2,883 comments) reflected a positive perception, and 2.2% (747 comments) indicated a negative

perception of safety. These results can be visualised in [Figure 3](#).

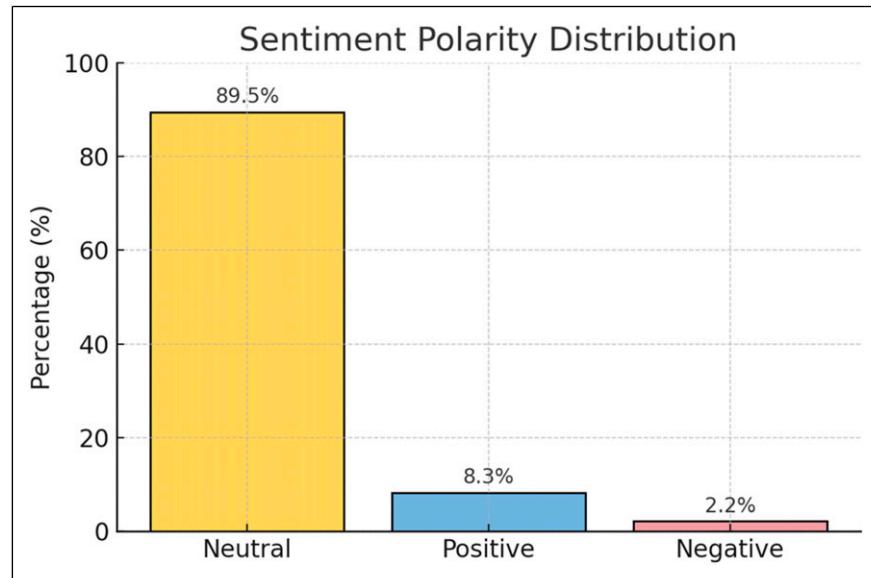
The predominance of neutral comments regarding safety (89.5%) also requires interpretation. In UGC, neutrality often reflects an “implicit expectation” of basic safety rather than a deliberate evaluation of it. LGBT + tourists tend to report safety explicitly only when it is threatened or when destinations offer exceptionally visible inclusion. Thus, neutrality does not indicate that safety is irrelevant; rather, it suggests that safety tends to be taken for granted unless disrupted. This pattern is consistent with research indicating that LGBT + travellers evaluate safety through subtle environmental cues and interpersonal signals, which are not always explicitly described in reviews.

To obtain a more precise understanding of this information, the data were cross-referenced to identify a detailed match between safety perception ratings and the overall sentiment of the comments. In this new approach, the perception of safety was analysed in conjunction with the sentiments (positive, negative, or neutral) expressed in the comments, allowing for new considerations and the assignment of the overall sentiment of the comment to the perception of safety. As presented in [Table 1](#), this combination significantly increases the number of comments where the evaluation is positive, and the perception of safety is neutral.

The analysis of the comments revealed the 20 most frequent words, which are related to themes such as leisure, positive sentiments, accommodation, and interpersonal interactions. The most frequently mentioned words reflect important aspects of the users' experience, as categorised in [Table 2](#). The words were organised into categories to facilitate data



**Figure 2.** Confidence distribution by sentiment polarity.



**Figure 3.** Perception of safety among the LGBT + audience.

interpretation: terms such as *staff*, *us*, *gay*, *friendly*, and *well* were grouped under 'Person', as they refer to interactions and interpersonal relationships. Words related to accommodation infrastructure, such as *room*, *hotel*, and *stay*, were classified under 'Accommodation'. Feelings such as *great*, *good*, and *nice* were grouped under 'Sentiment'. The words *place*, *time*, and *day* were organised into the 'Moment' category, associated with specific experiences in time and space. Finally, terms such as *pool*, *beach*, and *tour* were classified under 'Leisure', highlighting recreational locations and activities.

It can be seen that the group related to the human factor contains the highest concentration of words, making it the most relevant to the perception of safety. Words such as *friendly*, *well*, and *gay* are among the most mentioned, reinforcing the importance of a welcoming and hospitable environment. Accommodation infrastructure also plays a significant role in LGBT +

tourists' perception of safety, encompassing both physical and emotional dimensions. Terms such as *room*, *hotel*, and *stay* appear frequently, reflecting the importance of lodging environments in providing a sense of protection and psychological comfort. Positive sentiments such as *great*, *good*, and *nice*, along with contextual references like *place*, *time*, and *day*, suggest that perceived safety is closely linked to positive emotional experiences. Additionally, leisure-related elements – such as *pool*, *beach*, and *tour* – appear frequently and emerge as salient spaces where tourists feel safe to express themselves, indicating that recreational settings can serve as both inclusive and protective environments.

#### Keywords and key reports

An analysis of the most frequent positive and negative keywords in the comments was also conducted. Among

**Table 1.** Analysis of combined classification between safety perception and sentiment.

Perception of safety	Sentiment	Combination	Comments	Combined perception and sentiment
Neutral	Positive	Positive	23,200	25,235 72.8%
Positive	Positive	Positive	1864	
Positive	Neutral	Positive	171	
Neutral	Negative	Negative	5903	6458 18.6%
Negative	Negative	Negative	518	
Negative	Neutral	Negative	37	
Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	1450	1925 5.6%
Neutral	Unknown	Neutral	475	
Positive	Negative	Inconclusive	848	1040 3.0%
Negative	Positive	Inconclusive	192	

**Table 2.** Classification of the most frequent general words based on reviews.

Person	Accommodation	Sentiment	Moment	Connectives	Leisure
Staff	Room	Great	Place	One	Pool
Us	Hotel	Good	Time	Would	Beach
Gay	Stay	Nice	day	Also	Tour
Friendly					
Well					

the positive keywords, *friendly* stood out with 8,306 occurrences, followed by *welcoming* (1,371) and *safe* (1,139), suggesting that interpersonal treatment and perceptions of protection are strongly linked to positive sentiment (Figure 4). On the negative side, *fear* (59 occurrences) and *risk* (58) were the most frequent (Figure 5). However, these terms require contextual interpretation – fear of what, and risk in what situations? To address this, a deeper analysis was conducted using co-occurring words (see Table 2), which helped clarify how these terms were used in context and their connection to sentiment, especially regarding emotional and physical safety. Although negative terms were less frequent overall, their nuanced meanings highlight important vulnerabilities for LGBT + travellers.

The prominence of words such as “friendly” suggests that interpersonal interactions remain a central component of perceived inclusion for LGBT + travellers. The term frequently appears in contexts describing staff behaviour, community atmosphere and the comfort felt when expressing identity or affection. Conversely, although “fear” appears only 59 times, its occurrences are highly concentrated in comments describing nightlife, public spaces at night and concerns about expressing same-sex affection in certain areas. These contextual patterns reveal that even when negative emotions are

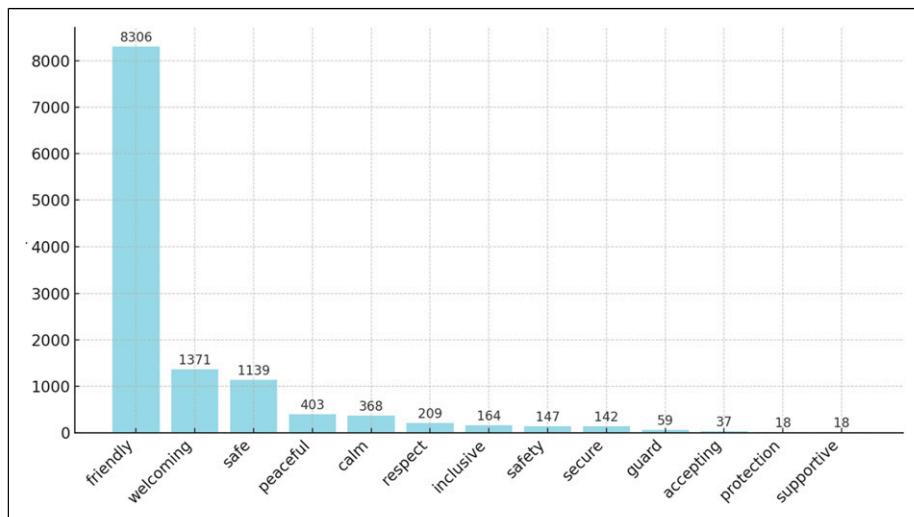
less frequent in absolute numbers, they carry significant weight in shaping perceived safety.

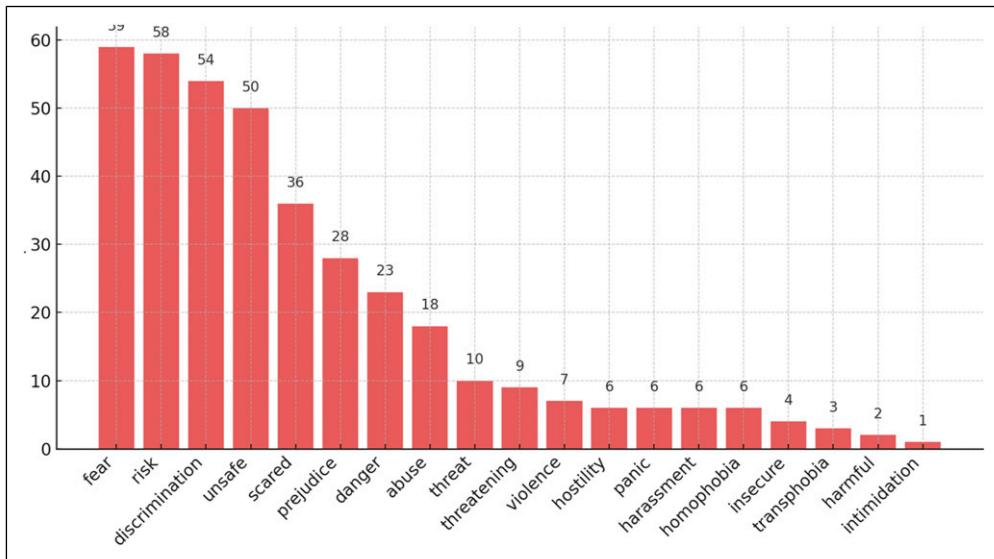
To complement the sentiment analysis, a qualitative interpretation of selected reviews from self-identified LGBT + tourists was conducted. These reviews revealed persistent concerns related to safety and inclusion, with some users describing experiences of discomfort, hostility, and exclusion in specific areas of the destinations visited. While negative reviews represented a minority in the overall dataset, their content offers valuable insight into subtle social dynamics that may not be captured through quantitative methods alone. For example, one tourist wrote:

I had some reservations about staying here based on previous reviews, and unfortunately, my concerns were validated ... I could feel the hostility in certain places.

This approach does not represent a formal validation method but provides illustrative support to deepen understanding of the perceived safety landscape. Future research would benefit from testing an adapted version of TOURQUAL through structured surveys to validate these findings more fully.

This type of experience echoes the observations of [Waitt and Markwell \(2006\)](#), who documented the

**Figure 4.** Frequency of positive words.



**Figure 5.** Frequency of negative words.

psychological impact of social marginalisation, demonstrating that perceptions of hostility can limit the desire to explore and freely move around the destination.

In addition to experiences of social discomfort, several LGBT + tourists also reported concerns specifically related to physical safety. A recurring theme was the sense of vulnerability when moving through certain areas, particularly at night. One tourist's review illustrates this clearly:

Staying here was not comfortable, especially at night. Groups would gather and make others feel uncomfortable with their remarks.

This highlights the intersection between emotional discomfort and perceived physical risk, reinforcing that for this audience, comfort and safety are deeply intertwined but conceptually distinct.

This fear of hostile and intimidating interactions, often related to other tourists or locals, aligns with the dimensions of the SERVQUAL model proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1988), in which safety refers not to a total absence of risk, but to the perceived adequacy of protective conditions during the service experience. The literature on tourism and safety reinforces that insufficient levels of perceived safety can negatively impact tourists' satisfaction, well-being, and loyalty (Prayag et al., 2024). This becomes even more significant for LGBT + tourists, who often face additional challenges related to inclusion and belonging. The data suggest that when safety is perceived as inadequate – whether physically, emotionally, or socially – it can create psychological barriers that

hinder destination exploration and negatively shape the travel experience.

Beyond social and emotional discomfort in public spaces, concerns about physical safety were also frequently reported in relation to accommodation establishments. Tourists highlighted issues such as flimsy locks and the absence of proper surveillance as factors that heightened their sense of vulnerability. For example, one tourist commented:

The lock on our door was flimsy, and anyone could access the room easily. It didn't feel secure at all.

These concerns, while significant for LGBT + tourists, are not exclusive to this group and are often shared by other vulnerable travellers, such as solo female tourists. This underscores the broader relevance of robust safety standards in hospitality services. Hughes' (2002) study suggests that such physical insecurities in the accommodation environment can amplify feelings of exclusion among LGBT + tourists, intensifying discomfort in spaces that should provide tranquillity. This aspect is expanded Monterrubio et al. (2020) study, which argues that the lack of training to handle diversity in the hospitality sector compromises the perception of hospitality and safety, a point corroborated by tourists who mentioned that their requests for safety improvements were met with indifference, as reported by one visitor:

I brought up the safety issue to the management, but they brushed it off, making us feel even less valued and less safe.

Concerns about safety in public spaces are another aspect frequently mentioned in the reviews. Many

LGBT + tourists reported fear of being targeted for verbal or physical assaults in public areas, leading them to avoid certain spaces and restricting their freedom of movement. One tourist reported:

We avoided certain streets because it felt like we could be targeted for who we are.

The literature on LGBT + tourism also identifies these self-imposed limitations, where visitors feel compelled to avoid certain areas, as suggested by [Poria \(2006\)](#). This geographical self-censorship reflects the perceptions of insecurity that create barriers to a full tourism experience, a pattern widely documented among minorities facing discrimination and harassment in destinations.

The context of urban destinations during major events, such as the Olympics, was another factor mentioned by our respondents, who reported an increase in perceived risk and the need for caution in crowded spaces. For example, one tourist mentioned:

I was in Rio for the Olympics and one of my plans fell short due to security concerns.

For many LGBT + visitors, large-scale events, which should be opportunities for celebration and belonging, end up being limited by these concerns. [Vorobjovas-Pinta \(2018\)](#) discusses how perceived violence in urban destinations and high-visibility events can impact the experience of LGBT + tourists, who often have their freedom to explore compromised due to feelings of vulnerability and the constant need for protection.

Even organised tours, such as visits to communities with tour guides, were accompanied by a sense of insecurity. For example, a visitor commented on their experience in a community in Rio de Janeiro, stating:

We went with Marcelo to the Santa Marta favela, but some parts felt risky.

A thematic reading of the qualitative excerpts reveals several recurring patterns. First, many travellers describe subtle social hostility, such as disapproving looks or discomfort from locals, which may not constitute overt discrimination but still affect the sense of welcome. Second, comments frequently highlight staff friendliness and professionalism as essential for feeling safe, particularly in hotels and restaurants where interpersonal contact is high. Third, a subset of reviews refer to night-time vulnerability, especially in nightlife districts or when walking in public spaces after dark. Finally, several comments relate to comfort with identity expression, noting differences across destinations regarding public displays of affection and the

visibility of LGBT + couples. These themes provide a deeper understanding of how safety is negotiated in everyday situations and further contextualise the quantitative findings.

This fear of deeper exploration of destinations illustrates what [Eliason and Ferguson \(2010\)](#) describe as self-censorship driven by risk contexts, where the fear of being harassed or assaulted limits the experience of the destination, reinforcing the need for hospitality practices that offer genuine safety and welcoming.

The reviews from LGBT + tourists highlight that both physical and psychological safety are fundamental for a positive experience, and that social interactions and support from service staff are crucial in this regard. However, as with all user-generated content, there is a need to interpret such reviews with caution, acknowledging that they reflect individual perceptions that may not always represent the broader reality of a destination. Some reviews may exaggerate concerns or misinterpret intentions, while others offer accurate accounts of inclusive or hostile environments. As [Pritchard et al. \(2002\)](#) suggest, a welcoming atmosphere and proactive staff responses can help mitigate feelings of vulnerability. Conversely, when tourists report that their safety concerns were met with indifference or coldness – such as a visitor who described the management's lack of empathy – it reinforces the importance of training hospitality teams to genuinely foster environments of safety and inclusion.

Thus, while previous studies have highlighted the importance of safety and inclusion in LGBT + tourism, this study reinforces and updates these findings by analysing over 30,000 reviews through advanced sentiment and keyword analysis. The results offer a large-scale empirical perspective on how both physical and psychological safety remain decisive in shaping travel experiences. The evidence supports the continued need for hospitality practices that move beyond physical protection, fostering environments where LGBT + tourists feel genuinely welcomed and respected throughout their stay.

### *Regional analysis of perceptions*

The analysis reveals clear perceptual differences across world regions, even when examined through broad geographical clusters. Europe and North America display the largest volume and diversity of reviews, reflecting both their consolidated tourism infrastructure and the greater online visibility of LGBT + travellers. These regions also show lower proportions of negative reviews, a finding consistent with [Puar's \(2002\)](#) argument that inclusive legal frameworks and protective policies contribute to higher perceived safety. The predominance of keywords such as "safe,"

“welcoming,” and “supportive” in these regions reinforces this pattern, indicating environments where LGBT + tourists tend to experience greater social and emotional security.

In contrast, smaller review volumes in regions such as the Middle East, Africa and parts of Asia may reflect barriers to LGBT + visibility, legal restrictions, or self-censorship in UGC. Countries such as Morocco and Egypt, for instance, appear with minimal review counts and higher ratios of negative sentiment, echoing [Hughes \(2006\)](#) and [Waitt and Markwell's \(2006\)](#) observations that discriminatory contexts limit freedom of movement and increase vulnerability. Where conservative norms or punitive laws persist, keywords associated with “fear,” “hostility,” and discomfort appear more frequently, indicating heightened perceptions of insecurity.

Destinations with a large LGBT + tourism presence—such as Spain, the United States, the United Kingdom and Mexico—show a mix of positive and negative reviews, suggesting that inclusive environments do not eliminate risks but do mitigate them. This aligns with [Monterrubio et al. \(2020\)](#), who emphasise the role of public policies and staff preparedness in reducing vulnerability and enhancing safety perceptions. Emerging destinations may therefore benefit from initiatives that promote social acceptance, staff training and visible inclusion strategies to strengthen their attractiveness ([Neves, 2021](#)).

Overall, the data confirm that safety remains a central determinant of LGBT + travel experiences, shaping destination choice, perceived quality and satisfaction. These regional patterns reinforce the relevance of TOURQUAL’s safety and human-element dimensions, while also supporting the need to adapt the framework to capture aspects of identity-based safety and inclusion that are particularly salient for LGBT + tourists ([Figure 6](#)).

### *Adaptation of quality models*

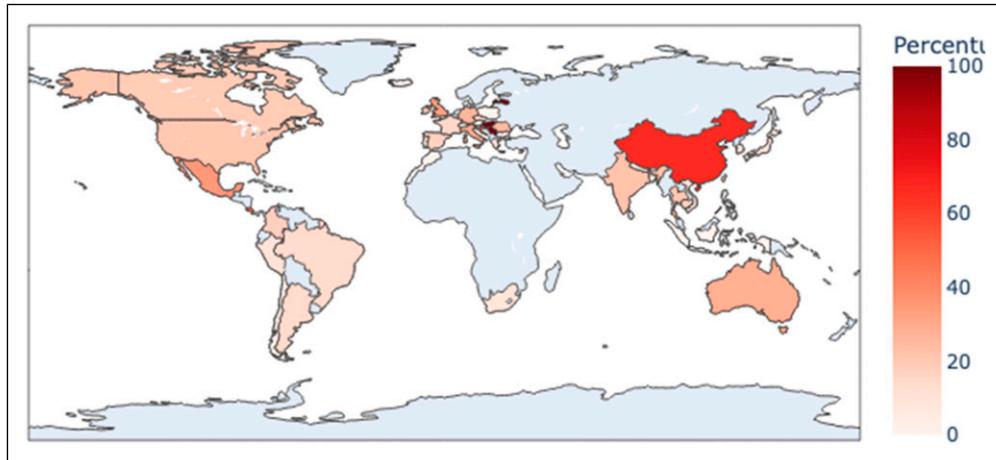
Studies on the quality of tourism services indicate that safety is one of the main factors for tourist satisfaction and loyalty ([Parasuraman et al., 1988](#)). The SERVQUAL model, developed by [Parasuraman et al. \(1988\)](#), includes safety as one of the five pillars of quality, which reinforces that tourists, especially LGBT + ones, value environments that convey trust and emotional security. LGBT + travellers face specific challenges that affect their perception of safety; [Hughes \(2002\)](#) and [Waitt and Markwell \(2006\)](#) highlight that experiences of discrimination, hostility and harassment generate psychological and social barriers, restricting freedom of movement and shaping travel choices and on-site behaviours ([Poria, 2006](#)). [Monterrubio et al. \(2020\)](#)

further emphasise that a lack of staff preparedness to interact appropriately with LGBT + tourists contributes to feelings of vulnerability, demonstrating the importance of training strategies centred on safety and inclusion. Such preparation is essential for promoting an environment of respect, comfort and support.

Focusing on the quality of tourism services aimed at the LGBT + audience, the TOURQUAL model serves as the basis for assessing safety perceptions in this study. The most frequent words in the analysed reviews indicate the relevance of accommodation-related elements, as shown by terms such as room, hotel and stay, which appear among the most common descriptors. Leisure environments also emerge as essential for LGBT + travellers, reflected in keywords like place, pool, resort and beach. In addition, interpersonal relationships are central to the tourism experience, with the human element playing a decisive role in shaping feelings of trust, comfort and belonging. In the dataset, staff appears as the third most mentioned word, while friendly and welcoming also rank highly, reinforcing [Mondo and Fiates' \(2017\)](#) findings that the human element is one of the primary influences on perceived safety.

Taken together, these keywords align directly with the TOURQUAL structure. Terms like staff, friendly and welcoming relate to indicators within the Human Element category, particularly attention, trust and emotional connection during service encounters. Words associated with physical space—such as room, hotel, pool, beach and infrastructure-related elements—correspond to the Infrastructure and Technical Quality dimensions, which evaluate comfort, cleanliness and functionality. Safety-related terms, including positive descriptors (safe, secure) and negative ones (fear, hostility), map onto the Safety dimension of the TOURQUAL model, which encompasses physical, psychological and financial safety. This mapping demonstrates empirically that the dimensions of TOURQUAL correspond to the elements most salient in the experiences shared by LGBT + tourists online.

Moreover, the dataset reveals nuances that indicate the need for an adaptation of TOURQUAL to better capture the specificities of LGBT + experiences. The prominence of terms relating to social acceptance, emotional comfort and identity expression suggests the value of incorporating an “Inclusion and Identity Safety” indicator within the Human Element dimension. This additional indicator would assess whether staff demonstrate inclusive behaviours, understand diverse sexual and gender identities and contribute to a socially safe environment. It would also evaluate whether the establishment employs LGBT + professionals and whether internal policies ensure care and protection for both LGBT + employees and customers.



**Figure 6.** Percentage of negative reviews by country.

This expanded dimension would strengthen the model's capacity to identify vulnerabilities related to stigma, discrimination and the emotional labour often involved in navigating tourism spaces as LGBT + individuals.

When adapting the TOURQUAL scale for accommodation settings, [Mondo \(2017\)](#) proposed 12 categories of analysis: accessibility, accessibility for people with disabilities, service waiting time, ease of purchase, schedules, comfort, human service, experience, cleanliness, food and beverages, infrastructure and internal signage. The safety of LGBT + tourists connects directly to categories such as accessibility, human service, infrastructure and cleanliness. In this group, the human factor stands out, since service delivery requires an inclusive and, at times, protective approach. Establishments that adopt inclusive staff policies tend to be better prepared to offer quality experiences, which reverberates across other TOURQUAL categories, especially hospitality and overall experience.

[Mondo and Fiates \(2017\)](#) also suggest the application of TOURQUAL to tourist attractions, with six categories of analysis: access, environment, human element, experience, safety and technical quality. Although the Safety category contains only one indicator, it already encompasses physical, psychological and financial safety, elements that align closely with the concerns of LGBT + tourists, who often experience risks linked to visibility, public affection and social exposure. The Human Element category plays an equally central role in perceptions of safety, as it represents the channel through which inclusion, respect and hospitality are expressed. The dimensions of attention and trust are critical for LGBT + visitors, who depend not only on the physical conditions of the space but also on interpersonal interactions to feel welcomed and protected. Integrating an inclusion-specific

indicator within the Human Element dimension would enhance TOURQUAL's ability to assess the relational and identity-based aspects of safety in tourism services.

## Conclusions and implications

This study serves to enrich the theoretical understanding of queer mobility by contextualising LGBT + tourism within the wider paradigm of relational and affective geographies. The findings indicate that safety is not only a condition to be provided but a feeling to be cultivated through relationships, representation, and recognition. This theoretical insight urges tourism scholars to revisit traditional constructs of service quality with a more inclusive lens that recognises the diverse needs of travellers in a post-heteronormative global tourism landscape.

Morte specifically, the findings offer important insights into the role of perceived safety in shaping the experiences of LGBT + tourists. The predominance of positive reviews highlights the growing efforts within the tourism industry to provide welcoming and safe environments. Nevertheless, the existence of a sizeable number of negative reviews and a notable volume of comments with neutral safety perceptions signals that there is still significant room for improvement in addressing the specific needs of this segment.

The recurring presence of terms such as *friendly*, *welcoming*, and *safe* in the corpus of positive reviews underscores the importance of inclusive interpersonal interactions and staff sensitivity. The prominence of these terms affirms the relevance of the 'human element' dimension of the TOURQUAL model, which captures the essence of service encounters where hospitality translates into a sense of protection and respect. The frequent mention of *staff* as a keyword reflects tourists' acute sensitivity to employee behaviour and

reinforces previous findings that highlight staff interactions as pivotal moments in service quality perception, especially among minority groups.

Keywords such as *fear* and *risk* in negative reviews meanwhile demonstrate that emotional safety remains a critical barrier for many LGBT + tourists to engage in tourism. Experiences of hostility and marginalisation will limit mobility and undermine well-being. These emotions, often triggered by discriminatory remarks or ambiguous social environments, indicate that the absence of overt hostility does not necessarily equate to a perception of safety. Rather, it is the proactive presence of inclusivity and protection that fosters true comfort: an insight consistent with the conceptualisation of service quality in the SERVQUAL model, particularly its dimensions of assurance and empathy.

The combined analysis of sentiment and safety perceptions further revealed that even within broadly positive reviews, safety was frequently described as neutral. This suggests that although the overall travel experience might be satisfying, safety itself may not be strongly perceived or articulated unless it becomes particularly salient. This result lends support to [Ro and Kang's \(2024\)](#) caution against relying solely on surface-level branding or tokenistic gestures of inclusivity. If safety is merely implied rather than demonstrated through concrete practices and environments, it may not register as a positive differential for LGBT + travellers.

Moreover, the prominence of accommodation-related keywords (e.g., *room*, *hotel*, *stay*) reflects the centrality of lodging environments in shaping perceptions of safety. Flaws such as weak door locks or unresponsive management were not only interpreted as risks but also as symbolic neglect, reinforcing feelings of exclusion. The TOURQUAL scale's emphasis on physical infrastructure and technical quality proves essential in this context, confirming its applicability to evaluating LGBT + tourism service quality.

The regional analysis also unveiled significant disparities. Destinations in Europe and North America, while not devoid of criticism, offered a broader base of inclusive infrastructure and legal protections, reinforcing their reputation as safer choices. In contrast, destinations in Africa, the Middle East, and parts of Asia remain underrepresented and are frequently associated with insecurity. These disparities call for greater international alignment of tourism standards, particularly through training and policy development that actively support inclusion and human rights.

In terms of service quality models, the study confirms that TOURQUAL scale offers a robust foundation for evaluating LGBT + tourist perceptions. The strong presence of keywords associated with its 'human element,' 'safety,' and 'experience' dimensions supports

the scale's relevance. However, findings also suggest the need to refine TOURQUAL scale by incorporating a specific subdimension focussed on inclusion, as proposed by the authors. This inclusion-oriented dimension could evaluate both internal (staff diversity, inclusive training) and external (customer treatment, incident handling) indicators, addressing the psycho-social layers of safety not captured by traditional physical measures.

Overall, this study reinforces the theoretical proposition that perceived service quality in tourism is a multidimensional construct, shaped by emotional, social, and infrastructural cues. For LGBT + tourists, safety is not a static attribute, but a complex, negotiated outcome of interactions, symbols, and social signals. The data presented support a shift from passive tolerance to active inclusivity as the defining marker of quality in services aimed at this group.

### Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the theoretical advancement of tourism and service quality research by reinforcing the centrality of perceived safety within the travel experience of LGBT + individuals. While existing models such as SERVQUAL and TOURQUAL have established robust frameworks for assessing service quality, the findings highlight the need to refine these models by integrating variables specific to social inclusion and minority experiences: particularly for groups such as LGBT + tourists whose safety needs extend beyond physical security to include psychological comfort and social acceptance.

The data indicate that the human element and emotional interactions are not merely supportive dimensions, but rather central pillars of perceived quality among LGBT + tourists. This supports the proposition that inclusive branding and frontline staff interactions play a determining role in shaping satisfaction. As such, the study encourages theoretical models to reconsider the weight attributed to staff behaviour and hospitality policies, which for marginalised groups become indicators of symbolic and emotional safety.

Moreover, the study contributes to the growing literature on UGC as a valid data source for understanding service quality. The use of sentiment analysis and keyword mapping strengthens the position of UGC not only as a managerial tool, but also as a theoretical lens through which tourist experiences can be interpreted. This reinforces the argument that UGC co-constructs the symbolic meaning of destinations, offering researchers a participatory framework to analyse lived experiences of inclusion or exclusion.

In the context of LGBT + tourism, the study provides empirical validation for the proposition that

perceptions of hostility or fear significantly influence travel behaviours. By quantifying these perceptions using a scale, this study not only confirms this phenomenon but also elevates their relevance within the broader discourse on tourist satisfaction and loyalty. The alignment between emotional safety and quality perception suggests that future theoretical models must incorporate sociocultural variables more explicitly to remain analytically relevant in diverse and intersectional travel contexts.

### *Managerial implications*

The findings of this study offer important managerial implications for both destination marketing/management organisations (DMOs) and individual tourism service providers seeking to position themselves as safe and inclusive environments for LGBT + tourists. Given the growing economic and symbolic relevance of this segment, adopting strategies that prioritise perceived safety is no longer optional but a competitive necessity. From a destination management perspective, one of the most immediate implications is the need to realign destination marketing strategies to emphasise safety and inclusivity as core values. As the data reveal, terms like *friendly*, *welcoming*, and *safe* are not only valued but are key determinants of destination choice among LGBT + travellers. Consequently, DMOs should develop communication campaigns that go beyond mere rainbow branding or tokenistic messages, instead grounding their messaging in real, demonstrable practices that foster a sense of safety (Dixon, 2024). In addition, campaigns could showcase actual safety protocols, LGBT + welcoming policies, and testimonials from diverse tourists. Perceived authenticity is crucial. Transparent representation and visibility of LGBT + locals, staff members, or business owners may enhance credibility and trust. Moreover, in terms of infrastructure and public policy, the results strongly suggest that urban safety initiatives should include elements specifically targeting the vulnerabilities of LGBT + tourists. DMOs, in collaboration with local authorities, can spearhead policies such as the establishment of tourist police units trained in diversity issues, creation of LGBT + tourist safety protocols, and investment in technologies like geolocated emergency support apps. Specialised police stations or support desks – such as those proposed in inclusive destination planning – can increase tourists' confidence to explore the destination freely.

Data collected from UGC can, therefore, serve as an ongoing diagnostic tool for DMOs to monitor shifts in safety perceptions and adjust policies proactively. Integrating sentiment analysis into strategic destination management systems can inform targeted interventions and support the continuous improvement of the LGBT + tourism experience. At the micro-level, individual

tourism enterprises must also assume an active role in promoting safety and inclusion. Accommodation quality and staff interaction are fundamental to the perception of safety. Hospitality businesses should therefore prioritise diversity training for staff, establish clear protocols for addressing discrimination, and foster an organisational culture where respect and inclusion are embedded in everyday service encounters. Hotels and attractions may consider obtaining LGBT + inclusion certifications or participating in diversity-focussed audits that validate their readiness to host this segment. Visible symbols of inclusion, such as inclusive signage, staff pronoun badges, or diversity flags, while seemingly simple, can signal safety and respect to LGBT + guests. These measures resonate with the TOURQUAL model's emphasis on the human element and experience dimensions, which were shown to be central in the reviews analysed.

In addition, restaurants and leisure venues that actively foster inclusive environments – through staff training, inclusive menus, gender-neutral facilities, and clear anti-discrimination signage – can differentiate themselves and build brand loyalty among LGBT + clients. The relevance of leisure spaces such as pools, beaches, and tours (as highlighted in the keyword analysis) implies that safety measures in these high-exposure environments must be visible, proactive, and responsive. Tour operators, for example, could inform tourists in advance about the safety conditions of the areas visited and be prepared to intervene in situations of verbal or physical hostility. Finally, the study suggests the value of integrated strategies that bring together public and private actors. Destination safety cannot be effectively addressed in isolation. Creating city-wide LGBT + tourism councils – composed of local businesses, government bodies, and community representatives – may foster a coordinated approach to identifying risks, developing inclusion protocols, and marketing the destination collectively as a safe space. Such governance models could mirror the collaborative frameworks advocated by Monterrubio et al. (2020) and Waitt and Markwell (2006), aimed at reconciling urban safety, social inclusion, and economic competitiveness.

### *Limitations and future research*

This study has some limitations that need to be addressed. Firstly, the analysis was based exclusively on Tripadvisor comments. This reliance on a single platform introduces a significant limitation insofar as the data may not fully capture the broader experiences of LGBT + tourists who use other platforms. As such, confirmatory research using data from other platforms is recommended. In addition, focusing on keywords and sentiments expressed textually may not fully capture the

nuances of LGBT + tourists' safety experiences in various contexts. The difficulty in segmenting safety perceptions among different identities within the LGBTQIAPN + community limits the depth of the results, suggesting that future research could benefit from more detailed analysis. Moreover, the sentiment analysis methodology and the use of automatic translation may impact the accuracy of some culturally specific terms. These tools, while useful, may not always capture the subtleties and context-specific meanings of certain expressions, potentially leading to misinterpretations.

While our analysis focuses on tourists' perceptions of safety and satisfaction, it is important to recognise that, as [Hadjisolomou et al. \(2023\)](#) demonstrate, experiences that are enjoyable or emotionally rewarding for LGBT + travellers may coexist with labour vulnerabilities for employees, suggesting that future research should also consider how inclusive and safe environments are negotiated by workers within LGBT+-focused tourism settings. These limitations point to future research directions that could combine quantitative analyses of UGC with in-depth qualitative interviews to capture a more comprehensive view of safety perceptions. By integrating these methods, future studies can gain a richer and more nuanced understanding of the factors that influence the safety and inclusion of LGBT + tourists in various destinations. This study contributes to the literature by highlighting the importance of safety as an essential factor for LGBT + tourism. The collected data show that the perception of safety and hospitality in destinations is crucial for this audience's experience, emphasising the relevance of an environment free from discrimination and practices that promote inclusion. By identifying language patterns and reports on safety in tourist reviews, this research provides practical guidelines for tourism businesses to adjust their approaches and policies, strengthening the confidence and satisfaction of LGBT + visitors and consolidating their reputation as inclusive and safe destinations. An additional avenue for future research involves integrating safety-perception data from UGC with legal and policy information on LGBT + criminalisation across countries. Resources such as the Human Dignity Trust's global map of jurisdictions that criminalise LGBT + people could help contextualise variations in review volume and sentiment, offering a deeper understanding of how legal environments shape online expressions of safety among LGBT + travellers.

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**Tiago Savi Mondo** is a Professor and Researcher at the Federal Institute of Santa Catarina (IFSC) and Fluminense Federal University (UFF). He holds a PhD in Administration and works in the areas of tourism management and marketing, service quality, and competitiveness. Creator of the TOURQUAL model,

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**Solano de Souza Braga** is a Professor in the Tourism and Heritage programs at the Federal University of Ouro Preto (UFOP), Brazil. He holds a PhD in Development and Environment from the Federal University of Piauí (UFPI) and a Master's in Geography from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). He is an active member of research groups focused on tourism, heritage, and nature, such as NATUR (UFOP) and the Integrated Research Group on the Espinhaço Range (GIPE).

**Erose Sthapit** is a Senior Lecturer at the department of marketing, international business, tourism, Manchester Metropolitan University. His research interests include memorable tourism experience, interactive value formation and sharing economy. He has published in high-ranking journals including *Journal of Travel Research*, *Journal of International Contemporary Hospitality Management* and *Psychology & Marketing*.

**Brian Garrod** is Professor of Marketing in the School of Management at Swansea University. He is author of eight textbook, the most recent being *Managing Tourism Attractions*, now in its third edition. He has also authored over 80 refereed articles in the field of tourism marketing, specialising in sustainable tourism, ecotourism, and heritage tourism. He has a special interest in the use of photography in tourism and the opportunities this brings as a method for phenomenological research. He has been consultant to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, and several other prominent organisations. He is an enthusiastic bass guitar player and parkrun participant, although not at the same time.