

The history and origin of backpacker travel – from tramping to flashpacker.

Dawn Gibson

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Dawn Gibson

Senior Lecturer

School of Tourism & Hospitality Management

University of South Pacific

Laucala Campus

Suva, Fiji

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ABSTRACT

Travel has become an essential part of post-modern society, and backpacker travel is a reflection of this trend. Described as a “metaphor of mobility”, who is “representative of a travel lifestyle and expression of identity”, which focuses on freedom and mobility, the backpacker phenomenon has evolved and is now an important tourism market. To situate the origins of backpacker travel within the broader history of tourism, this paper discusses the following: 17th and 18th century European Grand Tours; hiking and tramping; the youth hostel movement; non-institutionalised travel; drifter tourism; and youth tourism.

This is not a homogenous market and can be differentiated in a number of ways which include: nationality, purpose, organisation of trip, age, gender and lifecycle stage (Cohen, 2004). Although predominantly Western in origin new markets are emerging from Israel, Japan, and China. Backpacker tourism has the potential to provide opportunities for rural and community development, entrepreneurship and the growth of small businesses and opportunities for indigenous participation in the tourism industry.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of time, people have travelled in search of food, trade, religious pilgrimages, war, work, and migration. However, tourism is a twentieth century phenomena. Mass tourism, began in England with the growth of the middle class during the industrial revolution, and the availability of affordable transportation. Following World War II, the development of charter airlines and the jet aircraft in the 1950s, made the rapid growth of international travel possible, and led to the development of international tourism.

Travel has become an essential part of post-modern society, and backpacker travel is a reflection of this trend. Ateljevic and Doorne (2004a, p.60) described the backpacker as a “metaphor of mobility”, who is “representative of a travel lifestyle and expression of identity”, with an emphasis on freedom and mobility. To situate the origins of backpacker travel within the broader history of tourism, a brief discussion of the following is included: 17th and 18th century European Grand Tours; hiking and tramping; the youth hostel movement; non-institutionalised travel; drifter tourism; and

youth tourism (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004a; Cohen, 1972, 1973, and 1974; Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995; and Toxward, 1999).

The Grand Tour

The backpacker phenomenon has been compared to the Grand Tours of the eighteenth century (Towner, 1985), where aristocratic youth (especially male) “set out on adventure trips to experience the hidden, strange and exotic life of far away countries and unknown people” (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995, p. 820). The Grand Tour was considered a form of “finishing school” (Riley, 1988, p. 319), which increased one’s “sophistication, worldliness and social awareness” (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995, p. 820), where these young adventurers endured hardships and sometimes adopted the lifestyles of their hosts (Cohen, 1973). Towner offered a broader definition of the Grand Tour as “a tour of certain cities and places in Western Europe, undertaken primarily, but not exclusively, for education and pleasure” (1985, p.301).

Motivations for the Grand Tour were diverse, and Craik identified two main stages. The first, was ‘The Age of Reading and Speaking’ where travellers socialised with each other, locals and guides; and the second, ‘The Age of Observation’ where they learned by “visually taking in the vistas and splendour of continental culture” (Craik cited in Duncan, 2007, pp. 16-17). The Grand Tour served not only to nourish the intellect but also invigorated the soul. These diverse motivations in search of knowledge, culture and cross-cultural exchanges, were often not fulfilled, and in many cases they engaged in inappropriate and ‘indecorous’ behaviour, not unlike today’s “party backpacker’ or young ‘Gap year traveller’.

Inglis claimed that:

Their reasons for going where they went were scholarly and historical: they went to Italy to see classical antiquity. Or they were aesthetic: they went to Rome and Florence to admire the great buildings and paintings. Or they were cultivatedly acquisitive: the collectors bought for their collections. Or they were healthful: ... they took the horrible-tasting waters for the sake of their skin or their digestion and because Germany was more daring than Scarborough. Or they

went for sex: they went, like Boswell so ardently did, to indulge what was, in his case, an unslakeable sexual appetite and they did so because, well, on the Grand Tour as a young blade, anything goes. It was hard to damage a reputation in foreign parts (Inglis, cited in Duncan, 2007, p.17).

Countries included in the Grand Tour circuit of Europe were France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and the Low Countries (Belgium, Netherlands, and Switzerland). Until the 19th century, travellers were mainly British, and then Americans began to travel through Europe (Brodsky-Porges, 1981, p. 183). Although the social class of tourists changed with time, with increased travel from the professional middle classes and young working class men and women, the tour itinerary generally remained the same (Towner, 1985).

Hiking and tramping and the Emergence of Youth Hostels

The youth movement of 19th century Europe was a response to the difficult living conditions in heavily industrialised cities (Riley, 1988, p.314). Young people or ‘wandering youth’, from more affluent countries, escaped to the countryside to experience unpolluted, natural environments. The establishment in London of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in 1844, and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) in 1855, providing centres and hostels throughout Britain and Europe (Loker–Murphy and Pearce, 1995, p.822), made travel possible by offering affordable budget accommodation. If the Grand Tour was a type of travel for aristocratic youth (later adopted by middle class youth), tramping was a well institutionalised form of travel for working class youth, which symbolised the young working man’s Grand Tour and was later romanticised by middle class youth as a travel form (Adler, 1985, pp. 335-337). It was considered the forerunner of twentieth century youth travel (Duncan, 2007), where working class men travelled specific circuits in search of work, or to learn a trade (Adler, 1985; Duncan, 2007; Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995). This type of travel reached its peak in the 19th century, as work related travel changed to travel for leisure and tourism (Adler, 1985; Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995; O’Reilly, 2006). Duncan (2007, p. 22) suggested the tramping tradition was an important historical link to certain forms of contemporary youth travel, like

volunteering, especially since the backpacker market has diversified to include a broader range of young travellers and not just the Western upper middle classes.

Another activity, closely related to tramping, was hiking, and in 19th century German-speaking Europe, 'Homeland and Rambling' clubs developed for bushwalking and hiking (Loker –Murphy and Pearce, 1995, p.822). These clubs also built hostels, which provided accommodation, refreshments, maps, and guidebooks for their members. After World War I, and with the Great Depression, travel changed for a decade, as with high levels of unemployment "life on the road was more about survival than enjoyment" (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995, p. 819). Today, youth travel often involves work, and Riley (1988, p. 817) argued that to understand the backpacker of today, one must consider past traditions of travel in search of employment.

Non-institutionalised Travel

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the drifter traveller emerged. These drifters and hippies were thought to be hedonistic anarchists attempting to escape from reality (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995, p.823). Reminiscent of the tramping trips of the early 1900s, the early drifters and hippies rejected institutionalised tourism in exchange for free independent travel as a 'rite of passage' (Adler, 1985, p. 339; Doorne, 1994, p.30).

In the context of Cohen's tourist typology (1972), the backpacker has been compared to the 'explorer' who makes independent travel arrangements and travels off the beaten track where possible. 'Drifters' avoid traditional tourism establishments, choosing to travel further off the beaten track in search of 'authentic experiences' within local communities (Cohen, 1972, p.530). The modern backpacker combines the travel styles of both drifter and explorer, making decisions based on word-of-mouth communication, and guidebooks such as *The Lonely Planet* (Toxward, 1999, p.13).

Historically, men dominated youth travel, with young women rarely having the opportunity to travel alone in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The rise of mass tourism and Thomas Cook's packaged tours made travel more accessible to the working classes and easier for young women to travel through Europe unchaperoned (Urry, 1990, p. 24). In the 1970s, such travel was associated with the hippie counter culture,

hedonism, and drugs (Cohen, 1973; Vogt, 1976). Youth travel declined in the 1980s due to economic recession and high unemployment in western countries and the renewal of the Cold War (making traditional overland routes unsafe) (Duncan, 2007, p.23; O'Reilly, 2006). Youth travel, especially to South-East Asia and Thailand, grew again in the late 1980s. Riley (1988) claimed these travellers were no longer the hedonistic drug-taking anarchists characterised by Cohen's drifter typology (1973), but were now educated independent travellers, middle class, single, on a strict budget and at a "juncture in life" (Riley, 1988, p.313).

RESEARCH TO DATE

Table 1.1 below provides a summary of some of the research into backpacker tourism to date. However, the focus of this article will be backpacker literature on characteristics, motivation, and behaviour.

Table 1 Summary of Backpacker Research

Backpacker tourism as a development tool for third world/less developed countries	Hampton, 1998; Scheyvens, 2002a; Brenner and Fricke, 2007; Pugh, 2006
Backpacking as a popular form of tourism that enables travellers to build cultural and economic capital and undergo transformative experiences that influence personal change and global awareness.	Scheyvens, 2002a, p.151; Westerhausen and Macbeth, 2003; Gula, 2006; Pearce and Foster, 2007; Bennett, 2007; Cohen, 2003
Backpacking as a 'rite of passage' and educational experience that contributes to character development, life skills and future employment; youth tourism; backpacking as a form of volunteer tourism; the overseas experience (OE); GAP Year travel	Riley, 1988; Vogt, 1976; Adler, 1985; Cohen, 2003; Noy, 2004a; Noy, 2004b; Shaffer, 2004; Huxley, 2004; Obenour, 2004 & 2005; Pearce and Foster, 2007; O'Reilly, 2006; Heath, 2007; Palacios, 2010; Clarke, 2004; Cohen, 2010; Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, and Neil, 2012; Pearce, & Son, 2004; Tsaor, Yen, and Chen, 2010
Backpacker characteristics, motivations, behaviour, and satisfaction	Vogt, 1976; Adler, 1985; Riley, 1988; Jarvis, 1994; Loker-Murphy, and Pearce, 1995; Sorensen, 2003; Cohen, 2003; Jarvis and Peel, 2005; Hecht and Martin, 2006; Hannam and Ateljevic, 2006b; Hottola, 2008; Uriely, Yonay, and

	Simchai, 2002; Wilson, Fisher and Moore, 2008; Ian and Musa, 2008; Niggel and Benson, 2008; Jarvis and Peel, 2006; Maoz, 2007; Mohsin, and Ryan, 2003; Firth and Hing, 1999; Peel and Steen, 2007; Binder, 2004; Leiper, 2010; Slaughter, 2004.
The motivational overlap between backpacker and volunteer tourism which can create more sustainable tourism experiences and provide direction for marketing and product development	Oii and Laing, 2010; Sörensson, 2008
Backpacker destinations, communities, enclaves and intercommunity tensions	Wilson and Richards, 2008; Wilson, Richards and McDonnell, 2008; Peel and Steen, 2007; Allon, 2004; Allon, Anderson, and Bushell, 2008; Enoch, and Grossman, 2010; Hottola, 2004; Howard, 2007; Kain & King, 2004; Speed, & Harrison, 2004.
Gender differences in travel choice and behaviour; women as backpacker tourists; destination choices; and the behaviour of middle aged Israeli women backpackers; the Asian backpacker	Carr, 1999; Jarvis, 2004; Obenour, 2004 & 2005; Wilson and Ateljevic, 2008; Myers and Hannam 2008; Maoz, 2008; McNamara, K.E., and Prideaux, B., 2010; Teo, and Leong, 2006; Prideaux, and Shiga, 2007; Muzaini, 2006; Ong, and du Cros, 2012.; Reichel, Fuchs, & Uriely, 2009.
The characteristics, motivations and needs of older backpackers and implications for accommodation owners of catering to a multi-generational market The Grey Nomad	Markward, 2008; Holloway, D., Green, L., and Holloway, D., 2011; Hecht, and Martin, 2006
The mobility of the backpacker phenomenon; how young backpackers use their work travel experiences to create a sense of self identity	Duncan, 2007; Allon, Anderson, and Bushell, 2008; Cooper, M., O'Mahony, & Erfurt, 2004.
The influence of risk and adventure in creating backpacker identity and status	Elsrud 2001; Hottola, 2002

Sexual behaviour of backpackers and youth travellers	Egan, 2001; McNulty, Egan, Wand, and Donovan, 2010; Davies, Karagiannis, Headon, Wiig, and Duffy, 2011; Hottola, 2002
Authenticity and the extent to which backpackers engage with local communities	Huxley, 2004; Jarvis, 2004; Hottola, 2002 and 2004;
The globalisation of backpacker tourism, is the free independent traveller a dying breed?	Clarke, 2004; Larsen, Øgaard, and Brun, 2011; Pearce, and Maoz, 2008;.
The Lonely Planet and travel guides as travel survival kits. The role of the guidebook as a means to examine the behaviour of the traveller and the host community.	Welk, 2008; Hillman, 2000; Young, 2005.
The ecotourism purchasing behaviour of the backpacker market and potential for more targeted ecotourism marketing and environmentally responsible behaviour	Wearing, Cynn, Ponting and McDonald, 2002; Pearce, 2008
Backpacker tourism as an alternative form of economic development to mass tourism which allows local people to enter the tourism industry through the development of small scale businesses	Hampton, 1998; Scheyvens, 2002a & b; Hampton, 2003; Visser, 2004; Jarvis, 2004; Speed, 2008
Perceptions and quality of backpacker/budget accommodation facilities, service experiences and their attitudes towards sustainable tourism, social interaction and word of mouth communication	Firth and Hing, 1999; Cave, Thyne and Ryan, 2008; Thyne and Davies and Nash, 2005; Visser, 2004; Obenour, Patterson, Pedersen, and Pearson, 2006; Murphy, 2001; Chitty, Ward and Chua, 2007, Musa, and Thirumoorthi, 2011.
The emerging flashpacker market	Purshall, 2005; Jarvis and Hobman, 2006; Jarvis and Peel, 2010; Hannam and Diekmann, 2010b; Paris, 2012.

The tourist gaze, host gaze, intratourist gaze	Holloway, D., Green, L., and Holloway, D., 2011; Maoz, 2004; Pritchard, A., and Morgan, N., 2000a, 2000b; Ryan, C., Hughes, K., and Chirgwin, S., 2000; Shono, S., Fisher, D., and McIntosh, A., 2005; Urry, 1990; 2002.
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PROFILING THE INTERNATIONAL BACKPACKER MARKET

One of the difficulties with researching the backpacker phenomenon is its lack of a clear definition (Richards and Wilson, 2004a). The term ‘backpacker’ and the study of this phenomenon is quite recent, with the term first introduced to academic literature by Pearce (1990) when interpreting this style of travel (cited in Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004a, p. 65). The Association of Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) Backpacker Research Group (BRG) compiled a bibliography on the backpacker, which found that of the 76 references only 11 were published before 1990 (Richards and Wilson, 2004b, p.6).

Riley (1988) referred to backpackers as ‘international long-term budget travellers’. However, the term ‘backpacker’ to represent this market is universally accepted by the tourism industry, travellers, and local communities (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995, p. 819). Duncan (2007, p. 25) observed that, “although the lone independent drifter of the 1970s is no longer characteristic of the majority of backpackers, it remains a popular ideal” even though this travel style has been adopted by people from diverse backgrounds with differing motivations and expectations (O’Reilly, 2006). There are a number of other phrases used in the literature to describe this type of travel. In the United Kingdom, young people take time off between school and university or more recently between jobs. This is now popularly referred to as the ‘Gap year’ (Heath, 2007; Jarvis, 2011; Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995; Maoz and Bekerman, 2010; Richards and Wilson, 2004b), or in the case of the New Zealand youth travel market the ‘Overseas experience’ or the ‘Big OE’ (Bell, 2002; Inkson and Myers, 2003). Uriely (2001) uses the term ‘working tourist’. There are also a large number

who define themselves as ‘travellers’ (Jarvis, 2011; Richards and Wilson, 2004c, p.19; Uriely, 2009).

Defining the backpacker

Loker-Murphy and Pearce proposed an early definition of the backpacker as:

travellers who exhibit a preference for budget accommodation; an emphasis on meeting other people (locals and travellers); an independently organised and flexible travel schedule; longer rather than brief holidays; and an emphasis on informal and participatory recreational activities(1995, pp. 830-831).

Sørensen claimed that backpackers were often characterised as:

Self-organised pleasure tourists on a prolonged multiple-destination journey with a flexible itinerary, extended beyond that which is usually possible to fit into a cyclical holiday pattern (1999, pp. 50-51).

Other characteristics that have been ascribed to backpackers include their being: anti-establishment, adventurous, and in search of authentic experiences (Cohen, 1973; Riley, 1988; Vogt, 1976). Riley defined what she termed ‘budget tourists’ as:

People desirous of extending their travels beyond that of a cyclical holiday, and hence the necessity of living on a budget...they are escaping from the dullness and monotony of their everyday routine, from their jobs, from making decisions about careers, and the desire to delay or postpone work, marriage, and other responsibilities (1988, p. 317).

Whilst these definitions resemble Cohen’s (1972, 1973) non-institutionalised tourist, as this subsector of international tourism continues to expand, and destinations become commercialised with corresponding infrastructure development, one might argue that the line between the backpacker, or independent traveller, and mass tourist,

begins to blur (Hampton, 1998; O'Reilly, 2006). Contemporary backpackers, follow identifiable routes that include destinations such as Thailand, Indonesia, Israel, India, Mexico, Peru, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, United States, United Kingdom, and Europe. For backpackers to Australia and New Zealand, Fiji is also included in their travel circuit (See Jarvis 2006 and 2011).

Welk (2004) observed, that ironically, despite the backpacker's 'inherent quest for freedom', their behaviour is similar to conventional tourists. They live conventional lifestyles, visit popular backpacker enclaves, sightsee, party, and engage in recreational activities (Cohen, 2004, p. 51). 'Freedom' in this context is less about the individual travel style of the early 'drifter' and more about the hedonistic lifestyles, permissiveness and experimentation available at many backpacker enclaves. For some, this 'state of liminality' between their real world and the 'other', allows them to gain new perspectives on their societies and reflect on themselves (Noy, 2004a, 2004b).

Bradt (1995, p. 49 cited in Welk, 2004, p. 80) identified five 'badges of honour' as pillars of backpacker experiences:

1. Travelling on a low budget;
2. Meeting different people;
3. Being free, independent and open-minded;
4. Organising one's journey individually and independently; and
5. Travelling for as long as possible.

Welk (2004) suggested the above ideals were the basic symbols on which backpackers constructed their identities and sense of community. These ideals differentiated the backpacker from the traditional mass tourist.

The backpacker phenomenon in post-modern society is representative of a lifestyle choice (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004a), and has increased in popularity amongst tourists leading to wide-ranging economic, social cultural and environmental development impacts in those regions they visit (Hampton, 1998; Scheyvens, 2002a and 2002 b; Visser 2004). This growth has led to a corresponding growth in research and

scholarship on backpacker tourism, the motivations and behaviour of independent travellers and global nomads, recent developments and further segmentation of this market, infrastructure development and potential for community development.

Today's backpackers or budget travellers are better educated, affluent and take regular long-haul vacations. Most American, British and European youth tourists are about to enter university or possess degrees (Ayala, 1995). They are also technologically aware, each armed with digital cameras, iPods, photo mobiles and connected to the world via the internet (Pursall, 2005). Definitions of backpacker vary and can include Gap students, Career Gap Travellers, budget and independent travellers of all ages (Jarvis, 2011). Hampton (1998, p.641) described backpackers as experienced tourists, surviving on under \$15 per day, who use local transport, "carry all their belongings on their back, bargain for goods and services...and get away from crowds and discover new places". Scheyvens (2002a) claimed the term is widely used to describe predominantly young, budget tourists on extended vacations or working holidays. Visser (2004, p.283) stated that taken as a whole the backpacker tourist is "a sub-sector of international budget tourism... with characteristics that include communication networks; a demand for cheap accommodation, and a parallel structure of transport, restaurants and support services".

Riley (1988) rejected Cohen's early definitions (1972, 1973, and 1974), which used terms such as 'drifter' or 'hippie', as unrepresentative of contemporary western society defining the average backpackers as someone who:

prefers to travel alone, is educated,...middle class, single, obsessively concerned with budgeting his/her money, and at a juncture in life. Many are recent college graduates, delaying the transition into the responsibilities associated with adulthood in western society, or taking leave between jobs (Riley, 1988, p.313).

An addition to this definition would be the need for access to communication networks, especially the internet and mobile phone networks (Visser, 2004). A further development in the backpacker travel market has been the emergence of the 'flashpacker'. Flashpackers are a subset of the backpacker market, are a little older,

generally professionals taking a break from their careers, with higher budgets, who demand higher levels of comfort and quality, and choose active holidays of up to six months in length, which include experiencing indigenous local cultures (Jarvis, 2006; Pursall, 2005). Flashpackers are 'digital nomads', who backpack by choice, mediating their travel experience with communications technology, in the form of mobile devices (Hannam and Diekmann, 2010b; Paris, 2012). Their use of mobile technology allows them to maintain an independent lifestyle whilst working from anywhere they can access the internet (Paris, 2012). Described as a new global elite, whose travel is facilitated by backpacker infrastructure which includes "transportation systems, credit cards, accommodation, travel agents, travel booking and information websites" (Paris, 2012, p. 1095), flashpackers are an important potential niche market for Fiji and the local industry should seriously consider their motivations and demands (Jarvis, 2011).

Doorne (1994, p.30) observed that the backpacker was representative of a style of travel that emphasised movement and mobility, as evidenced by the backpack as a more convenient form of luggage than the suitcase (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004a, p.60). Westerhausen (2002, p. 146) noted that for a minority, "being on the road becomes a preferred way of life to which they will return whenever the opportunity presents itself". Cohen (2011) explored the concept of lifestyle consumption, and individuals who centred their lives around backpacker travel. Identified as a subset of the backpacker market, these lifestyle travellers returned repeatedly to the world of backpacking, in many cases financed through short periods of work at home or abroad (Cohen, 2011, p. 1551). Despite such definitions, relatively little empirical research has been conducted on these lifelong 'wanderers' (Noy and Cohen, 2005). Most research has focused on the young contemporary budget tourist on an extended holiday, who is in a transitional stage of life (e.g. their 'gap year' or 'overseas experience') which is likely to be temporary in nature (Maoz and Bekerman, 2010).

Pearce (1990; cited in Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004a, p. 66) claimed that backpacking was a style of travel, unrestricted by demographic or economic factors such as age, income, and length of stay. He observed that backpackers had the following characteristics:

- A preference for budget accommodation (one should note that not all users of budget accommodation are backpackers)
- An emphasis on meeting other travellers and local communities as a primary travel motivation
- An independently organised and flexible travel itinerary
- Travel for longer periods of time
- Engage in more participatory holidays that include health and outdoor adventure activities and specialist tours (Toxward, 1999, p.15-17).

Pearce's (1990) analysis was mainly concerned with motivational characteristics, especially as they relate to broadening one's education, escape from stressful lifestyles and engaging in temporary work to enable a longer stay. Further studies of backpacker characteristics, motivations and behaviour have emerged, which also include age and length of stay as determining factors (Loker-Murphy, 1996). These studies identified backpackers as predominantly young, but also as following a style of travel that welcomed travellers of all ages (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004b, p. 65).

Researchers such as Cohen (2004) and Atjelvic and Doorne (2004b, p. 76) cautioned against seeing the backpacker market as a homogenous entity. Given the dynamic nature of this market in recent years, there was a "continuing need for market research that reveals even more heterogeneity and is context-specific" (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004a, p. 23). Cohen (2004) recommended further analysis of the backpacker phenomenon, which considered age, gender, subcultures, and nationality. Recent studies have attempted to identify different backpacker motivations and experiences as they relate to gender (Carr 1999; Maoz 2007, 2008; Myers and Hannam, 2008), and nationality (Maoz, 2007; Noy, 2004a, 2004b; Noy and Cohen, 2005; Prideaux and Shiga, 2007; Richards and Wilson, 2004b), leading to a better understanding of this market. There is also considerable research that has investigated age and demographics (Jarvis, 2004, 2011; Jarvis and Peel, 2006; Jarvis and Peel, 2010; Newlands, 2004; Richards and Wilson, 2004b; Scheyvens, 2006). Research on older backpackers or the

'Grey Nomad' is limited, with some exceptions being studies by Myers and Hannam (2008) into Israeli middle aged female backpackers.

In recent years, the backpacker market has matured and diversified into multiple tourist types that include:

- The stereotypical student backpacker in their early twenties
- Teenage 'Gap' year travellers taking a break between school and university
- Career break travellers or 'flashpackers' from mid twenties to mid life, taking extended breaks from their careers to travel for long periods of time or combining travel with work abroad, choosing this mode of travel for the social opportunities available with this style of travel
- Backpackers as volunteer tourists (Jarvis and Peel, 2010, p. 21).

Research into these tourist types is essential if service providers are to adapt their products and services to meet the expectations of their guests. For the purpose of this study the following general definition of backpacker or independent traveller as some, prefer to be called, also used by Jarvis (1994) in his study "*The billion dollar backpackers the ultimate fully independent traveller*" and, also his more recent study of "*Backpackers and independent travellers in Fiji*" in 2006 was used.

The average traveller prefers to travel alone, is educated, European, middle class, single, obsessively concerned with budgeting his/her money, and at a juncture in life. Many are recent college graduates, delaying the transition into the responsibilities associated with adulthood in western society, or taking leave between jobs (Riley, 1988, p. 313).

An addition to this definition would be the need for access to communication networks especially the internet and mobile phone networks (Visser, 2004).

Youth tourism/GAP traveller

An increasingly popular option for young (predominantly British) students is taking a Gap year before starting university. This Gap year can involve a combination of “paid and unpaid work, leisure and travel” to finance “an overseas trip or volunteer placement” (Heath, 2007, p. 89). The proposed benefits to the student are an opportunity to gain a competitive advantage over other students for entry into elite universities. The social and cultural capital, accumulated within the Gap year travel experience, becomes a form of investment in developing more well-rounded curriculum vitae, which is more appealing to prospective employers (Heath, 2007, p.93). Benefits to students, with prospective employers, can accrue with a combination of international travel and volunteering. Duncan (2007, p.31) stated, that it is the altruistic and volunteering elements of Gap year travel, that sets them apart from backpackers and even different types of ‘Gap’ travel for example the Career Gap traveller. Gap year students from the United Kingdom make up a significant proportion of the international backpacker market, and the Gap year has become a common feature of contemporary youth culture (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995; Richards and Wilson, 2004b).

The flashpacker or career break traveller

The term flashpacker or career break traveller, is used to identify travellers with high disposable incomes who spend more, stay in backpacker/budget accommodation, but are willing to pay for their own room, soft towels, a king size bed and designer toiletries (Miles, 2004). The emergence of this sub-segment of the backpacker market has led to the development of accommodation with up-market rooms and such facilities as bars, swimming pools, coffee shops and internet cafes (Jarvis and Peel, 2010, p.22). Hannam and Diekmann (2010) defined the ‘flashpacker’ as:

The older twenty to thirty-something backpacker, who travels with an expensive backpack or trolley-type case, stays in a variety of accommodation depending on location, has greater disposable income, visits more ‘off the beaten track’ locations, carries a laptop, or at least a ‘flashdrive’ and a mobile phone, but who engages with the mainstream backpacker culture (p.2).

Nevertheless, the backpacker tourism market is still dominated by the young budget traveller, congregating in traditional backpacker ‘hotspots’ or ‘enclaves’, although the flashpacker is an emerging market which needs to be considered (Hannam and Diekmann, 2010, p. 2; Jarvis and Peel, 2010, p. 22). Although research on the flashpacker is scarce, Pursall (2005, cited in Jarvis and Peel, 2010, p. 22) observed the development of more up market purpose-built accommodation in Sydney, designed and marketed at the flashpacker market and has implications for backpacker product development in other neighbouring countries e.g. Fiji and New Zealand.

Backpackers as volunteer tourists

For some, the increase in popularity of backpacker travel, from the ‘road less travelled’ to well planned institutionalised infrastructure e.g. transport and travel intermediaries and accommodation, similar to mass packaged travel, is leading to dissatisfaction and a search for alternative experiences. Travellers and stakeholders see volunteer tourism as a more sustainable option, as it combines the altruistic motivations of the volunteer with travel, whilst at the same time making a positive contribution to local communities (Oii and Laing, 2010, p. 191). Backpacker tourism can make a significant contribution to marginalised communities in developing countries and, where aligned to volunteer tourism, the potential for increased positive impacts on the host community can increase (Oppermann and Chon, 1997; Scheyvens, 2002a, 2002b).

Volunteer tourism encompasses elements of travel, leisure, and volunteering and generally involves “the payment by tourists to participate in organised special-interest projects” which contribute to the local host community (Broad, 2003 cited in Oii and Lang, 2010, p. 192). This type of travel, to make a difference, is growing in popularity and providing alternative options for backpacker/volunteer travel. Volunteer tourism benefits host communities, and provides a number of personal and social benefits to the volunteer or participant. These include social networking and cross cultural interaction, as well as developing an increased awareness of social and environmental justice; global issues and inequalities, and in some cases, transforms the volunteer’s behaviour upon returning home (Brown, 2005; Cohen, 2004; Gibson, Pratt and Movono, 2012; Matthews, 2008; Oii and Lang, 2010, p. 192).

Critics argue that the existence of volunteer tourism programmes may inadvertently represent a form of neo-colonialism, but if locals were employed in the projects, the potential for more positive cross-cultural experiences could develop. If volunteer tourism activities were used to enhance backpacker travel, a more interactive exchange of knowledge between hosts and guests may develop, providing the backpacker with a more authentic experience of the local culture and community (Gibson et al., 2012; Laythorpe, 2010, p. 141).

Michel Maffesoli compared the idea of a global consumer to that of belonging to a 'tribe', united by consumption (1996). He described 'tribes' as coherent subcultures of society e.g. youth culture; that form "a series of temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating memberships" (Bennett, 1999, p.600). Richards and Wilson (2004a) suggested backpackers could be characterised as 'neo-tribes' of social groups, that bond together temporarily in new uncertain environments. Bennett (1999) claimed that youth were more fleeting and random, and capable of belonging to a variety of groups or 'neo-tribes' outside of their family home environment. Studies show that youth are likely to move between groups with different foci (MacCannell, 1999). In the case of cross-cultural experiences, they may find themselves inadequately equipped to deal with the 'authentic other', so they move back to familiar in groups found in nearby backpacker enclaves. Shields suggested that the diversity of collective identities in modern consumer societies, demonstrated the transitory nature of group identities in modern society, "as individuals continually move between different sites of collective expression and 'reconstruct' themselves accordingly" (1992, in Bennett, 1999, p. 606). For example, young travellers visit and engage in a variety of destinations, plus participate in volunteer projects that share different identities. The contemporary youth tourism market offers a variety of destinations and experiences that cater for the backpacker / volunteer / adventure tourism market.

The Kiwi Overseas Experience (OE)

Similar to the Gap travel of youth from the United Kingdom, the 'OE' or 'Overseas Experience' is considered a 'rite of passage' or 'coming of age' for young New Zealanders of predominantly European descent (Bell, 2002, p. 143). For many, this is their first trip away from New Zealand. Generally, it is taken after the

completion of tertiary study, or for non-students, as soon as they are able to save up the money to travel. For New Zealand youth, their OE spans from one to five years, and for many, is concerned with following in the footsteps of their parents and grandparents by travelling and working in the United Kingdom and Europe. For these travellers, in their mid twenties, the aim is to see the world before settling down in New Zealand. Bell described the OE as:

A secular pilgrimage to ‘see the world’ – the sites famous through one’s childhood and young adulthood, but far away. It is a temporary escape from conservative New Zealand, family constraints, and looming responsibilities of adulthood. OE is a way of delaying the taking on of adult responsibilities (2002, p. 145).

The OE does not fit traditional definitions of backpacker or Gap year travel, as it is usually for a longer period, and can involve a considerable period of time working. This also challenges the traditional WTO definitions, which defines tourism in terms of temporal boundaries and travel away from home for a period less than a year (WTO cited in Page, Brunt, Busby and Connell, 2001, p.13). Although the ‘OE’ may not conform to traditional definitions of tourism, young New Zealanders on an ‘OE’ engage in a variety of tourist experiences from city breaks, to package holidays and independent travel (Duncan, 2007, p. 33).

The ‘Big Trip’

The ‘big trip’ is the term given to travel by young Israelis, who have finished their National Service, and undertake an extended trip to ‘Third World’ destinations (Duncan, 2007, p. 33). This group of budget travellers have been described as “aggressive, impatient, strong-minded, and in-group oriented” (Hottola, 1999, p. 77, cited in Maoz, 2004, p. 110). Cohen (1973) observed that most of these young Israeli travellers did not seek to interact with local communities and culture. Unlike other backpackers, coming from a collectivist society means that they choose to socialise with other Israelis (Maoz, 2004). For example, Israeli backpackers in India were described as:

To a large extent, the backpackers continue their Israeli life. In their enclaves most of the food is Israeli, the menus are written partly in Hebrew, and so are the signs that hang in the streets. They read Hebrew books and Israeli newspapers, listen to Israeli music and speak mainly Hebrew (Maoz 2007, p. 227).

She suggested that members of this particular young group seek to escape the horrific experiences they had in the army. In India, they travel in groups of twenty to thirty and stay in Israeli enclaves, where they develop close-knit communities. They seek independence from their parents, family and army authorities.

The Israeli backpacker market to the South Pacific (including Australia and New Zealand) is small, but has the potential to increase. Dealing with an Israeli, predominantly Jewish market, also brings with it different dietary requirements, which for tourism service providers is an important consideration.

The Traveller

An interesting factor concerning the definition of 'backpacker', relates to who is using the term. Academic researchers may use the term 'backpacker' to define youth travellers, whilst a large number of backpackers refer to themselves as 'travellers' and to a lesser extent 'tourists' (Richards and Wilson, 2004c, pp. 16-17). Self-definitions are not static, and change with travel experience, with the more experienced tourist, who has engaged in a number of trips, calling themselves 'backpackers' or 'travellers'. Where a strong backpacker infrastructure has developed, for example in South East Asia, Australia and New Zealand, there was a greater association with the 'backpacker' label (Richards and Wilson, 2004c, p.17). Older backpackers tended to refer to themselves as 'travellers', although this may be an attempt to disassociate themselves from the 'party' backpacker stereotypes.

The backpacker market is not homogenous, and it is important to recognise the diverse types as they relate to differences in age, gender, class, ethnicity, origins and different subcultures (Cohen, 2004, p.57). He also suggested we consider the

relationship between backpackers and work as evidenced with the 'Flashpacker', 'Gap year', 'OE' and Voluntourism subsectors.

Solo independent women travellers

An emerging trend observed in the backpacker market, is "women travelling solo and independently" (McNamara and Prideaux, 2010, p.253). This has been investigated by a number of researchers (See Bialeschki, 2005; Bond, 1997; Matthews-Sawyer *et al.*, 2002; Pain, 1991; Whyte and Shaw, 1994; Woodward and Green, 1988). Solo women travellers range from those who are fearful and risk adverse, to risk takers with little concern for safety. They chose to travel alone without partners, friends or the support of packaged tours. Bond (1997, p.3) claimed these women were "bold, confident, gutsy adventurers". However, other researchers disagree and claim solo women tend to be concerned with safety and conservative in their choice of activities and destination choices (Bialeschki, 2005; Pain, 1991; Whyte and Shaw, 1994; and Woodward and Green, 1988).

Studies have identified motivations of solo independent women (Jordan and Gibson, 2005; Wilson and Little, 2005) as the desire to "change oneself and meet new people" (McNamara and Prideaux, 2010, p. 254) by moving beyond their comfort zone and developing a sense of autonomy and independence (Butler, 1995; Wilson and Little, 2008). Wilson and Harris (2006) analysed women's travel stories and discovered that women undertook solo travel in search of identity, self empowerment and a connection with others. These travel experiences formed a meaningful part of women's lives, and allowed them to review their lives and personal relationships. In their study of solo women's independent travel to Tropical North Queensland in Australia, McNamara and Prideaux (2010) identified a number of motivations for travel (See Figure 1.1). These findings are important for product development and marketing in Fiji, where a large proportion of the backpacker/independent travel market are women (Jarvis and Hobman, 2006, p.4).

BACKPACKER MOTIVATIONS AND BEHAVIOUR

Maoz defined backpackers as:

Self-organised pleasure tourists on a prolonged multiple-destination journey with a flexible itinerary. They are often keen to experience the local lifestyle, attempt to “look local,” and cite “meeting other people” as a key motivation. Their recreational activities are likely to focus around nature, culture, or adventure (2007, p. 123).

She argued that the above description was not enough to distinguish them from tourists, and contemporary backpackers are not the drifters and deviants of the 1970s. Travel represented a transitory leave of absence from their affluent lifestyles, but there was always an understanding that at some point backpackers will be returning to their ‘normal life’ (Sorensen, 2003). Although they claim to be travelling alone or with a friend, in reality many gather in backpacker ‘ghettos’ or ‘enclaves’ that provide all the home comforts and the company of like minded travellers (Loker-Murphy, 1996). Even when travelling in remote areas, they are likely to meet backpackers following the European or South-East Asian circuit, or routes recommended by popular travel guides or fellow travellers (Huxley, 2004). In many cases, the enclaves are nation specific, for example beaches in Thailand known as ‘Little Sweden’, ‘Little Germany’, or Israeli enclaves in Northern India.

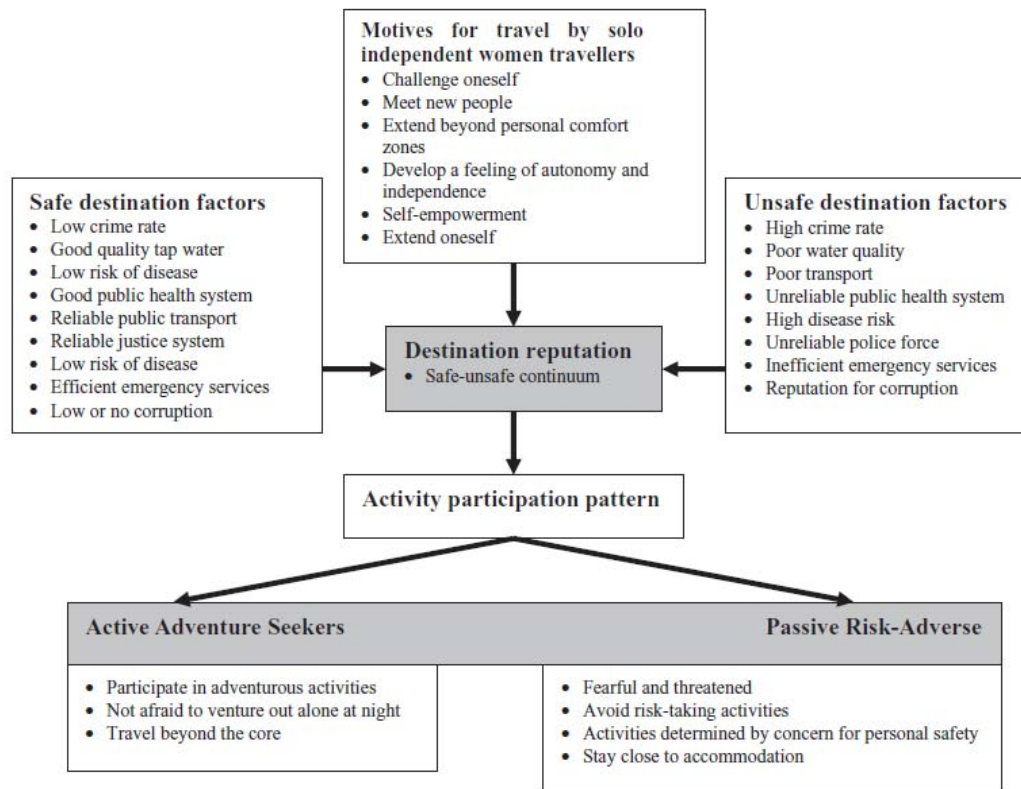


Figure 1.1 Travel motivations for solo independent women travellers

(Source: McNamara and Prideaux, 2010, p. 260).

Many backpackers travel at times of transition in their life, or after experiencing life crises, and this has led to their journeys being described as self-imposed ‘rites of passage’ (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000). Often dissatisfied with their home societies and the stress of everyday life, they travel as a form of escape and opportunity for personal growth. Some studies claim that backpackers are disinterested in meeting locals and experiencing local cultures, and have little regard for local customs and norms. Apparently ‘free’ from the constraints of their home society, they engage in culturally and socially unacceptable patterns of behaviour (Maoz, 2007).

Backpackers are not a homogenous group and can be differentiated by nationality, purpose and organisation of trip, motivation, age, gender and lifecycle stage (Cohen 2004). For example, in their study of young budget travellers in Australia, Loker-Murphy and Pearce identified seven categories according to different motives and experiences:

- **Moratorium travellers** – travel extensively before entering a career and family life, have adequate resources, choose comfortable ways of travelling, and avoid risky adventures and experiences.
- **Ascetic travellers** – abstain from worldly comforts and pleasure on lonely and unplanned journeys. Spend as little money as possible and test their own limits of endurance.
- **Adventurers** – interested in testing their limits, but have high levels of financial resources and engage in lengthy planning, look for new ‘unconquered’ areas and large audiences to view their performances.
- **Goal-directed travellers** – interested in carefully planned and prepared educational travel, trip alone is insufficient justification for travel, must have material or cultural profits.
- **Party travellers** – view the whole trip as a party and opportunity to meet new people and engage in behaviour they would never do at home.
- **Alternative travellers** – look for new experiences by avoiding mainstream tourism – can be problematic for destinations if large numbers of visitors choose to engage in alternative lifestyles e.g. drug consumption.
- **Peter Pan travellers** – About forty years old in search of their ‘second youth’ by abandoning normal life and joining the young travellers. An expanding market, given changes in contemporary labour markets and family structures.

(Adapted from Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995, p. 829).

Maoz suggested that given the diversity of this group, the use of the term ‘backpacking’ to cover all of them may be “so broad as to lack significance” (2007,

p.124). She stated the international backpacker was still predominantly Western, originating from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Western Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand. There are also many Israelis and an increasing number of Japanese travellers. Her research examined the role of national and cultural characteristics in determining the behaviour of 'tourists' as opposed to 'backpackers'. Examples of tourist behaviour by nationality from a variety of studies documented by Maoz (2007, p.125) suggested that cultural factors could explain different travel behaviour. For example, Americans are more interested in mixing and socialising with other tourists. Japanese and French are interested in artefacts and culture. French, Italian, Japanese, and Koreans avoid local food and prefer their own cuisine. Arabs prefer relaxation with no physical activity. Japanese tour in groups, visit sacralised attractions, take lots of photographs and are high spenders. Although stereotypical, these factors could be of interest to tourism service providers.

According to Maoz, a primary motivation for many backpackers is "the desire to construct a new temporary identity through travel" (2007, p. 126) by mastering new skills, engaging in adventurous exploits and gaining a greater sense of independence (Cohen, 2004). The original 'drifter' destinations of South-East Asia, the South Pacific (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995) and other developing regions, which attracted the long-term budget travellers (Riley, 1988), today provide the 'pull' factor for the youth traveller and backpacker. These are imagined as places where people can transform themselves, and accumulate cultural capital (Maoz, 2007). Travel provides them with the opportunity to redefine themselves as individuals, through their personalised 'world' experiences, and separates them from the shared stereotypes of nationality, age, background, and gender. However, in many cases, the 'new' identity is a reflection of their own societal values, which, for the majority of backpackers, are Western (Elsrud, 2001, p. 599).

CONCLUSION

This paper discussed the history and origins of backpacker travel within the broader context of the history of tourism which included European Grand Tours, hiking and tramping, the growth of the youth hostel movement, non-institutionalised travel, drifter tourism and youth tourism. Many argue that travel is an essential element of

post-modern society and the backpacker with their emphasis on freedom and mobility is a reflection of this trend (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2004a, p.60).

This is not a homogenous market and can be differentiated in a number of ways which include: nationality, purpose, organisation of trip, age, gender and lifecycle stage (Cohen, 2004). Whilst the international backpacker is predominantly Western in origin new markets are emerging from Israel, Japan, and China and this market although still underestimated by governments and industry practitioners, has the potential to provide opportunities for rural and community development, entrepreneurship and the growth of small businesses and increasing opportunities for indigenous participation in the tourism industry.

The diverse nature of this market also provides abundant opportunities for research into this market, findings of which would assist with the development and delivery of quality visitor experiences, satisfied visitors and positive word-of-mouth, which is vital given this market's use of technology and social media.

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