THE BACKPACKER TOURIST
THE BACKPACKER TOURIST: A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

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To my wife Ana for her extraordinary patience, to my son Afonso who thinks I will get rich with this book and to my daughter Maria who came into the world during the writing of this book and who didn’t always let me sleep. When they grow up, I hope they can also discover the world with the eyes of a backpacker.

To my wife Carla for her understanding and for always ‘being there’, and to my daughters Inês and Margarida, for their patience and love, hoping that they have the opportunity to travel and discover the world as a backpacker.
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About the Authors

Márcio Ribeiro Martins was born in Murça (1979), Vila Real, Portugal. He has a degree in Geography (University of Porto – FLUP, 2002) and, in 2005, completed the Master in Natural Hazards Management in the same faculty. Since 2002, he has been teaching Geography at different secondary schools around the country, and since 2011, he has been teaching as an Invited Assistant in Instituto Politécnico de Bragança. In 2020, he completed his PhD in Tourism at the University of Aveiro with the thesis ‘The backpacker phenomenon and its spatiotemporal movement patterns in Porto urban destination’. At moment, he holds the position of Adjunct Professor at Instituto Politécnico de Bragança, and he is a Collaborator Member of the research unit on Governance, Competitiveness and Public Policy, working in the group on Tourism and Development. He is also an author and co-author of several articles in national and international journals. Backpacker tourism and tourist space–time behaviour are his main research topics.

Rui Augusto da Costa was born in Oliveira de Azeméis, Aveiro, Portugal. He graduated in Management and Tourism Planning at the University of Aveiro in 1988, completed his Master’s degree in Innovation and Policy Development at the University of Aveiro and a PhD in Tourism at the same University in 2012. He is an Assistant Professor in the Tourism Area in the Department of Economics, Management, Industrial Engineering and Tourism at University of Aveiro. He is a member of the Executive Board of DEGEIT and he is also an Integrated Member of the Research Unit on Governance, Competitiveness and Public Policy in the Research Group on Tourism and Development. He develops his research in the planning and project in tourism, networks, governance and public policy, territorial dynamics of investment and financing of small and micro enterprises in the tourism sector. He participates in several projects of applied research nationally and internationally, and he is an author and co-author of several articles in national and international journals.

He is also an Associate Editor of the Journal of Tourism & Development and a member of the Organizing Committee of the International Conference INVTUR.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 2014, I started doing my first academic research on backpacker tourism. Since then, I had the opportunity to publish some scientific articles and finalise my PhD thesis on the spatiotemporal behaviour of backpackers in an urban destination, under the supervision of my co-author Rui Augusto da Costa. This book is the result of six years of ongoing research.

Some years ago, I had the opportunity to start working with my colleague and co-author Márcio Ribeiro Martins, which presented me the backpacker world! During these years, we had the opportunity to work together and to ‘build’ a very good friendship. Research is more than publishing papers ... is to create ties between people!

We will begin by thanking the series editor, professor Richard Sharpley who supported and encouraged our initial proposal suggesting relevant and valuable contributions.

Thanks to all the publishing team, especially to Kousalya Thangarasu for her patience and dedication in overcoming all the delays and difficulties that were emerging and to David Mulvaney for the beautiful book cover.

We also would like to acknowledge the financial support of the research unit on Governance, Competitiveness and Public Policy (UIDB/04058/2020) + (UIDP/04058/2020), funded by national funds through FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, Portugal.
In this introductory chapter, there will be a brief presentation of backpacker tourism as a form/type of tourism whose visibility and popularity have increased all over the world, with a highlight in the summary on its economic relevance to destinations and some of its main environmental and sociocultural impacts. The main purpose of the book will be presented before a brief summary of all chapters, with a complete and consistent synthesis, emphasizing how contemporary backpacking has evolved.

Tourism is an economic activity that is at the heart of the globalisation process. It has benefitted and continues to benefit from technological developments and the emergence and spread of innovations in telecommunications, transport, marketing and management, among others. Nowadays, tourism is responsible for a significant increase in economic growth in many countries, and according to World Travel & Tourism Council (2021) in 2019, the best year ever for world tourism, travel and tourism accounted for one in four of all new jobs created across the world, 10.6% of all jobs and 10.4% of global GDP, and it represented 7% of world exports and 28% of total service exports (World Tourism Organization, 2020). In 2019, 1,460 million international tourist arrivals were also registered worldwide (World Tourism Organization, 2020) – the highest number ever, and more than 336 million were youth travellers based on the WYSE Travel Confederation (2021) website. These figures illustrate the relevance of young travellers as one of the current trends with great impact on tourism activity and among them are the backpackers, the main subject of this book.

Although it is not an easy task to present the economic impact of backpacker tourism quantitatively due to the lack of systematic collection of statistical
data worldwide (Martins & Costa, 2017), it is possible to directly assess its economic relevance from data collected in countries such as Australia or New Zealand, where the backpacker market is well established and indirectly from information regarding youth tourism. For example, in 2020, Australia registered over 2 million international backpackers (Statista, 2021a) with the cities of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane accounting for 39.4% of this figure.

Therefore, according to the WYSE Travel Confederation (2016) report, the market value of international youth tourism increased from 190 billion USD in 2009 to 286 billion USD in 2014 and is expected to reach the extraordinary amount of 400 billion USD by 2020. In 2014, youth tourism was responsible for 200 million international trips (Tourism Research and Marketing, 2013) and for generating revenues of 286 billion USD (World Tourism Organization, 2016). Data from the WYSE Travel Confederation (2019) regarding backpackers indicate that they were responsible for 44 million trips in 2017.

It is broadly accepted that young tourists are an important market for the future because they sometimes spend more money than other tourists, are more likely to return to the same destination and are also described as more resilient to potential crises. They spend most of their money in local communities, making an important contribution to other economic activities, and have the ability to attract other visitors to the places they visit (UNWTO, 2016; UNWTO & WYSE Travel Confederation, 2010).

However, this book is about backpacker tourists, a complex and heterogeneous group of travellers, which over the last five decades has been transformed from a marginal phenomenon into a global one. Described as a modern trend, ‘backpacker tourism comprises the activities carried out by a complex and heterogeneous group of travellers, consisting predominantly of young people who travel for longer periods than usual and with flexible and informal travel itineraries’ (Martins & Costa, 2021a, p. 1).

In the study of backpacker tourism, E. Cohen’s (1973) contributions are fundamental and provide the basis for contextualising behaviour in terms of society and change. Constituted in the past by a relatively small group of errant travellers described by E. Cohen (1973) as drifters, over recent decades backpackers have become a powerful tourist segment made up of predominantly young travellers who plan and prepare their own trip, looking for direct cultural contact, novelty, spontaneity and risk all around the globe.

Riley (1988) classifies these tourists as educated, belonging to the European middle class, single, travelling alone and concerned about their small budget, travelling with backpacks on their backs and a small daily budget.

A complex and multifaceted form of tourism (Sørensen, 2003) and the lack of consensus among researchers on the current conceptualisation of
backpackers are still evident today (Dayour, Kimbu, & Park, 2017; Ooi & Laing, 2010), which is why this topic is analysed in Chapter 2. The literature presents a multiplicity of terms concerning the various groups of non-institutionalised tourists; however, it seems to be consensual that backpackers constitute a distinct category in relation to institutionalised tourists (E. Cohen, 1973; Riley, 1988).

Based on research with Israeli backpackers, Uriely, Yonay, and Simchai (2002, p. 536) suggest that backpacking should be regarded as a form rather than a type of tourism. Form-related attributes refer to visible institutional arrangements and practices through which tourists organise their travel; type-related attributes represent tourists’ attitudes towards the core values of their own society, their motivations to travel and the meanings they attach to their experiences (p. 521). Therefore, the most distinctive features of backpackers are related to the length of excursion and flexibility of itinerary, the low spending tendency that determines the destinations and to the means of transportation and accommodations usually selected by backpackers – all form-related attributes.

Although these arguments are open to discussion, for Reichenberger and Iaquinto (2022), contemporary backpacking offers experiences related to freedom and existential authenticity, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 5.

Acting as true global nomads (Richards, 2015), the growing number of young people travelling with backpacks has become more diverse, making this phenomenon progressively more complex, as revealed by their different motivations and behaviours, their psychographic and social characteristics and even by some aspects related to their mobility. However, there has been a progressive institutionalisation of backpackers, which has transformed them into the current mainstream version (O’Reilly, 2006).

The literature on backpackers states that these travellers generate important impacts on the destinations they visit (Martins & Costa, 2017). On an economic level, they spend more money than other tourists due to their longer stays, contributing to a significant entry of foreign currency (Becken & Simmons, 2008; M. Hampton, 1998; M. P. Hampton, 2013); they do not buy luxury products but spend more on local goods and services such as catering, transport and accommodation (Gibson & Connell, 2003; Moscardo, Konovalov, Murphy, & McGehee, 2013; Ooi & Laing, 2010), and the firms providing services to backpackers are usually small and their owners are locals (M. Hampton, 1998; Maoz, 2006; Scheyvens, 2002). In some countries, such as Australia, backpacker tourists also constitute an important temporary workforce in the agricultural sector and tourism (Iaquinto, 2015; Moscardo et al., 2013).
Regarding environmental impacts, backpackers are generally recognised as having a smaller environmental footprint due to lower consumption of resources (Ooi & Laing, 2010; Scheyvens, 2002), a preference for travelling in groups, using land transport, public transport and carpooling (Iaquinto, 2015). Backpacker’s accommodation also consumes substantially less energy per year and per guest (Becken, Susanne, Frampton, & Simmons, 2001).

At the social and cultural level, their impacts are not very different from those of other tourists, although some studies mention their concern and respect for the local culture and environment (X. Luo, Brown, & Huang, 2015; Rodrigues & Prideaux, 2012).

As suggested above, backpacker tourism has assumed special relevance, evidenced by the growing interest of researchers around the world (Agyeawaah, Dayour, Otoo, & Goh, 2021; G. Chen, Zhao, Huang, et al., 2019; Dayour, Park, & Kimbu, 2019; Iaquinto & Pratt, 2020; Martín-Cabello, 2014; Rogerson, 2007) and focused on the heterogeneity and complexity of the phenomenon (Sørensen, 2003) and its economic relevance (M. P. Hampton, 2013). Others have shown interest in the study of motivations (Maoz, 2007; Nok, Suntikul, Agyeiwaah, & Tolkach, 2017; Wang & Chen, 2018) or backpacker identity (Agyeiwaah, Pratt, Iaquinto, & Suntikul, 2020; G. Chen, Zhao, Huang, et al., 2019; Zhang, Morrison, Tucker, & Wu, 2018) in the context of non-Western countries.

Several reasons can be provided to explain the development of backpacker tourism in recent decades: political and economic changes, technological innovation in telecommunications and transport, sociocultural transformations and new marketing strategies, among others. All these arguments have induced overwhelming changes in tourist activity all over the world, and backpacker tourism has been no exception.

Of all these factors, the most important that contributed to the evolution and transformation of the backpacker phenomenon was the emergence of the internet, the establishment of a gigantic network of hostels around the world and the changes in the liberalisation of airspace that led to the emergence of many low-cost airlines in several regions of the world. But the internet was the most disruptive technology that allowed the globalisation of communications between travellers and the appearance of several websites to search for and book accommodation and transport. Through the internet, travellers can communicate regularly with friends and family, get in touch with other travellers, report on their own travel experiences and virtualise the desirable road status, which is such a relevant aspect in the backpacker culture.

Transport is another important component of backpacking. Even if the preference is for overland transport like bus, train or even hitchhiking, air
travel has been crucial to the growth of backpacker tourism, specifically low-cost airlines. A low-cost airline or low-cost carrier (LCC) has this designation because they offer lower fares compared to traditional airlines due to the elimination of many services usually provided during an air trip (Zhou, Wu, Zhou, Li, & McGuire, 2009). By 2020, low-cost airlines had substantial market shares worldwide. On average, in the Asia Pacific region, they accounted for 32.5% of the market, in North America 34.9%, in Europe 44.5% and in Latin America 45% (Mazareanu, 2020). These figures confirm the importance of LCC across the globe in supporting backpackers during their travels.

The establishment of a global network of low-cost accommodations was also crucial to the development of the backpacker market. Campsites, low-cost hotels, couchsurfing and hostels are the most popular modes of accommodation among backpackers. Hostels are budget accommodation, characterised by the existence of several common areas for guests to socialise and the possibility of sharing rooms.

By August 2021, 9,924 hostels were registered on the well-known booking website hostelworld.com, spread across 2,321 cities (Hostelworld, 2019), which corresponded to 63.4% of the 15,643 hostels counted worldwide until October 2019 (Statista, 2021b). Of these, 5,829 (37.3%) were in Asian countries and 4,738 (30.3%) in Europe, the two largest international markets (Table 1.1).

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the global hostels market, consisting of sales of hostels and related services, is expected to grow from 4.37 billion USD in 2020 to $5.2 billion USD in 2021 and is expected to reach 5.99 billion in 2025 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4% (Reportlinker, 2021). These findings seem to demonstrate the great resilience of the youth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of Hostels</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>5,829</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>4,738</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>2,434</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>1,454</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15,643</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statista (2021b) (own construction).
market, and especially of backpackers, who apparently want to continue travelling despite the associated risks.

The WYSE Travel Confederation’s New Horizons Survey of youth and student travellers (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2019) revealed some very interesting data about backpackers and backpacker tourism trends in recent years. Among these are the decreasing proportion of young travellers identifying themselves as backpackers, the increasing proportion of backpackers over the age of 30 and the decreasing trip length. While estimated trips conducted by backpackers only decreased from 45 million to 44 million between 2002 and 2017, the same period saw a sharp reduction in travellers identifying themselves as backpackers, from 30% to 14%.

All this information deserves a more detailed analysis and raises a series of questions: will this trend of decrease in numbers of travellers who identify themselves with backpackers continue in the future? What are the reasons behind this decrease?

The main characteristics of backpackers and their evolution will be discussed in Chapter 2, but the fact that backpackers are no longer a homogeneous group of young travellers might help explain these changes. Today’s backpackers cannot only be seen in the image of their predecessors, the drifters of the 1960s and 1970s, often associated with deviant behaviour such as drug use and where drifting was a symptom and an expression of broader alienating forces as explained by E. Cohen (1973). For these reasons, many young people who travel backpacker style do not identify with the backpacker label.

The number and type of activities undertaken by backpackers in the destinations visited have also changed. Between 2002 and 2017, there was a big reduction in visits to clubs and nightclubs while activities like language learning, academic study and ‘living like a local’ increased (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2019). The ageing trend of backpackers may also explain the changes in the activities undertaken in the destinations visited: less nightlife fun and more intense and authentic cultural experiences. The most important factor is that the freedom and authenticity offered by backpacker-style travel continue to be attractive to many young people who wish to travel around the world and come into contact and explore culturally different societies at their own pace.

This short book focusses on the experiences of backpacker tourists through a complete and consistent synthesis of contemporary backpacking, discussing backpackers’ sociodemographic and travel characteristics, and also exploring potential future transformations. It covers the main topics discussed in the scientific literature with a fresh overview and a comprehensive synthesis that
will be ideal for all those, students, educators, practitioners or the general public who want to know more about backpacker tourists.

Grounded in an awareness that the global economic growth of the last 30 years has contributed to the increase of young people travelling around the world backpacker style, leading to a greater diversification of this segment and their experiences while travelling, this book explores the role and experiences of the backpackers over the past 50 years, their characteristics, subsegments, motivations, identity and behaviours.

The chapters are organised by different topics; however, it is important to highlight that all of them complement each other and are not intended to give a reductive, watertight and isolated view of each theme under analysis.

In addition to this introductory chapter, this book is structured in five other chapters that are intended to provide a synthesis and complementary analysis of the evolution of a specific group of travellers known as backpackers.

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to present and discuss some concepts related to backpacker tourism through a historical overview from the last 50 years in order to frame its evolution. As a heterogeneous phenomenon, prominence will be given to the concept of backpacker tourists and the various subsegments that have been identified in the literature with emphasis on the traveller–tourist debate.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to backpackers’ socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, education, country of origin, income, occupation) and to the analysis of the progressive institutionalisation of backpacker tourism, supported by the evolution of information and communication technologies (ICT) that has led to the creation of a global network of hostels and low-cost airlines. Also discussed will be the way in which backpackers plan and organise their travels and how this has changed over time, from traditional guidebooks and word of mouth (WoM) until the digital age of internet and electronic word of mouth (eWoM). Online travel agencies are among the most used by younger tourists (Fair & Cutting-Miller, 2014). Therefore, companies that provide services in the tourism sector will have to be aware of these trends, so it is pertinent to better understand the impact of these new technologies on travel planning and travel behaviour in destinations.

Chapter 4 explores backpackers’ diversity and heterogeneity. These travelers have been associated with a variety of motivations for travelling, and the diversification of the age and nationality/culture of origin, among others, has contributed to this diversification. Emphasis will be placed on the increasing number of Asian backpackers at a time when backpacking is becoming less a phenomenon that mostly comprises young Westerners.
In Chapter 5, emphasis will be given to backpackers’ identity, authenticity, behaviours and backpacker culture through an analysis of the main changes that occurred in a historic and geographic frame (space–time perspective) supported in the literature.

In the Conclusion (Chapter 6), in addition to drawing the main conclusions, a final discussion about future backpacking transformations will be provided, raising a number of important issues that may encourage further debate among academics, students and practitioners.

Fifty years after Cohen’s ‘drifters’, independent travel has become very popular across the globe and in a post-pandemic world, with a focus on economic recovery and the re-establishment of tourism activity. In the following pages, a fresh perspective will be presented on backpackers as one of the most relevant tourism research topics. Considering the economic and social relevance of backpacker tourism, its evolution in the globalised world and the fact that research in this segment is still at an early stage of development, it is hoped that this book as a whole will contribute to critical knowledge and understanding of backpacker tourists’ experiences today.
As mentioned in Chapter 1, backpacker tourism is a relatively recent form of tourism and has attracted the attention of several international researchers. Originally consisting of a small and marginal group of wandering travellers which E. Cohen (1972) called drifters, in recent decades, backpackers have become an important tourist segment (Adam, Agyeiwaah, & Dayour, 2021; Reichel, Fuchs, & Uriely, 2009), consisting predominantly of young travellers who plan and prepare their own trip and seek direct cultural contact, novelty, spontaneity and who sometimes have a greater propensity for risk.

The main objective of this chapter is to present a historical overview of backpacker tourism in recent decades, giving prominence to the concept of backpacker tourism and to the various subsegments that have been identified in the literature.

In this regard, in the next section, some central questions about backpacker tourism are reviewed, with a focus on original travellers rooted in countercultural ideas, and on the non-consensual subsegments and conflicting interpretations that have recently been identified in the literature. Who are these travellers referred to as backpackers? Are the current backpackers the same as those of the 1960s? What changes have occurred in recent decades?

Despite the current demographic dynamics of most Western countries being characterised by pronounced ageing of the population as a result of the continuous reduction in birth rates and increasing life expectancy, youth tourism has been growing and establishing itself as one of the most important tourist segments worldwide. This is demonstrated by the 336 million international youth trips recorded in recent years (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2021) before the terrible impact of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic.
Factors that have contributed to these results, among others, are the world economic growth that has contributed to an increase in disposable income, the dissemination of a set of technological innovations (Hannam & Diekmann, 2010), including smartphones and their applications, the increasing number of years of school education and the expansion of the middle class in many developing countries, particularly in Asia. Acting as true global nomads (Richards, 2015), the growing number of young people travelling with backpacks has been diversifying, making this phenomenon progressively more complex, as evidenced by their different motivations and behaviours, their psychographic characteristics and even some aspects related to their mobility.

This chapter is structured as follows: after presenting the origin and historical evolution of backpacker tourism, an approach is made to the main backpacker definitions presented in the literature, with a summary of the main distinctive characteristics of the various subsegments. Emphasis on the traveller-tourist debate will be provided. The problems of conceptualisation and the difficulties of operationalisation mentioned by some researchers are also discussed.

ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

From a historical perspective and according to the existing literature, backpacker tourism has been presented as originating in the Grand Tour of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Adler, 1985; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995) and/or in the drifter phenomenon described by E. Cohen (1972) when he referred to the existence of institutionalised and non-institutionalised tourists (Reichel et al., 2007) (Table 2.1).

For Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995), it is necessary to go back in history to explain the origin of backpacker tourism, which, according to these authors, dates back to the European Grand Tour of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where rich, educated, aristocratic young people, with purely educational intentions, would set off on adventure trips to distant countries to come into contact with the people there and experience unknown and exotic ways of life. Viewed as a form of cultural enrichment and improvement, and as contributing, for example, to increased sophistication and social awareness, young people sometimes adopted the way of life of their hosts.

While the Grand Tour was focussed on the elite of European aristocratic youth, at the end of the nineteenth century the youth belonging to the middle-class gave rise to tramping. Travelling more by necessity than by leisure, they departed in search of new work experiences. According to Adler (1985),
Concepts and Segments of Backpacker Tourists

however, their motivations were the same: a ritual of entry into adulthood, encouraging a break between young people and their family, and also offering the opportunity to explore and visit new places, learning about new cultures and have adventures.

The emergence of youth movements in the late nineteenth century also played an important role in the evolution of backpacker tourism. With the urban expansion and as a reaction to the living conditions in the industrial cities of the nineteenth century, the first youth movements started to emerge. Young adults from the most developed European countries started to discover and value contact with nature in rural areas and in 1844, the ‘Young Men’s Christian Association’ (YMCA) was founded in the United Kingdom, followed by the ‘Young Women’s Christian Association’ (YWCA), 11 years later, providing affordable accommodation and a set of cultural activities for young travellers (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995).

The concept of the ‘hostel’, which had not been employed since the sixteenth century, started to be reused. ‘Homeland and rambling’ clubs were also beginning to appear in German-speaking European countries, providing affordable accommodation and a range of services such as maps and walking guides. In 1909, the German teacher Richard Schirrmann persuaded his colleagues to allow his schools to be used as dormitories during their holiday periods and in 1910, the first youth hostel was founded. Shortly after, the German Youth Hostel Association (YHA) was established. Today, the organisation Hostelling International, with an online presence at www.hihostels.com, represents thousands of hostels in dozens of countries around the world. As in the past, the current International Youth Hostel Federation also continues to have social and constructive objectives, such as the promotion of education for the young of all nations, especially for those who are less economically privileged. This historical background helps us to understand that the impetus for travelling among young people is not really a recent phenomenon.

Table 2.1. Backpacker Tourism/Tourist Evolution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grand tour</td>
<td>Seventeenth to eighteenth centuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tramping</td>
<td>Eighteen to nineteenth centuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth movement</td>
<td>Nineteenth to twentieth centuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drifters</td>
<td>Twentieth century (1960s/1970s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanderers</td>
<td>Twentieth century (1970s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term budget travellers</td>
<td>Twentieth century (1980s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backpackers</td>
<td>Twentieth century (1990s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These movements and organisations have certainly contributed to the emergence of new types of accommodation focussed on a younger public, in which we can fit the current hostels that have given important support to the development of backpacker tourism.

All these influences, according to Adler (1985), have also played an important role in the way of travelling that E. Cohen (1972) distinguished between institutionalised and non-institutionalised forms of tourism. The former includes tourists travelling in organised mass tours and those who do not travel in large groups but plan their trip: the individual mass tourist. In both cases, risks are calculated to minimise contingencies and there is little involvement with the destination. The second includes the explorer and drifter tourists, characterised by not planning their trip in detail and being very involved with the communities they meet, and therefore exposed to more risky situations.

E. Cohen (1972) stated that non-institutionalised tourists, such as drifters, travelled for purely hedonistic reasons and were seen as hippies, whose anarchic behaviour, sometimes associated with drug use and begging, was connoted with the counterculture movement of the 1960s. They were therefore considered a social problem. In this context, it is important to remember that in the second half of the twentieth century, important political and cultural transformations took place at an international level, associated with the hippie movement. Culturally, this movement was a response to the traditional and conservative way of life, attacking the established social system, rejecting the consumer society and demanding an end to armed conflicts and greater equality of legal rights between men and women. By setting out on a long journey, young drifters were not only seeking to find a way to themselves by escaping their home society and seeking more intensive, ‘experiential’ or ‘existential’ types of experiences (E. Cohen, 2004) in more exotic places. This search for a hedonistic and anarchic experience (E. Cohen, 1972) was probably related to changes being brought about in their own society.

Vogt’s (1976) contribution opened the door to exploring the internal dynamics of backpacker culture and consumer psychology, classifying these non-institutionalised tourists as wanderers. He describes them as travellers seeking autonomy, independence and therefore motivated by the need they feel to invest in their personal growth, self-knowledge and knowledge of other people and cultures. The conceptual framework was presented by E. Cohen (1972) and Vogt (1976), and according to Ateljevic and Doorne (2004), it was fundamental to support further research and theoretical trajectories on backpacker tourism.
In the late 1980s, a rupture with Cohen’s drifters took place, and for the first time, the concept of ‘long-term budget travellers’ appeared to designate tourists who, despite having characteristics of both, were neither drifters nor explorers (Riley, 1988). Described as young travellers who travelled for a year or more, they also had similarities with the young travellers of the nineteenth century: they travelled for hedonistic reasons and personal development/growth, to experience feelings of freedom, to seek adventure in exotic places and to satisfy their curiosity about other countries and cultures (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995).

While the main European capitals were the exotic places to those who practised the Grand Tour, the countries of South and Southeast Asia became the main destinations for drifters from the 1960s onwards. In the 1960s and 1970s, various European countries were already the destination for many young people who travelled for fairly prolonged periods but the more adventurous sought out Morocco, some Middle Eastern countries or the famous hippie trail also known as The Road to Kathmandu. This ‘... route headed down through eastern Europe, via Greece into Turkey. From there it headed across the Middle East via Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, ending in India or Nepal’ (M. P. Hampton, 2013, p. 9). Interrupted by the geopolitical context of the 1970s – the end of the Vietnam War, the economic crisis resulting from the OPEC countries’ oil shock, the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the war in Afghanistan with the invasion by the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) – this route was gradually replaced by cheaper air travel due to the progressive liberalisation of this means. Meanwhile, other destinations in Asia and Australia became very popular.

Since then, these backpack travellers have been distancing themselves from the ‘hippy’ notion and the term ‘long-term budget travellers’ appeared for the first time in Riley’s work (1988). She classifies this type of tourists as educated, belonging to the European middle class, single, travelling alone and worried about their limited budget, distancing themselves from the drifters and explorers, although they still have characteristics of both (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995). More recently, the most used term to designate this segment of tourists became ‘backpackers’, described as tourists who travel with backpacks on their backs, with a limited daily budget (M. Hampton & Hamzah, 2010), predominantly young and with a preference for a budget accommodation and informal and flexible itineraries (P. L. Pearce, 1990).

Although the introduction of the term backpacker in the scientific literature is usually attributed to P. L. Pearce (1990) in his seminal work ‘The Backpacker Phenomenon’,
Backpacker has become a generic term and seems to have originated during the 1980s in North Queensland. It appears to have been used for the first time when a hostel known as the Backpackers Inn at 255 Lake Street, Cairns was opened in 1983. (McCulloch, 1991, p. 10)

THE DIVERSE BACKPACKER SEGMENTS

Described as a complex and multifaceted form of tourism (Sørensen, 2003), there has been an evident lack of consensus among researchers on the current concept of backpackers (Ooi & Laing, 2010), a segment characterised by their deep awareness of controlling their costs and a tendency to travel longer distances, favouring authenticity and contact with the locals (Maoz, 2006; Scheyvens, 2002). In the course of time, following its historical evolution, several terms have emerged to designate these travellers. In addition to the drifters and nomads already mentioned by E. Cohen (1972) and wanderers by Vogt (1976) that the French literature calls deviants, there are also the youthful travellers (Teas, 1974), the escapers (C.I. Ho, Lin, & Huang, 2012), the hitchhikers (Mukerji, 1978) or the tramping youth by Adler (1985). In China, these travellers are known as ‘donkey friends’ (H. Chen & Weiler, 2014) and in Brazil they are known as ‘duristas’ and ‘farofeiros’ (Wunder, 2000) as a reflection of their limited travel budget. After the ‘long-term budget travellers’ presented by Riley (1988), the expression that is now frequently used, as we saw earlier, is backpackers.

McCulloch (1991, p. 3) defines a backpacker ‘as a traveller who stays in budget accommodation, has a flexible travel itinerary and is predominantly from the 20–35 age group’. Hilary Bradt (1995) who writes guides for backpackers, emphasises other characteristics, describing an experienced independent traveller as

*Get by for £10 a day, use local transport, carry all your belongings on your back, bargain successfully for all goods and services, be constantly on guard against theft and annoyance, stay away from crowds and find new places.*

P. L. Pearce (1990) describes them based on five main characteristics that distinguish them from other travellers: a preference for budget accommodation, independent travel with a flexible itinerary, an extended holiday period, emphasis on meeting people and taking part in informal activities. According to P. L. Pearce (1990) and McCulloch (1991), the criterion ‘preference for budget
accommodation’ is basic and essential in defining a backpacker. This market label perspective has dominated a large amount of research on backpackers, particularly in countries where its economic relevance has been recognised. The following characteristics of backpackers can be found in the literature:

- independent tourists who organise their own multi-destination trip with a flexible itinerary (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Paris, 2010a; Uriely et al., 2002);
- travelling for the longest time possible (Paris, 2010a);
- predominantly young (P. L. Pearce, 1990) between the ages of 18 and 35, and with an academic qualification at least equivalent or higher to the average in their country of origin (P. L. Pearce & Foster, 2007; Sørensen, 2003);
- a limited budget (M. Hampton & Hamzah, 2010; Paris, 2010a);
- preference for low-cost accommodation, such as hostels (Nash, Thyne, & Davies, 2006; P. L. Pearce, 1990);
- travelling alone or in small groups (M. Hampton, 1998);
- a low degree of planning and no fixed schedules (Nash et al., 2006);
- they like to interact with local populations (Paris, 2010a; P. L. Pearce, 1990; Nash et al., 2006);
- a propensity to participate in leisure activities involving risk and adventure (Paris, 2010a; Nash et al., 2006; Reichel et al., 2007).

As McCulloch (1991) points out, Pearce states that being a backpacker is an approach to travel and holiday taking, highlighting that backpacking is best defined socially rather than economically or demographically. In the same line of thought, Sørensen (2003) mentions that the term backpacker is more a social construct than a definition and taking into account the current diversity of this segment, particularly the length of travel time, the ability to represent all backpackers according to Riley’s proposal (1988) raises some doubts. Sørensen (2003) proposes the term ‘short-term backpacker’ to designate backpacker-style travellers with a time budget limited to the available holiday period. This follows the concept of ‘flashpacker’, introduced and analysed in the scientific literature by Butler and Hannam (2014), Hannam and Diekmann (2010) and Paris (2012) to designate backpacker tourists, usually older and travelling with a backpack on their back, more by choice than for economic reasons (Paris, 2012). Table 2.2 provides an overview of all these concepts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Backpacker Subsegments</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backpackers</td>
<td>‘Backpackers will be considered to be those travellers who: use budget accommodation, are involved in longer rather than very brief holidays, are predominantly under 40 years of age, have flexibility in their itineraries, and show a willingness to be involved in social and participatory holiday activities’</td>
<td>P. Pearce, Murphy, and Brymer (2009, p. 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term budget travellers</td>
<td>‘Such travelers are likely to be middle-class, at a juncture in life, somewhat older than the earlier travelers on average, college educated, and not aimless drifters. They travel under flexible timetables and itineraries. Most expect to rejoin the work force in the society they left’</td>
<td>Riley (1988, p. 326)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term backpacker</td>
<td>‘... individuals who travel backpacker-like, but within the time limits of cyclical holiday patterns. They behave as ordinary backpackers: they interact socially with other backpackers, stay at the same places and travel along the same trails, even though they naturally cover less ground during a trip’</td>
<td>Sørensen (2003, p. 861)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday backpacker</td>
<td>‘Short-term backpacker on paid holidays. Older, repeat visitation. Strong recent growth. Have $$ to spend’</td>
<td>Tourism Victoria (2009, p. 28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flashpacker</td>
<td>‘... the older twenty to thirty-something backpacker, who travels with an expensive backpack or a 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’</td>
<td>Hannan and Diekmann (2010a, p. 2)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Due to their greater financial affordability, flashpackers travel with the latest technologies, such as personal computer, tablet, smartphone or flash drive (Hannam & Diekmann, 2010) and for shorter periods of time, selecting higher-quality accommodation. They have the opportunity to undertake new experiences, travelling through lesser-known routes, and are not restricted to the use of public transport (Butler & Hannam, 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept/Segment</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Career breaker                   | ‘... flashpackers’ as older travellers on career breaks who ‘can afford to splash out on some of life’s luxuries when the going on the road gets tough’  
‘Career breaker (Flashpacker,) break from established career (financial resources), 26–25 y. olds, social, quality accommodation, can use WHM visa (under 31), Boutique hotels, 5 star’ | The Future Laboratory (2004, p. 13) cited by Hannan and Diekmann (2010b, p. 2)                   |
| Gap year backpacker              | ‘Gap between school and university. 18–19 y. olds’  
They can be ‘party backpackers or volunteers’                                                                 | Tourism Victoria (2009, p. 28)                                                                   |
| Green nomad                      | ‘Connected to environmental projects, community service activities and special events. Emerging as a group of interest in the locations but not yet a well-established phenomenon with the exception of volunteers on organic farms but this group is more like a temporary worker’ | Moscardo et al. (2013, p. 540)                                                                  |
| University gap traveller         | Travel at ‘end of year and end of course. 20–24 y. olds’                                                                                                                                                  | Tourism Victoria (2009, p. 28)                                                                   |
| Study backpacker                 | ‘Study in Australian university and backpack in the breaks’                                                                                                                                              | Tourism Victoria (2009, p. 28)                                                                   |
| Grey nomads                      | ‘Over 55 mature traveller, Self-drive popular, boutique hotels’                                                                                                                                            | Tourism Victoria (2009, p. 28)                                                                   |
| Global nomads                    | ‘The “global nomads” described by Kannisto (2014, p. 2) are location independent travellers who stay away from ‘home’ for long periods of time, and who generally reject the ideology of settled society’ | Richards (2015, p. 344)                                                                          |
As previously noted, one of the main characteristics that has been associated with flashpackers is the use of new technologies, but more than a decade after the first studies on this subsegment, there has been a generalisation in the use of smartphones, laptops and tablets. Today, the vast majority of young people carry one or more communication devices with them, so it is no longer a distinctive feature associated specifically with flashpackers.

Some flashpackers are called career breakers (Tourism Victoria, 2009) because they are looking for better quality accommodation, take a break from their professional career or practise working holiday making (WHM Visa). Allon, Anderson, and Bushell (2008) emphasise the need for backpackers to be recognised not only as consumers of services but also as labour suppliers in various economic activities, as occurs in Australia or New Zealand. As described by Martins and Costa (2017), aware of the economic advantages of the backpacker segment, Tourism Victoria (2009) Australia, also recognises the existence of various subsegments such as the holiday backpacker, comprising tourists who are older than the regular backpackers and who enjoy short periods of holidays, sometimes repeated and have more financial resources at their disposal (Table 2.2); the gap-year backpacker, aged 18-19 years old, on a gap year between the end of high school and the beginning of university, in which party backpackers and voluntourists are included. Associated with voluntourism are the green nomads, who are characterised by the use of discretionary time and income to volunteer away from home (Moscardo et al., 2013).

There is also the university gap traveller, described as being aged 20–24 and taking a break from university studies or celebrating the end of higher education; the study backpacker (Allon et al., 2008), which includes Australian university students who travel during academic breaks and the grey nomad, which includes tourists aged 55+ who enjoy driving their motorhome or other vehicles and frequenting everything from campsites to boutique style hotels.

Greg Richards (2015) reviews the main trends in youth tourism research over the last 40 years with the purpose of tracing the origins of ideas linked to nomadism among young people and their nomadic styles of travel. Using the data collected in ‘The New Horizons Research Programme’ initially developed by the research group on backpackers ‘ATLAS BRG 2014’ and the ‘World Youth Student Educational Travel Confederation’ (WYSE), he identified the existence of three types of nomadism among young people travelling today, considering them as the main and current trends: backpackers, flashpackers and global nomads.

The former are defined by Richards (2015, p. 344) as ‘tribal nomads’, employing the concept of Noy (2004), describing them as gathered in specific enclaves to share storeys that form the shared culture of the tribe; flashpackers
due to the use of new communication devices can be related to the digital nomads; and the global nomads are described as independent travellers who stay away from home for long periods of time and are able to travel for three or more years through several countries. In general, they reject the ideology of the sedentary society, which, as defined by Kannisto (2014), tries to impose limitations on the movements of these long-term travellers, by means of visa regulations, for example.

Although this distinction is exclusively based on younger travellers’ mobility characteristics, according to Richards (2015) the data collected in ‘The New Horizons Research Programme’ allowed to differentiate them according to certain features regarding their profile and behaviours:

- **Backpackers** – average age of 25 years old; have a tendency to travel longer, with the last trip lasting on average 77 days; have made an average of five long international trips in the last five years; 23% use hotels.

- **Flashpackers** – average age of 26 years; have higher incomes and are less likely to be unemployed; they travel an average of 62 days; having made an average of four long international trips in the last five years; 47% use hotels.

- **Global nomads** – average age of 28 years; higher unemployment rate (15%); they travel an average of 70 days; they have made an average of seven long international trips in the last five years and are more likely to use peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation websites such as www.couchsurfing.com; 58% prefer to travel off the beaten track, although 33% continue to visit big cities.

If the contributions of Uriely et al. (2002) regarding the form-related and type-related attributes associated with backpackers are considered, it can easily be seen that all the identified segments or subsegments are distinguished on the basis of form attributes, that is, the organisation of the trip, the arrangements and practices, such as the choice of budget accommodation, the duration of the trip or the flexibility of the itinerary. Type-related attributes, such as attitudes towards the core values of their own society, travel motivations, and the meanings they attach to their experiences, are less present. The exception is the global nomad ‘who generally rejects the ideology of established society’ (Richards, 2015, p. 344). On the one hand, this fact reveals the distancing of backpackers from Cohen’s drifters and on the other hand, the predominance of the market label perspective that has been associated with backpackers.

Most of the subsegments identified and described above also reflect the lack of consensus regarding a universal definition of the term backpacker and the existence of a certain ambiguity which is not unfamiliar to the
‘definitional concerns in tourism based around markets and the provision for those markets’ (P. Pearce et al., 2009). For these authors, the emergence of these subdivisions is also related to ‘some academic pressure to subdivide the overall backpacker market since this permits researchers to focus on specific sub-groups and to write about smaller, lesser studied groups’ (p. 9).

Therefore, it will be pertinent to reflect now on who are the backpackers in the twenty-first century. Are today’s backpackers the same as in the 1960s or 1970s?

In view of what has been said throughout this chapter, the only possible answer is no. The young people who currently travel in the backpacker style don’t come exclusively from Western industrialised countries and most of them do not travel as a form of rebellion and contestation to the fundamental values of their own society or as an escape from the way of life in their countries of origin. The international geopolitical and social context is also quite different, as are the motivations for travelling and the respective meanings they assign to their experiences.

In the article ‘Nomads from Affluence: Notes on the Phenomenon of Drifter Tourism’ published in 1973, drifters are analysed and described as more adventurous travellers who distance themselves not only from the usual tourist flows but also from the way of life in their home country. But, as can be seen, a number of reinterpretations have emerged whereby the backpacker label has become unrooted (O’Regan, 2021). If we take into consideration E. Cohen’s (1972, p. 168) definition of the drifter:

This type of tourist [drifter] ventures furthest away from the beaten track and from the accustomed ways of life of his home country. He shuns any kind of connection with the tourist establishment, and considers the ordinary tourist experience phony. He tends to make it wholly on his own, living with the people and often taking odd-jobs to keep himself going. He tries to live the way the people he visits live, and to share their shelter, foods and habits, keeping only the most basic and essential of his old customs. The drifter has no fixed itinerary or timetable and no well-defined goals of travel. Novelty is here at its highest, familiarity disappears almost completely

It will be difficult to find a drifter in the immensity of tourists that annually travel around the world, but not impossible. Certainly, there will still be some travellers who identify with the drifters’ and long-term budget travellers’ style of travelling, spending their time staying with local people and travelling off the beaten track. But they will be a minority among all the subgroups present in Table 2.2.
However, despite their heterogeneity and complexity, there is space for everyone. Traditional backpackers, as defined by P. L. Pearce (1990) and rooted in Cohen’s drifters, share a set of characteristics regardless of ethnicity, language or origin, as argued by O’Regan (2021). Consequently, what differentiating characteristics distinguish them from other young tourists? The answer to this question is more difficult and complex.

All the subsegments identified share among themselves not only some motivations but mainly the form-related attributes mentioned above. According to Pearce’s (1990) definition, the use of budget accommodation such as hostels is not an exclusive choice of backpackers, and there is also a tendency to travel often during the year for short periods of time instead of one long trip. The flexibility in their itineraries and the willingness to be involved in social and participatory holiday activities seem to be the most relevant distinctive characteristics. There is also the backpack, which is in the etymological origin of the term backpacker and continues to be a differentiating element that allows backpackers to be identified in a crowd of tourists. It has been observed that many backpackers who make shorter trips bring with them a small suitcase with the specific dimensions to be transported without additional costs by low-cost airlines. It is, therefore, more difficult nowadays to distinguish a backpacker from any other young traveller.

As we had the opportunity to mention in the previous chapter, in 2017 backpackers were responsible for making 44 million trips (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2019), a value slightly lower than the one registered in 2002. This decrease may be related not to the decline in young travellers, but to the decrease in young travellers that associate themselves with the backpacker label. And as the number of young people travelling around the world increases, it becomes more and more difficult to fit them all in one or more of the categories already mentioned. Furthermore, the recognition of backpacker tourism in terms of its economic, social and environmental impacts, which will be analysed later in Chapter 3, has aroused the interest of more researchers who have brought new perspectives of analysis regarding conceptualisation.

Another interesting aspect worth mentioning is the fact that many young people who travel with backpacks and choose hostels as accommodation do not want to be identified or associated with backpackers. Besides wanting to move away from a distorted and/or outdated image associated with the precursors of backpackers and identity issues that will be explored in Chapter 5, there are several researchers who have alluded to this situation, which is why the self-identification criterion has been used to identify young travellers travelling backpacking style (e.g. Agyeiwaah et al., 2020; Iaquinto & Pratt, 2020).
HOW TO IDENTIFY AND OPERATIONALISE BACKPACKERS?

Given this diversity of typologies, some researchers highlight the lack of consensus and the existence of inconsistencies due to the lack of uniform criteria for the operationalisation of the term backpacker (Dayour, Kimbu, & Park, 2017). This leads to incorrect identification of backpackers in some research, and therefore some studies published on backpackers may not actually be about them. Another problem is related to the collection of statistical data since the lack of uniform criteria hinders a correct comparison of the phenomenon between countries.

This is one of the most revealing features of the progressive complexity of the backpacker phenomenon, the contemporary perspective of which deserves reflection. The diversity of characteristics associated with backpackers results in a wide variety of criteria for their operationalisation, reflecting in part the progressive diversity and heterogeneity of this market segment. Dayour et al. (2017, p. 2) review the main criteria used by different researchers in the operationalisation of the term, highlighting age, motivations, characteristics of the trip, membership of virtual communities, frequency of enclaves, self-recognition as a backpacker and also the economic criterion. While some authors use, for example, age or motivations to travel as distinctive criteria (P. L. Pearce, 1990; P. L. Pearce & Foster, 2007; Sørensen 2003), others select the trip characteristics, such as the type of accommodation or the duration of the trip (Adam et al., 2021; Hunter-Jones, Jeffs, & Denis, 2008; P. L. Pearce, 1990), belonging to a virtual community (Paris, 2012), staying in enclaves (Howard, 2007), self-recognition as backpackers (Adam, 2015; Reichel et al., 2007) or an economic criterion (O’Reilly, 2006). Tourism Research Australia (2009) tries to overcome this important constraint by collecting statistical information on backpacker tourists, identifying them as individuals ‘who spend one or more nights in backpacker or hostel accommodation (p. 1)’.

Based on the literature review, some of the main characteristics of backpackers identified and used by various researchers will be presented and further discussed in Chapter 3.

The most commonly used criteria are accommodation, identifying all hostel guests as backpackers (e.g., Brochado, Rita, & Gameiro, 2015; Chiang, 2018; Hecht & Martin, 2006; Iaquinto, 2016) and also the combination of several criteria (e.g., Adam & Adongo, 2016; Iaquinto, 2018; Thieme, Hampton, Stoian, & Zigan, 2021; Zhang et al., 2018). However, dozens of published articles on backpackers do not reveal how these travellers were identified and classified as backpackers by the researchers.

If at the academic level there is a lack of consensus, the same situation is observed among backpackers. As we will see later, there are those who,
Concepts and Segments of Backpacker Tourists

Despite travelling in the backpacker style, do not want to be identified as such and prefer the label of the independent traveller. Let us now take a closer look at some of the main criteria.

Age is the main sociodemographic characteristic that has been used with different weights and measures. If life expectancy and consequent ageing of the population are increasing, the establishment of an age limit up to which a traveller can be classified as a backpacker needs reflection. P. L. Pearce's (1990) definition of backpackers does not mention a specific age but defines the term 'predominantly young'. P. L. Pearce et al. (2009) refer to the limit of 40 years old and Hunter-Jones et al. (2008) use the criterion between 15 and 24 years old.

But will excluding all travellers aged over 40 not contribute to a partial and incomplete analysis of backpacker tourism, mainly in an ageing society?

Although useful in distinguishing some subsegments, age as an isolated criterion does not seem to be the most appropriate in operationalising the backpacker segment. Despite the fact that most travellers in this segment are predominantly young, there is no age limit for travelling backpacker style. G. Chen et al. (2020) found several travellers aged 65 and over in their research!

Regarding the travel characteristics, several options were found in the literature, from ‘independent tourists who organise their own multi-destination travel with a flexible itinerary’ (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Ooi & Laing, 2010), to ‘travel with a backpack’ (G. Chen et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2018) or ‘travel for leisure’ (Adam, 2015).

There is also the duration of the stay or the trip that does not facilitate the operationalisation of the term backpacker. Sørensen (2003) had already mentioned that the duration of the trip contributes to disqualifying most current backpackers due to the recent tendency to travel for shorter periods. Shorter trips (up to one week) can be a criterion used to identify the subsegments: short-term backpackers, flashpackers, party backpackers and study backpackers.

Hostels are inexpensive types of accommodation sought by travellers with smaller travel budgets. At hostels, guests have the possibility of reserving a bed and sharing several common areas such as living rooms, a kitchen, the bar and having better opportunities to socialise (Oliveira-Brochado & Gameiro, 2013). Many researchers have used hostels as the main criterion for identifying backpackers. But as they are more economical types of accommodation, as with the recent capsule hotels (Chiang, 2018), they attract various types of customers, not only backpackers.

At enclaves, backpackers experience the comfort of home and the company of tourists with similar interests. Predominantly frequented by backpackers, these territories facilitate interaction with other travellers from different backgrounds, contributing to the creation of a sense of togetherness or group.
However, they are not very effective in terms of operationalising the backpacker concept, since their use would lead to the exclusion of all backpackers staying in hostels located outside the enclaves. While the vast majority of enclaves are frequented by backpackers, it is also true that many backpackers do not frequent enclaves exclusively.

Self-recognition or self-identification as a backpacker is another criterion used to identify and operationalise the backpacker concept. The proportion of travellers who recognise themselves as backpackers changes with the country of origin and those who have more experience travelling are more likely to consider themselves as backpackers or travellers. As they are more individualistic and more independent, it seems clear that the term backpacker is much more than a category of tourists, but also a social identity with its unique culture and values.

The use of the backpack as a distinctive criterion in identifying current backpackers raises many doubts. The choice of luggage has been used in some studies (G. Chen, Bao, & Huang, 2014; Zhang, Morrison, Tucker, & Wu, 2018) but while most travellers travelling with a backpack on their back can be considered backpackers, there are others that choose a smaller, stiffer suitcase to carry their belongings on shorter trips such as the short-term backpackers. Increasing limitations on luggage weights imposed by low-cost airlines have led to significant changes in the types of luggage used. Although the concept of backpacker is etymologically linked to the use of a backpack, nowadays, the complex backpacker phenomenon can include travellers without a backpack.

Another central aspect of backpacker tourism that has been identified as an important distinguishing feature is the economic criterion. Besides being a motivation for backpacking, the existence of a limited daily budget allows people to travel for longer periods of time leading to the choice of a cheaper means of transport and accommodation and more competitively priced tourist destinations. However, the criteria linked to the daily budget are also not very objective, as they are very dependent on the cost of living of the cities and countries visited. Additionally, there are subsegments with greater purchasing power, such as flashpackers and holiday backpackers, usually aged over 35, who seek more comfort and privacy, preferring hostels with single, double or other more expensive types of accommodation. A higher budget also leads to the choice of a private means of transport, such as rented cars and participation in more exclusive activities. However, the main difficulty of operationalisation lies in the fact that there is no criterion of a universal quantitative nature that can be used to distinguish the different subsegments.

Finally, the motivations to travel can be described as a broad concept, which encompasses biological, psychological and social factors that activate, guide
and maintain behaviour in different degrees of intensity. The existence of a large, diverse set of motivations, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, reflects the complexity and heterogeneity of this market segment in line with the work of C. Y. Hsu, Lee, and Chen (2017) and Oliveira-Brochado and Gameiro (2013), who state that there is an emerging diversity and growing heterogeneity in the preferences of backpackers. As Loker-Murphy (1997) emphasises, backpackers do not travel only to meet other people and to have a good time. Today, many backpackers share the same motivations of mainstream tourists, so the use of motivations as a distinguishing criterion is not the most appropriate and makes its operationalisation almost impossible. However, if we consider the existence of several subsegments of backpackers, some motivations could be used in order to identify different travel profiles, facilitating tourism marketing and the operationalisation of the various subsegments.

BACKPACKERS, TOURISTS, TRAVELLERS OR INDEPENDENT TRAVELLERS?

All readers who are used to some technical terms of tourist activity know that

Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited. (UNWTO, 2007, p. 363)

Backpackers, as individuals who travel to and stay in places outside their usual environment, are part of this.

Therefore, some more technical details may still be mentioned, which instead of clarifying the matter, contribute to further confusion, and therefore deserve some reflection. One of the characteristics of the trips undertaken by backpackers is their long duration. Some backpackers travelled and continue to travel and are away from their usual environment for periods of longer than one year. However, the previous definition refers to ‘for not more than one consecutive year’. Therefore, should those who travel for consecutive periods of time exceeding one year be excluded from the scope of tourism?

But the expression ‘other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited’ is also problematic for many backpackers, particularly those who, travelling for longer periods, end up working for short periods of time in the places which they visit to earn some money to enable them to continue their trip. In Australia, for example, many young
people arrive with a visa to work temporarily in the agricultural harvests and then they take the opportunity to travel around the vast Australian territory.

Other relevant topics are related to the following findings: the existence of backpackers who do not identify as tourists and the fact that there are independent travellers who, despite sharing all the characteristics that the literature associates with backpackers, reject the backpacker label.

Backpackers usually refuse the tourist label and everything that is assumed to be typically ‘touristy’ (Richards & Wilson, 2004a) because it represents precisely what they clearly reject. Backpackers have a preference for budget accommodation, extended holidays and a flexible and informal travel itinerary, whereas tourists do not. Backpackers place an emphasis on meeting other travellers and local people, participating in a range of activities, whereas tourists do not. Backpackers travel off the beaten track with a limited daily budget escaping from the stress of crowded places, whereas tourists do not. Therefore, backpackers act, or try to act, like “anti-tourists” carrying the notion that they have an “inborn” travelling expertise that lifts them above mainstream tourists’ (Welk, 2004, p. 83). Tourists are viewed as seeking minimal uncertainty, comfortable accommodation, westernised meals (Riley, 1988) and backpackers are the opposite.

But are not backpackers also tourists?

According to the UNWTO, backpackers are also considered as tourists, because ‘a visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor), if his/her trip includes an overnight stay’ (UNWTO, 2008, p. 99). And as stated by the same organisation, they are also travellers: ‘a traveller is someone who moves between different geographic locations, for any purpose and any duration’ (UNWTO, 2008, p. 99).

Therefore, taking into consideration the UNWTO (2008) definition of a tourist, when travelling outside their usual area of residence and staying at least an overnight stay, backpackers are, in technical terms, classified as tourists. So, even if they don’t perceive themselves as tourists, they are tourists.

Another important and curious issue is the fact that many independent travellers, while sharing all the characteristics that the literature associates with backpackers, reject the backpacker label. It is the negative connotations associated with tourists that put backpackers off this designation, and they prefer to call themselves ‘travellers’ as referred to by Muzaini (2006), Richards and Wilson (2004a) or Zhang et al. (2017). In many studies, researchers are faced with this contradiction. When answering questionnaires or being interviewed, there are many examples of young travellers who do not identify with the backpacker label (e.g., Riley, 1988; Richards & Wilson, 2004a), preferring to use the term ‘traveller’.
The last decades have seen a large increase in the number of young people travelling backpacker style and a progressive institutionalisation of backpacker activity shifting from a marginal to mainstream phenomenon (O’Reilly, 2006). But even if the drifter remains the model for their successors, as E. Cohen (2004, p. 46) states, ‘few backpackers seek to realise it in practice, or show a great concern for profoundly ‘authentic’ experiences of sites, events or people on their trip’. While backpacking becomes more mainstream, purist travellers start to look for an alternative, preferring to use the term ‘traveler’ instead of the label of ‘backpacker’ to describe themselves (Richards & Wilson, 2004a). It is important to note that the membership of one community means the exclusion from the other; therefore, even with the number of young travellers increasing, the proportion of young travellers identifying as backpackers continues to decline (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2019), as they prefer the label of independent traveller (Welk, 2004). This is in line with a recent study on Chinese backpackers, where Zhang et al. (2018, p. 531) found that 105 respondents identified themselves as backpackers, while 205 (66%) respondents denied the backpacker identity. If backpackers reject the conventional tourist label, it is also true that there is an increasingly negative reaction from travellers and tourists against backpackers – a form of ‘backpacker angst’ (Richards & Wilson, 2004a, p. 35).

These facts, as illustrated in this chapter, reflect the growing heterogeneity of backpacker tourism. Over the years, this has included travellers who do not share the same social identity in accordance with the results obtained by Adam et al. (2021, p. 151), who state ‘that this segment is made up of different subsegments with varying identities that possess unique travel motivations and sustainable behavioural traits’. But does it make sense to label all travellers who share characteristics commonly associated with backpackers as backpackers, despite the fact that they do not identify as such? Is it not necessary for all individuals to be aligned ‘with a set of global practices, regulating principles and schemes of perception, thought and action that link them spatially or temporally with others in pursuit of a common cause’ as argued by O’Regan (2021, p. 5)? This will be a discussion for Chapter 5.

In the following chapter, the emphasis will be on backpackers’ socio-demographic characteristics, the impact of the evolution of information and communication technologies (ICT) and their institutionalisation.
In the previous chapter, the main difficulties observed in the conceptualisation and operationalisation of the backpacker tourism concept were explained and discussed. One of the main difficulties is related to substantial heterogeneity and diversified subsegments and their sociodemographic characteristics.

This chapter has two main objectives: (1) to characterise backpacker tourists in terms of their sociodemographic characteristics, and the planning and organisation of their travels, and (2) to discuss the progressive institutionalisation of backpacker tourism, presenting the evolution of information and communication technologies (ICT), and how transformations in supply, accommodation and transport impacted the backpacker experience.

The development of transport and ICT have had a remarkable impact on backpacker tourism and are responsible for the (hyper)mobility of backpackers, expressed not only in the trips made but also in the frequent contact with friends and relatives and other backpackers while travelling. However, the role of the internet and its influence is still an under-explored topic in studies on backpackers, although several researchers state that younger people often use new technologies not only in preparation but also during their trips (H. Chen & Weiler, 2014; Lu & Chen, 2014; F. L. F. Luo & Li, 2009; M. R. Martins, Costa, & Moreira, 2022; Mohsin & Ryan, 2003).

Backpackers are known for their will to get to know and discover new places and are considered precursors in the tourism development of several destinations worldwide. Information regarding routes, transportation and accommodation, among others, is shared among backpackers; and therefore,
restaurants, cafes, hostels and other tourist services start to appear. As a result, destinations become known all over the world.

This chapter is structured as follows: The first section is dedicated to backpackers’ sociodemographic characteristics (age, income, academic qualifications). In section ‘Travel Planning and Organisation’, the way backpackers plan and organise their travels will be discussed as well as how it has changed over time from traditional guidebooks to the word of mouth (WoM) and electronic WoM (eWoM). Section ‘ICT: The Impact on Backpackers’ will present the evolution of information and communication technologies and their importance to backpackers; and finally, section ‘Transformations in Supply and the Impact on Backpackers’ Experience’ will be dedicated to how transformations in supply, accommodation and transport have impacted the backpacker experience.

BACKPACKERS’ SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education and country of origin, among others, are variables that have been frequently used in various studies on tourist behaviour patterns (Caldeira, 2014; Le-Klähn, Roosen, Gerike, & Hall, 2015; Martins & Costa, 2021b). There is still no consensus on gender differences regarding behaviour patterns and the decision-making process. Differences regarding route selection had already been confirmed by Xia et al. (2009) and Xia et al. (2010). According to Xia et al. (2009), there are gender differences in relation to the strategies used in route selection. Male tourists use different reference points, such as vegetation types or trail markings, and are more likely to select more scenic routes than female tourists. Chang (2012), in a study conducted in Venice, found some differences, concluding that women showed a higher level of anxiety and gave higher preference to a routeing strategy, in terms of orientation.

The sociodemographic characteristics are mainly related to age, which has been used by several researchers with different weights and measures in several studies (Caldeira, 2014; Xia et al., 2010; Zakrisson & Zillinger, 2012). The increase in average life expectancy and consequent ageing of the population, especially in more developed countries, calls into question the establishment of an age limit up to which a traveller can be classified as a backpacker.

Although useful in distinguishing some backpacker subsegments, age does not seem to be the most appropriate in operationalising the backpacker segment. As the majority of backpackers are predominantly young, there is no defined age range for travelling backpacker-style, and excluding travellers aged over
40 may contribute to a partial and incomplete analysis of backpacker tourism. Table 3.1 presents different categorisations of backpackers’ considering age.

Loker (1990), cited by Dayour et al. (2017), considers backpackers to be those aged between 18 and 30 years old, while Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) consider the range between 15 and 29 years old; Sørensen (2003) states that most are between 18 and 33 years old; P. L. Pearce and Foster (2007) classify backpackers as those aged between 18 and 35 years old and Hunter-Jones et al. (2008) when describing the growth of the backpacker market refer to travellers aged between 15 and 24 years old. In Australia, P. Pearce et al. (2009) consider backpackers as those under 40 years old, and in a more recent study in which a questionnaire was applied to Chinese backpackers, G. Chen et al. (2020) collected information from backpackers older than 65 years of age.

Therefore, although most backpackers are predominantly young (18–35 years old), the existing literature, as presented in the previous chapter, characterises the flashpacker, holiday backpacker and global nomad subsegments as typically over 35 years old. The youngest subsegments (18–19 years) correspond to gap year backpackers and party backpackers (Tourism Victoria, 2009). University gap travellers are typically aged between the ages of 20 and 24 (Tourism Victoria, 2009).

In Table 3.1, it can be seen that over time, some researchers conducting studies in different parts of the world have identified backpackers aged over 35 years old, which reflects the ageing of backpackers. While P. L. Pearce (1990) described backpackers as predominantly young, 7 years later, in Loker-Murphy’s (1997) research, the average age was 25, with 90% of participants aged 30 and under. G. Chen et al. (2020) found that about 9% and 13% of participants in their first and second study, respectively, were over 36 years old, in line with Agyeiwaah et al. (2020) and Adam et al.’s (2021) researches, where about 11% of respondents in both studies were 35 or more years old. Although it is still predominantly a phenomenon of young travellers, backpacker tourism attracts more and more adults of older age and most probably travellers with some backpacking experience.

Regarding gender, the main studies published on backpacker tourists reveal that the participation of men and women is very similar. Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995, p. 832) mention that

the comparison between backpackers and other visitors indicates that the gender breakdown is likely to be somewhat more homogeneous for backpackers (52% male, 48% female) than for other visitors (56% male, 44% female).
In Loker-Murphy’s (1997) research, 50.6% were male; in P. Pearce et al. (2009), 52% of participants were male and in Martins and Costa (2021) 47.6% were female. Surprisingly, in Adam’s (2015) study on backpackers’ risk perceptions and risk reduction strategies in Ghana, 74.1% of the backpackers were female. In more recent researches conducted by Adam et al. (2021) and Agyeiwaah et al. (2021), 54.5% were female. As has happened in many other aspects of contemporary societies, women’s participation has been increasing and if this growth trend continues in the future, we will have more women associated with backpacking.

An interesting characteristic associated with backpackers is also their high level of education. In the past, and in comparison with other tourism segments, the educational level of backpackers was already high, and the most recent literature reveals that the same trend is still prevailing. According to Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995, p. 832), ‘as would be expected given the previous literature, backpackers were far more likely than other visitors to be students (32% vs 9%)’. In a study carried out in Australia, Loker-Murphy (1997) confirms that 41.9% of respondents had between 12 and 16 years of education and 32% had more than 16 years of education. Studying the evolution of the backpacker market in Australia, P. Pearce et al. (2009) reveal that 44% had graduated from college or university, 22% reported completing some college or university and 20% had graduated from high school. In Adam’s (2015) research, the majority of backpackers had university/college or postgraduate education (60.0% and 11.8% respectively). The same trend was found in Agyeiwaah et al. (2021) and Martins and Costa (2021b).

Relating the education and income level with the space–time behaviour of visitors, De Cantis et al. (2016) found that tourists with higher education and income levels took longer tours, which is in line with Hanson and Hanson

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**Table 3.1. Backpackers’ Age Range.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predominantly young</td>
<td>P. L. Pearce (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 15 and 29 years old</td>
<td>Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 15 and 31 years old</td>
<td>Adam (2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 18 and 33 years old</td>
<td>Sørensen (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 18 and 35 years old</td>
<td>P. L. Pearce and Foster (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 15 and 24 years old</td>
<td>Hunter-Jones, Jeffs, and Denis (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;40 years old</td>
<td>P. Pearce et al. (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;65 years old</td>
<td>G. Chen et al. (2020)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Authors construction.*
Backpackers’ Sociodemographic Characteristics

(1981), cited by Dejbakhsh, Arrowsmith, and Jackson (2011), where richer and more educated tourists are more mobile. According to Cooper (1981), cited by East, Osborne, Kemp, and Woodfine (2017), lower-income tourists are also less exploratory, focusing their time budget more on a smaller number of attractions to maximise their visit experience.

As well as being a motivation for backpacking, the existence of a limited daily budget allows people to travel for longer periods of time (M. Hampton, 1998; Hecht & Martin, 2006; Iaquinto, 2015) leading to the choice of cheaper means of transport and accommodation and more competitively priced tourist destinations. However, the amount of the daily budget is very dependent on the cost of living in the cities and countries visited. Bradt (1995) describes backpackers as independent travellers who survive on less than US$15 per day, but this amount is currently very low in most Western countries. Additionally, there are subsegments with greater purchasing power, such as flashpackers and holiday backpackers, usually aged over 35, who seek more comfort and privacy and prefer hostels with single or double rooms, or other more expensive types of accommodation. A higher budget also leads to the choice of a private means of transport, such as rented cars and participation in more exclusive activities. However, the main difficulty lies in the fact that there is no criterion of a universal quantitative nature that can be used to distinguish backpackers and their subsegments.

From the 1960s to the present day, backpacker tourism has been described as a predominantly Western phenomenon, dominated by young travellers from European, North American, Australian, New Zealander and Israeli countries. In Europe, countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland and Germany (Loker-Murphy, 1997; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995), but also Spain or France (Adam et al., 2021), stand out with a growing number of travellers. In recent years, a number of Asian backpackers have been increasing, contributing to a greater diversification of this market segment. In a study conducted in a Portuguese hostel, Martins, Rachão, and Costa (2018) found that the South Korean guests were the third most represented (10.4%), after the French (10.9%) and the Spanish (11.4%). And in a comparison between Asian and Australasia backpackers surveyed in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and in three Thai enclaves (San Road, Bangkok; Koh Phi Don and Rai Leh, Krabi Province), Paris et al. (2014) reveal that 52.7% were Asian backpackers. But as Ong and du Cros (2012) mentioned, Chinese nationals face travel restrictions, even to the two SARs (Hong Kong and Macau), and this constrains the growth of tourism and the growth of backpacker tourism in particular. Despite growth in some Asian markets, the vast majority of backpackers continue to be from Western, particularly European countries.
Regarding the country of origin, several studies have identified some differences between tourists (Becken, Wilson, Forer, & Simmons, 2008; Koo et al., 2012), namely in the distance travelled from the country of origin and the destination. Flognfeldt (1999) and Lew (1987), cited by Lew and McKercher (2006), found, among others, that the nationality of tourists has an influence on the choice of attractions visited. Tourists culturally closer to the visited destination seek different attractions and travel to different areas compared to tourists originating from more distant cultures (Debbage, 1991). According to Caldeira and Kastenholz (2015), tourists from more distant countries of residence invest more time and money in their trip, seeking more variety, reduced risk and uncertainty and economic rationalisation, with consequences on their space–time behaviour during their stay. Specifically studying backpackers visiting the city of Porto (Portugal), Martins (2020) found that backpackers from more distant countries (long haul) made longer visits, visited more attractions and spent more time on the move.

TRAVEL PLANNING AND ORGANISATION

Although backpackers are usually associated with a low degree of planning and no fixed schedules (P. L. Pearce, 1990; Riley, 1988), it does not mean that there is no previous preparation for the trip. As they prefer to travel for longer periods, they need to dedicate more time to contact with other travellers, researching transport, accommodation and places to visit, among others. Until the advent of the first travel guides, WoM was crucial among the backpacker community. The more experienced travellers acquired higher status within the community due to the richness of information they shared. Depending on the tips received, travellers would select the most suitable destinations, activities to do and the most appropriate means of transport, among others. Regarding the information sources used by backpackers, Richards and Wilson (2004a) refer to young backpackers as being ‘information-intensive’, emphasising the search for a wide variety of information before travelling with emphasis on the internet, friends and family and also well-known travel guide books.

M. P. Hampton (2013, p. 37) highlights the BIT Guide, Overland to India, published by the underground press in London; the contributions of Tony and Maureen Wheeler with their overland experiences beginning what was to become the Lonely Planet guidebooks, known worldwide, and the publication of Guide du Routard for Francophone travellers by Philippe Gloaguen and Michel Duval. Lonely Planet guides emerged as an alternative guidebook
brand in 1970s, holding a central role and influence in the development of backpacker tourism. These publications made an important contribution to the travel planning of all independent travellers who no longer needed to be so dependent on information passed on by WoM by more experienced travellers. At the same time, they contributed to arousing the curiosity of a wider public, changing the image that society had of drifters, helping ‘to shape the values and the very subculture of the new backpackers’ (McGregor, 2000 cit. by M. P. Hampton, 2013, p. 37).

It is important to note that guidebook studies have broadened their scope away from tourists from Western countries, including investigations of guidebook use among outbound travellers from Asian countries. Western and Asian guidebook users have different information needs, and guidebook use also differs between Chinese, Japanese and Korean travellers, meaning editors have much to consider when translating guidebooks for different markets (Iaquinto, 2012, p. 147). But the literature does not only identify travel guidebooks as the most important information source consulted by backpackers before and during the trips. WoM information among family, friends and other travellers also plays a central role (Iaquinto, 2012; Richards & Wilson, 2004a).

Table 3.2 compares the information sources consulted by backpackers before departure in different surveys over time. It is interesting to notice the importance of the information obtained through well-known WoM with friends and/or family (Hindle, Martin, & Nash, 2015; Murphy, 2001; P. Pearce et al., 2009; Richards & Wilson, 2004b). Despite a decrease between 2004 and 2020, the use of WoM information continues to be very significant (Table 3.2).

Relating to the impact of pre-travel internet use on actual backpacker tourism, Sørensen (2003) considered that it may be modest. Recent research indicates that the impact of the internet is profound, not only on the road but also before departure. In 2004 the use of the internet was already prominent (P. Pearce et al., 2009; Richards & Wilson, 2004b) and has remained so until today where online search engines (e.g. google.com) stand out as the most used source of information prior to the visit (Table 3.2).

The way in which tourists seek and utilise the information when visiting Paris was investigated by Pirolli (2018), who concluded that online search engines are among the most influential information sources, in line with Mariussen, Von Ibenfeldt, and Vespestad (2014), who claim that online information sources are among the most used in initial searches about the destination.

In order to understand how nationality and gender can influence information searching, Lu and Chen (2014) studied the behaviour of independent
tourists (Japanese, Chinese and North Americans) visiting Taiwan. They also concluded that the internet is the main information source, followed by newspapers, magazines and books, and the Chinese are more influenced by underground, bus, television, radio and billboard advertising than the Japanese or North Americans. Japanese and Chinese are more likely to use brochures and travel agencies than North Americans.

To better understand how backpackers organise their journeys, it is necessary to recall what the literature mentions about their main characteristics. Backpackers are independent tourists who travel for leisure (Adam, 2015) and organise their own multi-destination travel with a flexible itinerary (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Ooi & Laing, 2010; Riley, 1988; Uriely et al. 2002). Consequently, they have a low degree of planning and no fixed schedules (Nash et al., 2006; P. L. Pearce, 1990; Riley, 1988). They tend to travel alone or in small groups (M. Hampton, 1998; Hannam & Diekmann, 2010; Riley, 1988; Sørensen, 2003) preferring longer trips and travelling as long as possible (Nash et al., 2006; Paris, 2010a; P. L. Pearce, 1990; P. Pearce et al., 2009).

**Table 3.2. Information Sources Used by Backpackers Before Travel (%).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networks (e.g. Facebook …)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search engines (e.g. Google …)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>70.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online reviews</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, friends</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>48.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other travellers</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>46.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidebooks</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel agency</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers, magazines</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour operator brochures</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist boards</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV, radio</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airlines</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade shows</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources: Martins (2020), P. Pearce et al. (2009) and Richards and Wilson (2004a) (authors’ construction).*
Another traditional characteristic is the use of the backpack (G. Chen et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2018). In fact, the backpacker concept is etymologically linked to the use of a backpack, but nowadays the complex phenomenon of backpacking can include travellers without a backpack. And while most backpackers travel with a backpack on their back, some of them travel with a smaller, stiffer suitcase to carry their belongings on shorter trips, as is the case for short-term backpackers. We cannot ignore that the increasing limitations on luggage weight imposed by low-cost airlines have led to significant changes in the types of luggage used.

As we have seen before, multi-destination trips are another characteristic of backpacker trips. As they travel for longer time periods, they tend to visit more countries and more cities than other travellers. The flexibility of the travel itinerary is another characteristic often associated with backpackers and which according to Richards and Wilson (2004a) may be indicative of a lack of travel planning or, on the contrary, of the need for backpackers to gather more information about the destinations to be visited. As they have a more generous time budget, backpackers may change their plans whenever they deem convenient. They can stay longer than initially expected in a destination, taking the opportunity to explore it further or travel earlier to another place if they so wish.

Typically, the literature associates backpackers with a preference for long trips but does not identify limits on their duration. Sørensen (2003, p. 851) describes backpackers as tourists on a trip ‘extended beyond that which it is usually possible to fit into a cyclical holiday pattern’, but the author also mentions that the duration of the trip contributes to disqualifying most current backpackers because there are ‘individuals who travel backpacker-like, but within the time limits of cyclical holiday patterns’ (p. 861). There are backpackers who travel for 2 or 3 months, for 6 months or a year and there are even backpackers who make longer trips of more than a year. Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) and P. L. Pearce and Foster (2007) identify backpackers as those who travel for four or more weeks and in a more recent study with a very robust sample under ‘The New Horizons Research Programme’, Richards (2015) reports that a backpacker’s average travel was 76.7 days. In Australia, international backpackers stay for an average duration of 66 nights (Richards & Wilson, 2004a). More recently, researches on China demonstrate that the majority of Chinese backpackers travel for short periods, less than 10 days (G. Chen et al., 2020; X. Luo, Brown, & Huang, 2014), which can be explained by the fact that they have more limited holiday periods. Wang and Chen (2018) found that most backpackers who participated in their study stayed in Taiwan for a maximum of one week, although they did not mention whether or not they were undertaking a longer multi-destination trip.
The duration of trips made by backpackers and their subsegments has been the subject of analysis in the literature (Richards, 2015). Backpackers who are on a long-duration trip usually have a travel plan that involves visiting several countries and/or several cities, which may influence the number of attractions to visit, the number of activities to perform and the distance travelled on each day of the visit, among others. As time goes by, it will be natural that tiredness will accumulate and that the time budget dedicated to the visits will be influenced. Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) identify a set of characteristics in these travellers: a high level of interaction with local populations, a low level of planning and organisation, using a set of low-cost services, and a high degree of independence, seeking more authentic experiences in non-institutionalised journeys.

Brzózka (2012) describes the differences between backpackers and mass tourists and the nature of backpacker trips focussing on the motivations of Japanese, Polish, German and Israeli backpackers. While the Israelis make longer trips, usually alone, with a preference for cheap accommodation and visiting non-European countries, the Japanese make shorter trips, alone, staying in more expensive places. They buy food in supermarkets and travel around Europe and other developed countries. Poles stay in very cheap or free places (Hospitality Club members), buy food in local markets, visit Europe and Asian countries and Germans make medium-length trips, alone or accompanied, stay in very cheap or free places (camping), buy food in supermarkets and have a preference for visiting countries in Europe, South America and Asia.

Israeli backpackers have also been an interesting and fertile object of study. Maoz (2007) analyses their motivations and travel patterns, relating some aspects of Israeli society to their behaviour, highlighting their ‘collective orientation’ and the fact that they are not a group of outsiders looking for a new direction. They mostly travel at the end of their military service, in groups, and dislike other nationalities and the local population of the destinations, which are usually developing countries in Asia or South America. Maoz (2007) describes them as tending to abuse drugs and disrespect local norms. Noy (2004) explores the travel narratives of Israeli backpackers visiting South America and Asia, studying the sociocultural context of contemporary Israeli culture where narratives of self-change construct a collective notion of identity. It concludes that Israeli backpackers seek authenticity, that travel is a rite of passage and that those who visited South America are more adventurous and those who visited Asia are more ‘spiritual’.

The differences in backpacker subculture between two groups of backpackers (Australasia and Asia) were analysed by Paris et al. (2014), who identify shared values and differences in backpacker culture. They concluded
that Asian backpackers are less flexible in trip planning, not departing from existing routes and seek more structured and organised experiences, family dining options and greater ease in trip planning, for example through online booking, and are therefore closer to the institutionalised tourist. Australian and New Zealand backpackers, predominantly male, are more adventurous and express a higher level of agreement regarding backpacker culture such as partying, drinking and sex than Asians.

Butler and Hannam (2014) studied the means of transport used by backpackers and flashpackers in Norway, finding that although both groups value mobility throughout their trips, backpackers mostly use public transport (bus and train), while flashpackers use more private transport such as a car, this choice not being linked to their motivations. The use of cars by flashpackers allows them to combine autonomy and greater freedom of movement (self-directed movements). They conclude that higher income and use of technological equipment, differentiating characteristics of flashpackers, should be associated with the use of cars to distinguish this subsegment from the remaining backpackers.

Backpackers tend to travel alone (M. Hampton, 1998; Riley, 1988) preferring, for example, the freedom of choice of itinerary or activities, but others travel in small groups. While travelling, backpackers tend to seek social interaction in order to establish friendships with others, meet new people and associate with other travellers. Sometimes they also seek more intimate and romantic relationships with other travellers or locals. Thus, a backpacker travelling alone may visit a destination alone or in the company of other backpackers he/she has met in the meantime, and a backpacker travelling with a group of friends may visit a city alone. These decisions have implications on the way destinations are explored. The literature says that when travelling in groups, tourists have to negotiate a set of activities acceptable to all, so group dynamics can influence movements (Lew & McKercher, 2006). Visiting a destination within an organised group also restricts the choice of transport mode, destinations visited, interests and allocations of time budgets (Lew & McKercher, 2006). In the study conducted by Martins (2020), 42.8% of the backpackers who participated visited Porto alone and 37.2% visited it in the company of another person.

In tourism, the tourists’ time budget is an important characteristic concerning the visit, which strongly conditions their spatio-temporal behaviour (Caldeira, 2014; Lew & McKercher, 2006; Ritchie & Dickson, 2007; Shoval et al., 2015). But research on the space–time behaviour of backpackers in the visited destinations is scarce. Do they have the same behaviour as other tourists?
In research conducted by Martins (2020) in an urban destination, it was found that backpackers who stayed more nights tend to visit attractions further away from their accommodation, which may have contributed to a higher average speed of the visit. Longer distances may also justify the need to use transportation (public or private) contributing to a higher average speed of the visit. Backpackers with longer stays also visited fewer attractions, in line with the results of other studies. Time constraints associated with a shorter stay seem to induce tourists to visit as many attractions as possible (Xia, 2007) and backpackers are no exception.

The length and phase of the stay impact the number of activities or attractions that can be visited, for example, or the perceived distances to be travelled (Lew & McKercher, 2006). McKercher and Lau (2008) found differences between tourists’ movements on the day of arrival, on the last day of the stay and on the other days and found that on the first and last day of the visit, tourists tend to confine their movements to the vicinity of the hotel. Zakrisson and Zillinger (2012) found little significant difference in movement patterns, pointing out that movement does not necessarily depend only on the person him/herself, but also on the situation.

In Martins (2020), the staying phase did not reveal the existence of associations with very high significance value; however, backpackers who visited the city on an intermediate day of their stay moved further away from the accommodation than on the first and last day of their stay. The percentages of visitors who got lost were also higher on an intermediate day and there was also a higher use of public transportation on an intermediate day than on the other stages of the stay.

The accessibility of the transport network, that is, the greater or lesser ease with which one travels in a given territory, also has a number of impacts on movement patterns. Lew and McKercher (2006) identify some, such as the degree of freedom or restriction of movement, differences in access to attractions and choices in the mode of transport. The choice of the mode of transport to be used at the destination influences the movement pattern of tourists (Masiero & Zoltan, 2013) and depends on the available means of transport, the distance to be travelled and the perceived costs and benefits. Tourists can choose between using a car (private or rented), transport provided by organised tour/walking companies, public transport such as buses, trains, ferries, taxis, among others, and also walking (Lew & McKercher, 2006).

Tideswell and Faulkner (1999) note that the mode of transport plays an important role as tourists using public transport travel considerably less to the destination than those using private means of transport. Le-Klähn et al. (2015) show that tourists with higher educational qualifications (college/
university) are more likely to use public transport than other tourists and that visitors travelling accompanied are more likely to use public transport than solo travellers. Price also has a positive effect on the use of public transport. Demographic characteristics and familiarity with the destination can also influence tourists’ choice of transport (Masiero & Zoltan, 2013).

Due to greater constraints on travel budgets, backpackers tend to use public transport. Martins (2020) reveals that 94% of backpackers visiting Porto, Portugal, explored the city on foot, and public transport was used by 38.1%. Commercial and tourist transport was chosen by 5.6% and rented cars were used only by 2.4%.

As tourists, backpackers are expected to visit the same popular attractions at a destination as other mass tourists (Paris, 2010a). With more time available, backpackers undertake different activities from other travellers, mainly once-in-a-lifetime activities. Richards and Wilson (2004a) states that as travel experience increases, backpackers tend to perform more activities supporting the idea that backpackers are ‘experience-hungry’ tourists. The segments with higher budgets, such as flashpackers, will have more money to spend on more expensive activities.

In Table 3.3, the most popular activity is walking or trekking. Over time, walking seems to remain the main activity for backpackers. Walking does not imply spending money and is a cheap way to explore the visited territories. Sitting in cafes and restaurants is very popular as well. It is an opportunity to taste local gastronomy and local drinks and to rest to recharge batteries for the next visit to historical sites or monuments. The remaining activities presented in Table 3.3 should be interpreted with caution. In addition to being data with a very different number of participants, Richards and Wilson’s (2004a) study has as its source the ATLAS Backpacker Research Group (BRG) survey carried out on a global scale, while the results observed in Martins (2020) refer to backpackers visiting an urban destination in Portugal. Consequently, not all destinations provide or are famous for the same activities.

**ICT: THE IMPACT ON BACKPACKERS**

In the 1960s, without the internet, smartphones, tablets or laptops, it was not easy for the first drifters to prepare for their journeys. They ventured out on more risky and unpredictable trips, relying heavily on information shared by other travellers through WoM.

With the advent of the internet, telephones became outdated, and email has replaced letters. Backpackers could use their email addresses and check
for messages often, keeping in contact with friends and relatives (Sørensen, 2003). It seems clear that with the growing presence of the internet and ICT, the demand for information by tourists has undergone significant changes (de la Hoz-Correa & Muñoz-Leiva, 2019). Due to their intensive internet use, younger travellers, known as ‘digital natives’ (Prensky, 2001), prefer to organise their visits independently, so, new technologies are expected to play a very important role in the preparation of their trips and even during their visits to a given destination. Backpackers are no different and as demonstrated before, the internet is a crucial source of information before departure.

Reisenwitz and Fowler (2019) compared the information searching process between Generation Y (born between 1977 and 1994) and Generation X (born between 1965 and 1976) and concluded that Generation Y tourists, who have a high use of online social interaction, use a wider range of technologies to search for information when planning their trips. In the research conducted with Danish and Norwegian tourists visiting Majorca, Jacobsen and Munar (2012) found high use of computers and the internet, not only before but also during the visit, confirming that tourists who are interconnected through electronic social networks, such as Facebook, use the internet more intensively. Studying the space–time behaviour of backpacker tourists in an urban destination, Martins (2020) observed that backpackers who used web search engines (e.g. Google) visited more attractions and performed more activities. They also used urban landmarks and urban signage more often to orient themselves during their visit to the city. Any search on the Google

Table 3.3. Backpacker Activities (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visiting historical sites, monuments</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking, trekking</td>
<td>86.5</td>
<td>87.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting in cafes, restaurants</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>71.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shopping</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting museums</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural events</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanging out on the beach</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightclubs</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observing wildlife/nature</td>
<td>64.9</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports activities/adrenaline</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching sport</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Martins (2020) and Richards and Wilson (2004a) (authors’ construction).
search engine returns thousands or millions of results, a gigantic amount of data that the precursors of backpackers did not have to deal with thirty years ago. Just for example, in February 2022, if we search for ‘backpacking’ on Google, we get 606 million results. And as Tideswell and Faulkner (1999) found, travellers who seek more information are more inclined to visit more destinations, which leads to greater spatial dispersion.

Focussing on the differences in the use of social media for travel, Amaro et al. (2016) also identified different segments among travellers according to the degree of involvement in consumption and creation of travel content. They found five different segments of social media users (Inactive; Occasional Consumers and Apathetic Creators; Occasional Consumers and Creators; Consuming Enthusiasts and Apathetic Creators and Fully Engaged) and claim that the use of social media is higher before the trip than during and after the trip.

The literature demonstrates that the use of new technologies in the tourism industry influences the way in which trips are prepared. Before travelling, tourists usually seek information about their holiday destination and accommodation in order to ensure that they make the best choice, thus reducing uncertainty (Hernández-Méndez, Muñoz-Leiva, & Sánchez-Fernández, 2015; Xiang, Wang, O’Leary, & Fesenmaier, 2015). Therefore, the search for information is crucial when choosing a destination to visit (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012) but visitors’ need for information varies substantially and is usually incomplete (Fodness & Murray, 1997; Lew & McKercher, 2006). According to Bauder and Freytag (2015), studies on tourist information sources and travel preparation focus their attention on where and how tourists look for information about the destination and also on the type of information searched.

Other studies have focussed on understanding how tourists use the internet to search for and collect information about destinations (Hernández-Méndez et al., 2015; Pirolli, 2018; Reisenwitz & Fowler, 2019) or on the analysis of the influence that social networks seem to have on the choice of destinations and their loyalty to them (Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2017). Danish and Norwegian tourists visiting Majorca (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012) who used computers and the internet extensively, not only before but also during the visit, confirmed that tourists who are interconnected through electronic social networks, like Facebook, use the internet more intensively during the decision-making process.

In addition, the existence of limited information at destinations, such as a lack of transport schedules and the absence of maps with detailed information, contributes to tourists’ frustration in relation to the movements they could have made (Edwards, Griffin, Hayllar, & Dickson, 2009), limiting their space–time behaviour. When analysing the influence of travel preparation on
the spatial behaviour of tourists, Bauder and Freytag (2015) conclude that those who prepared their trip better tend to organise their stay in a more efficient and structured way, allowing them to concentrate on specific places, and they also choose a variety of more dispersed activities, even outside the city centre.

Consisting mostly of younger travellers, the backpacker segment uses the internet intensively. Some virtual communities include a diverse set of texts that describe the journeys and adventures experienced by numerous travellers in detail, acting as a simpler, cheaper and faster method of information collection. The internet also brings scheduling flexibility between travellers, namely more options for travel partners to temporarily separate and later reunite (Sørensen, 2003). With new technologies, backpackers can keep ‘part of one’s backpacker identity, even when not travelling, by communicating with those still on the road or recently returned home’ (Sørensen, 2003, p. 861). In 2022, all this has become easier and not only emails but all social networks play a key role in maintaining the backpacker identity. Home and visited places have never been closer than they are today.

Analysing the virtual communities used by backpackers, Ku (2011) found that the backpacker community can serve as a reference group to influence other travellers’ choices, attitudes and beliefs and those travel agencies must be technologically astute to stay connected to their customers. Some researchers use virtual communities associated with backpacker tourists to conduct their studies, identifying and surveying their members on several websites. Consisting mostly of younger travellers, the backpacker segment uses the internet intensively to plan their trips, consulting blogs and online sites to book flights or accommodation, and to keep in touch with friends and family.

To make this possible, we cannot neglect the impact of smartphones. These small devices are real computers that not only allow backpackers to be in permanent telephone contact with their family and friends but also to access the internet. Consequently, they not only facilitate research on places to visit and activities to do but also allow them to search for and book hostels or other low-cost accommodation and buy airline or other transport tickets. With smartphones and the internet, they can also be in permanent contact with other backpackers, search travel blogs and websites of more experienced travellers or simply follow what is going on social networks. The days of internet cafes, once numerous in backpacker destinations, are certainly numbered. With the internet, traditional WoM has become virtual, becoming an eWoM.

Analysing the relationship between backpackers’ motivations, their travel experience and their behaviour, Alves, Abrantes, Antunes, Seabra, and
Herstein (2015) conclude that information sharing is of major importance for backpackers, making the study of WoM essential. Online reviews have become very popular and their significant impact on individual buying behaviour is recognised (Schuckert et al., 2015). According to these authors, 71% of independent travel-related bookings are done online, while 36% of all package tours are booked online. Online reviews are fast, up to date, always available and reflect satisfaction with the consumption experience (Schuckert et al., 2015; Xiang & Gretzel, 2010) offering valuable information to help potential consumers.

The internet also supports the existence of virtual communities. Some virtual communities include a diverse set of texts that describe the routes and adventures experienced by numerous travellers in detail. Enoch and Grossman (2010) state that online diaries known as blogs allow the experience of tourists during their trips to be studied and represent a wide variety of ages, nationalities or travel styles, thus constituting a valuable information source. Some travel blogs used by Chinese backpackers known as ‘donkey friends’ were also used by X. Luo et al. (2014) and H. Chen and Weiler (2014) as the main information source in their research, in which the virtual or digital ethnography (netnography) method was used. Focussing on the flashpacker subsegment, also known as tech-savvy independent travellers, Guerreiro et al. (2019) also used several blogs (TravelBlog.org, TravelPod.com, Blog.realtravel.com, Yourtraveljournal.com and Travelpost.com) as a method of data collection, due to the fact that they allow knowledge of how their users express observations, perceptions, judgements, feelings and emotions of the trips made, also showing how this subsegment understands the products, services and travel experiences.

TRANSFORMATIONS IN SUPPLY AND THE IMPACT ON BACKPACKERS’ EXPERIENCE

The term globalisation appeared in the 1960s when Marshall McLuhan used the concept of the global village to refer to the impact of new communication technologies on social and cultural life. The space–time compression theorised by David Harvey (1989) has so transformed the structure and scale of human relations that social, cultural, political and economic processes take place on a global scale with a consequent reduction in the significance of other geographical scales such as the national, local, etc. (Pratt, G., 2000).

However, Giddens (2006) emphasises that globalisation is not only an economic phenomenon. Influenced by progress in communication systems in the
late 1960s, globalisation is also political, technological and cultural. The idea that globalisation is an inexorable and virtually unstoppable process, a force to be accommodated rather than resisted, has become a central idea in neoliberal political and economic circles.

Finding a definition for the concept of globalisation is not an easy task. As a complex, multifaceted and transversal phenomenon to practically all dimensions of our life (economic, technological, social, cultural, and political), it has been defined ‘with some connotations referring to progress, development and stability, integration and cooperation, and others referring to retrogression, colonialism and destabilisation’ (Al-Rodhan & Stoudmann, 2006, p. 3). It is also ‘an inner phenomenon that influences intimate and personal aspects’ (Giddens, 2006, p. 45) and should therefore be understood as a complex network of processes that, with greater or lesser intensity, involves everything and everyone. The great challenge is to manage and guide it, contributing to the emergence of a democratic global order, respectful of the fundamental rights and freedoms of all human beings.

Tourism activity is closely linked to the globalisation process and is an increasingly decentralised phenomenon, in which the backpacker tourist segment has played a key role as a cause and consequence of the continuous transnational and transcultural integration. Supported by the technological development of transport and the emergence of low-cost airlines, the development of new ICT and the growing network of hostels, backpacking tourism has grown and diversified, contributing to the achievement and reproduction of globalisation.

As is known, the globalisation process brought with it an increase in mobility, be it physical or virtual. The mobility of backpackers, mostly young tourists who take advantage of the facilities resulting from technological developments, both in transport and in ICT, has been the focus of attention of several researchers interested in the backpacker phenomenon and in the new research approach constituted by the new paradigm of mobilities (Allon et al., 2008; Gogia, 2006; Kannisto, 2014; Richards, 2015). In Kannisto’s (2014) work ‘Global Nomads: Challenges of Mobility in the Sedentary World’ he states that the lifestyle of global nomads is marked by a continuous crossing of borders and encounter with new cultures, so that these travellers are no more than a mirror of our society.

Gogia (2006) investigates how the mobilities of backpackers and seasonal workers are determined and connected and how they reflect the identities of the actors involved. Analysing the mobility of Canadian backpacker tourists visiting central America and of central American seasonal workers heading to Canada, the author questions whether these mobilities represent new patterns
of mobility or whether they materialise colonial relations between North and South, as the freedom of mobility of some is only possible through the organised exclusion of others.

An important milestone in the evolution of this market segment is the break with E. Cohen’s (1972) ‘drifters’ and Vogt’s (1976) ‘wanderers’, in which these travellers are no longer connotated as hedonists or anarchists and are now classified by Riley (1988) as ‘long-term budget travellers’. This demarcation represents the recognition of a new tourist segment, composed mainly of young travellers, described as backpackers since the 1990s. As noted and discussed in the introductory chapter of this book, the establishment of a global network of low-cost accommodation was also crucial to the development of the backpacker market. Their diffusion around the world is closely linked to the development of backpacker tourism and its progressive institutionalisation.

The existing relationship between the development of this market segment and the deepening and intensification of the globalisation process has led some authors to refer to backpackers as modern ‘global nomads’. The development of transport and ICT has given backpackers (hyper)mobility, which can be observed not only in the trips they make but also in their frequent contact with friends, family and other backpackers with whom they establish social encounters or friendships during the trip, local people and other travellers (Paris, 2010b). This occurs in a kind of itinerant socialisation that results from the permanent contact with a virtual social network and where information circulates in real time, all over the world, blurring the political boundaries between the places visited and home, the place of usual residence (Paris, 2010b). It was concluded that backpacker tourists are both an agent and an expression of the globalisation process, making an important contribution to the current process of cross-cultural integration.

The importance of hostels is unquestionable, constituting the most visible, material and symbolic part of the backpacker culture (O’Regan, 2010). Hostels are inexpensive types of accommodation that offer guests the possibility of booking a bed in different types of rooms (shared dorms, private rooms, etc.) and are sought by travellers with smaller travel budgets. As they are more informal and adventurous, and taking into account the common areas (living rooms, kitchen, bar, etc.), they offer better opportunities for guests to socialise (Oliveira-Brochado & Gameiro, 2013).

Hostels are not just cheap accommodation. They are places of meeting, creation and reproduction of identities, places for sharing ideas, assumptions, storeys, and knowledge (O’Regan, 2010) and, therefore, fundamental in the backpacker culture. It is in these meeting places that backpackers interact with each other and maintain dialogue focussed on the trips they are doing.
In hostels, backpackers establish contacts via mobile phone or internet with friends and family who, from a distance, are accompanying the trip and contact with members of the local population. If traditionally the favoured direction of the main flows of backpackers was the South Asian countries (India, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, among others), there has been a diversification of destinations in other continents, as will be discussed in Chapter five.

Therefore, several researchers have used hostels as the main criterion for identifying backpackers. In Australia, where the backpacker market is more mature, official authorities such as Tourism Research Australia (2009) and Tourism Victoria (2009) have adopted hostels or other low-cost accommodation to distinguish backpackers from other tourists. But as hostels are more affordable, they attract various types of customers, so not all guests are effectively backpackers.

As for meeting places, hostels also tend to be concentrated in some neighbourhoods that lie at the intersections of the main backpacker routes, giving rise to the emergence of enclaves. Enclaves are territories, which are distinct from the local environment with well-defined limits, where accommodation and other support services are concentrated, and according to Maoz and Bekerman (2010), cited by S. A. Cohen (2011), they function as places where backpackers can experience the comfort of home and the company of tourists with similar interests. As in hostels, enclaves, mostly frequented by backpackers, facilitate interaction with other travellers from different backgrounds contributing to the creation of a sense of togetherness or group. Howard (2007), defines an enclave for backpackers more objectively as an area with at least 10 accommodation units of any size, relatively spaced and inexpensive, frequented in part by backpackers. Places of social iteration, activity planning or simply to take... a break and restoring energy, enclaves can also be considered the visible face of the institutionalisation of backpacker tourism.

In tourism, transport is essential. Backpackers’ preference is for overland transport like bus, train or even hitchhiking, but air travel has been crucial to the growth of backpacker tourism, specifically low-cost airlines.

With the liberalisation of air space that has occurred in recent decades, the number of low-cost airlines has been increasing all over the world and so, nowadays it is easier to travel. There are more air connections between major cities and major international tourist destinations, and fares have been greatly reduced. The air companies are also present on websites where travellers can purchase their tickets directly. The same is true for accommodation. In addition to their own websites, hostels are present on websites such as Booking.com or Hostelworld.com where it is very easy to search for and select the accommodation that best suits the preferences of each guest. All these
transformations in supply have completely changed the way people travel today. Middlemen have been eliminated and backpackers, as independent travellers, are among those who have benefitted the most from these changes.

The next chapter will focus on backpackers’ diversity and heterogeneity with emphasis on the increasing number of Asian backpackers at a time when backpacking is becoming less a phenomenon that mostly comprises young Westerners.
This chapter intends to discuss the backpacker’s motivations for travelling. Backpackers are described as a heterogeneous segment, and the diversification of this group in terms of age, nationality, culture of origin, subsegments and individual travel experience has contributed to this heterogeneity. Another main purpose is to explore this phenomenon considering the changes that have occurred in the international flows of backpackers, namely the recent growth in the number of Asian backpackers.

Alongside the socio-economic, cultural and demographic characteristics of backpackers, their behaviours and activities performed, the motivations of this segment are one of the characteristics that have been most used by researchers to differentiate them (Larsen, Øgaard, & Brun, 2011; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Paris & Teye, 2010; Uriely et al., 2002) both from more institutionalised tourists and from their subsegments, which have been identified in the meantime.

All tourists are driven by one or more motives when planning and making their trips. In Mayo and Jarvis’s (1981) book ‘The Psychology of Leisure Travel’, they state that motivation is the ultimate guiding force, characterised by internal motives of a psychological nature, which explains individual actions. Therefore, backpacker tourists, who constitute a heterogeneous market, deserve particular attention, especially regarding the identification of backpacker typologies, in order to identify different travel profiles and thus facilitate tourism marketing (Fodness, 1994).

Therefore, the diversity of studies on backpackers and their motivations for backpacking, which have been conducted over time and in different latitudes, seem to demonstrate that these main motivations have been changing. The different typologies of backpackers meet the notion of ‘post-tourists’ proposed by Feifer (1985), cited by Uriely et al. (2002), as those who enjoy different types of experiences during their trip.
This chapter is structured as follows: the first section ‘Motivations – Conceptual Framework’ presents the definition and conceptual framework of backpackers’ main motivations to travel and their push and pull factors. Sections ‘Backpackers from Different Cultures and Motivations for Travel’ and ‘Motivations and Travel Experience’ will analyse backpacker segments and their main motivations, and the implications of different cultures in the motivational factors to travel. Travel experience factors will be discussed in section ‘Differences between Backpackers and Mass Tourism’, which will analyse and present the differences between backpackers and mass tourism, and the last section ‘Western and Eastern Backpackers’ will discuss the difference between Western and Asian backpackers.

**MOTIVATIONS – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The motivation to travel can be described as a broad concept, which encompasses biological, psychological and social factors that activate, guide and maintain behaviour in different degrees of intensity, these being the ultimate driving forces that explain individuals’ actions (Mayo & Jarvis, 1981). Tabassi and Bakar (2009) state that motivations intend to satisfy needs and desires through appropriate activities and, according to Pinder (1998, p. 11), cited by Gallstedt (2003), motivation is a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual’s being to initiate work-related behaviour, and to determine its form, direction, intensity and duration. Consequently, motivation is most often not theorised as a separate issue but rather viewed as something that contributes to a comprehensive understanding of backpackers (Maoz, 2007; Møller Jensen & Hjalager, 2019; Sørensen, 2003).

In recent years, multiple definitions of motivation have been proposed for different factors that influence people’s travel motivations and numerous studies have contributed to the push and pull framework to elucidate travel motivation (C. H. Ho & Peng, 2017). According to G. Chen et al. (2014), Dann (1977) conducted one of the earliest empirical investigations in the field of travel motivations, in which he used the survey data on visitors’ attitudes towards Barbados to identify two basic motivations: anomie (to escape) and ego enhancement (to re-establish one’s ego). Nok et al. (2017, p. 160) refer to other studies which have addressed both functional and leisure aspects of motivation, while others have been based on Maslow’s (1943) motivation theory in the study of motivations in travel and tourism.

In a work on tourist motivation, Fodness (1994) developed a self-report scale to measure leisure travel motivation, conceptualising four functional
dimensions: the knowledge function of leisure travel; the utilitarian function, which includes needs for relaxation and escapes; the social function; and the value expressive function. As described by G. Chen et al. (2014), four dimensions of travel motivators were presented by Ryan and Glendon (1998): social (to have friendship and interpersonal relationships), relaxation (to escape and search), intellectual (to learn, explore and discover) and competence mastery (to achieve, challenge, master and compete).

The literature review focusing on backpackers’ motivations to travel has revealed the existence of a large and diverse set of motivations that reflect the complexity and heterogeneity of this market segment in line with the work of Oliveira-Brochado and Gameiro (2013) who state that there is emerging diversity and growing heterogeneity in the preferences of backpackers known as travellers that enjoy different types of experiences during their visits. As Loker-Murphy (1997) emphasises, backpackers do not travel only to meet other people and to have a good time.

Backpackers’ motivations have been studied extensively in previous literature. According to previous studies (Elsrud, 1998; Richards & Wilson, 2004a), four recurring motivations of backpacker travel are identified: a desire for an authentic or genuine experience, novelty and action, affiliation or social motives and achievement or learning. Paris and Teye (2010) stated that Murphy (2001) found the main reasons why respondents of her study choose backpacking as a means of travel, ranking them in order: economic, social, a more real experience, longer trip length, independence, flexibility, ease and convenience, previous backpacker experience and being recommended by other people.

Another motivation often described in the literature is the break from daily routine (Riley, 1988), where travel becomes a kind of means of escape (P. L. Pearce, 1990). Escaping from stress and routine leads backpackers to seek freedom, independence, adventure and different experiences during the trip (Elsrud, 2001; O’Reilly, 2006), making it a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity (Table 4.1). Another important aspect of backpacking is socialisation (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Murphy, 2001), since friendships between travellers are formed more quickly, contributing to the creation of ideas and goals which lead to the formation or reformulation of ‘norms, conduct, values, etc. among backpackers [which] are continuously negotiated, challenged, manipulated, and upheld or changed through social interaction’ (Sørensen, 2003, p. 855).

Backpacker tourism has also been considered a means of seeking gratification. One of the achievements of backpackers is their self-perception of an adventurous and risky lifestyle already analysed in the literature (Elsrud, 2001), evidenced by the stories of the trips made. Ooi and Laing (2010) state
**Table 4.1. Backpackers’ Main Motivations to Travel.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maslow’s Classification Hierarchy</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychological needs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving personal skills</td>
<td>G. Chen et al. (2014), Larsen et al. (2011), Mohsin and Ryan (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and updating personal skills</td>
<td>G. Chen et al. (2014), J. L. Hsu, Wang, and Huang (2014), Mohsin and Ryan (2003), P. Pearce et al. (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing and strengthening relationships</td>
<td>Paris and Teye (2010), P. Pearce et al. (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-fulfilment needs</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The pursuit of freedom, independence and open-mindedness</td>
<td>Brzózka (2012), Nok et al. (2017), Paris and Teye (2010), P. Pearce et al. (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realisation of the dream of a lifetime</td>
<td>Loker-Murphy (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on the demand to experience the local/foreign way of life</td>
<td>G. Chen et al. (2014), J. L. Hsu et al. (2014), Larsen et al. (2011), Mohsin and Ryan (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things that are only done once in a lifetime</td>
<td>Murphy (2001), Paris and Teye (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfying curiosity about new things</td>
<td>J. L. Hsu et al. (2014), Nok et al. (2017), P. Pearce et al. (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking fun in nightlife and entertainment</td>
<td>Mikulic et al. (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape and relaxation</td>
<td>Brzózka (2012), G. Chen et al. (2014), Larsen et al. (2011), Loker-Murphy (1997); P. Pearce et al. (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search for authenticity</td>
<td>Gibson and Connell (2003)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Own construction.*
that an encounter with the unknown can be understood as a vehicle that leads to self-discovery and also contributes to the acquisition of generic tools and the development of personal skills. This comes about as a result of self-enhancement, which results from the experiences lived during the trips that P. L. Pearce and Foster (2007) called the university of travel. Backpackers often seek greater contact with what is local or typical of the cultures of the places visited and try to experience local life experiences (E. Cohen, 2003; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995).

Other studies include further motivations for backpacking, namely opportunities for learning (P. L. Pearce & Foster, 2007), experiencing the local lifestyle (Maoz, 2007), and meeting other travellers (Oliveira-Brochado & Gameiro, 2013). According to J. L. Hsu et al. (2014), backpackers travel with an independent and flexible trip arrangement in mind (P. L. Pearce, 1990) and are different from other tourists in that backpackers are less motivated towards travel luxuries (Larsen et al., 2011).

Conceptualising backpackers’ motivation with travel career pattern (TCP) theory was one of the objectives of the work of Paris and Teye (2010), who studied the relationship between travel experience and motivations. They concluded that the main motivations of backpackers are cultural knowledge and relaxation and that there are four motivational factors that vary according to the backpacking experience and age. These are personal/social growth, experiences, low-cost travel and independence.

Based on a literature review, Table 4.1 summarises the main motivations for travelling associated with backpackers. When backpackers plan their trip, motivational factors are relevant as they are driven by a plurality of internal and external forces (i.e. push and pull factors). Therefore, what makes people go backpacking has been explored by several researchers, as can be seen in Table 4.1.

As mentioned by C. H. Ho and Peng (2017), travel motivation is potentially the main driver of tourist behaviour and among the theories on travel motivation, the push and pull model is one of the most accepted frameworks, in line with Mohsin and Ryan (2003), who also state that motivation should be analysed taking into account the need to travel (‘the push factors’) and the attractions to visit (‘the pull factors’).

Nok et al. (2017) refer that some of the earliest studies on general travel motivations as published by Dann (1981), identified pull and push factors, which are related to destination attractions and internal psychological needs, respectively. Internal forces (push) drive an individual to travel (such as escape, prestige, self-actualisation or adventure). The destination’s features (pull factor) are the specific attractions or unique attributes which attract visitors.
Internal motivations for backpackers are associated with their ‘adventurous personalities, risk-taking attitude, appetite for outdoor sports, escapism, and dissatisfaction with the pressures and monotony of daily routine, as they believe that each trip offers the opportunity for personal growth and search for life’s meaning’ (Nok et al., 2017, p. 1060). Consequently, understanding backpackers’ internal and external driving forces is essential for destination management organisations’ design and market tourism strategies to fit backpacker expectations (Nok et al., 2017).

As Møller Jensen and Hjalager (2019) mention, motivations are not universal for all people and may vary between destinations or travel types. Backpackers are no exception and as they are known as a heterogeneous group of tourists who enjoy different types of experiences during their visits (Oliveira-Brochado & Gameiro, 2013), their motivations for travel should continue to be studied.

In conclusion, the push motivational factors motivate people to travel and explain the desire and decision to take a trip, whereas the pull motivational factors influence the selection of the travel destination according to the destination attributes. The concept of push and pull motivations has become a crucial framework for examining travel motivation.

As mentioned above, backpackers are a heterogeneous group of travellers, and the diversity of their motivations, behaviours and destination preferences is particularly useful in understanding tourist typologies in the broad market of backpacking travel (G. Chen et al., 2014).

At this point, a question must be raised: What makes people choose backpacking as a way to travel? G. Chen et al. (2014) answer that backpackers may also have various motivations. Indeed, backpackers do not all share exactly the same motivations. Some travel to look for pleasure, others travel to escape or to pursue freedom or independence. Some backpackers are interested in meaningful experiences for self-development (Møller Jensen & Hjalager, 2019).

Based on Pearce’s concept of travel careers, Loker-Murphy (1997) identifies four distinct segments of backpackers visiting Australia: social/excitement seekers, escapers/relaxers, achievers and self-developers. Social/excitement seekers are strongly motivated by social interaction, seeking to meet local people; the escapers/relaxers need to relax and escape from the daily routine, seeking adventures and exciting things to do. The third group’s main interest is self-fulfilment; and these latter travellers focus their visit on places of natural and environmental interest.

Comparing the motivations of young Israeli backpackers with those of backpackers from other countries, Maoz (2007) concluded that the preference
Backpackers’ Travel Motivations

to ‘escape together’ is a common motivation for young Israeli and Japanese backpackers.

In research carried out in an urban destination, Martins (2020) found that the main motivations for travelling among backpackers were cultural knowledge (4.39), a budget trip (3.98) and escape and relaxation (3.96). Each dimension presented in Table 4.2 had a set of items and the score of each dimension was calculated through the average of the respective items, ranging from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 5 – the higher the score, the stronger the motivations in that dimension. These results are in line with the fact that the urban destination where the study was carried out is classified by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site and therefore has a strong focus on the cultural dimension. Escaping from the daily routine of life and work, relaxing psychologically, and looking for calm, safe environments away from crowds are also interests that meet the dimension ‘escape and relaxation’, one of the main motivations of backpackers mentioned in some international studies (Paris & Teye, 2010; P. Pearce et al., 2009; Richards & Wilson, 2004a).

Using a scale of 1–5 (1 = of no importance and 5 = very important), Richards and Wilson (2004a) found that backpackers’ most important motivations for undertaking their last main trip were to explore other cultures (4.6), experience excitement (4.3), increase knowledge (4.1) and relax mentally (3.9). Social interaction is also relevant, namely having a good time with friends (3.7) and interacting with local people (3.9).

Using data from the WYSE Travel Confederation Survey (2013), Richards (2015) found that in terms of travel motivation, backpackers are most likely to be travelling to experience other cultures, experience everyday life abroad, increase their knowledge and interact with local people. With the presentation of this data we can conclude that in recent decades, the main motivations of backpackers to travel have not changed greatly.

Backpackers FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES AND MOTIVATIONS FOR TRAVEL

Backpackers’ country of origin and some issues related to cultural differences have also been explored by several authors, who have shown that nationality and cultural background play an important role in influencing backpackers’ motivations (Brzózka, 2012; G. Chen et al., 2014; Maoz, 2007; Noy, 2004; Teo & Leong, 2006).

Mohsin and Ryan (2003) investigated backpackers from different nationalities who visited Northern Territory in Australia. They found country-related
differences in travel motivations among backpackers: Japanese travellers were primarily motivated by the desire to make new friends and interact with different people; travellers from the United Kingdom, North America and New Zealand were motivated by a long-standing desire to undertake travel and broaden knowledge about the world (p. 120). They also concluded that not all backpackers are new and that some are full-time holidaymakers who stay in hostels because of the low prices.

Exploring the motivations of backpacker tourists visiting Australia and New Zealand, C. I. Ho et al. (2014) analyse the motivational factors associated with the experience of working during the holiday period and conclude that a large number of backpackers are ‘holiday-makers’. The interest in the relationship between tourism and work is shared by Jarvis and Peel (2013) with a study on backpackers in the working holidaymakers (WHMs) segment. WHMs tourists are dispersed throughout the Australian territory and contribute to the emergence of new businesses, such as hostels adapted to working tourists. It is important to note that, although spending is localised, tourists from this segment engage far more with community-based commercial leisure infrastructure than that provided by the tourism industry.

In a study of the motivations of Taiwanese for visiting Australia, Kao, Patterson, Scott, and Li (2008), cited by J. L. Hsu et al. (2014, p. 58), found that the primary push factor was to ‘travel around the world’, while the main pull factor was to ‘appreciate the sunshine and scenery’.

Backpacker tourism in Asia has also attracted the attention of several authors worldwide (M. Hampton & Hamzah, 2010; M. P. Hampton, 2013; Musa & Thirumooorthi, 2011) but backpacker motivations, preferences, and impacts on urban destinations have aroused little interest (Nok et al., 2017). The large and rapid economic growth of some Asian countries, such as China, has contributed to the increase in the number of tourists, making China one

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation Dimension</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mean (ST)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal and social growth</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.79 (0.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.51 (0.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences at destination</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.81 (0.55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escape and relaxation</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.96 (0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural knowledge</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>4.39 (0.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget trip</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.98 (0.86)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Martins (2020).

ST, standard deviation.
of the main outbound and inbound tourist markets in the world. The growth of the backpacker segment in Asia and particularly in China will be discussed in Chapter 5.

In Ong and du Cros’ (2012) work, Chinese backpackers are described as a generation that emerged after Mao Zedong’s reforms. When they visit Macao they appropriate it as an exotic territory of escape from everyday life, leisure and as a form of liminal space, not giving much importance to cultural aspects and experiences linked to the authenticity of the places and/or attractions.

However, despite the growing importance of Chinese backpackers, there are still few empirical investigations (G. Chen et al., 2014). H. Chen and Weiler (2014) focus their attention on the Chinese backpackers who visit Tibet. Donkey friends, as backpackers are known in China, travel to this mountainous region seeking contact with the natural environment and the exotic Tibetan culture. But as G. Chen et al. (2014) emphasise, little research has been conducted to understand travel behaviours of the emerging Chinese backpackers. These authors state that the literature identifies four motivating themes: social interaction, self-actualisation, destination experience, and escape and relaxation.

Travelling as a ritual of transition to adulthood, Israeli backpackers are completely different. Living in a society marked by compulsory military service and where there are many conflicts with the neighbouring Palestinians, some Israeli backpackers are described as disrespectful to other nationalities and their hosts, disrespecting local rules. Backpacking is expected to help them become more responsible. Maoz (2007) also analyses Israeli backpacker motivations and travel patterns, relating some aspects of Israeli society to their behaviour, highlighting their ‘collective orientation’ and the fact that they are not a group of outsiders looking for a new direction.

Noy (2004) explores the travel narratives of Israeli backpackers visiting South America and Asia, studying the sociocultural context of contemporary Israeli culture, where narratives of self-change construct a collective notion of identity. The study concludes that Israeli backpackers seek authenticity, that travel is a rite of passage and that those who visited South America are more adventurous and those who visited Asia are more ‘spiritual’.

**Motivations and Travel Experience**

As described in the course of this chapter, the accumulation of personal experiences has a central role for backpackers in (re)constructing their own identities during or after their travels (Noy, 2004; Sørensen, 2003), seeking valuable
personal experiences, as a kind of rite of passage into adulthood. As Ooi and Laing (2010) mention, travel gives a relevant contribution to backpackers’ self-growth and maturity.

Motivations also differ from the backpacking experience. Motivations for travel are dynamic and evolve over time, changing from the first backpacker trip to successive ones (Loker-Murphy, 1997; Uriely et al., 2002). But as Jensen and Hjalager (2019) highlight, few types of research have been conducted on the motivational drivers of the second, third and subsequent backpacker trips. Based on Paris and Teye (2010), the previous authors mention that backpackers with more travel experience are less concerned with personal/social growth, and according to Sørensen (2003) more experienced backpackers are less concerned with intra-group status. Studying backpackers’ risk perceptions and risk reduction strategies in Ghana, Adam (2015) found that more experienced travellers are also less concerned about perceived risk. This behaviour associated with repeat backpackers ‘may very well be motivated by a need to retain, reinforce or ascertain his/her social identity as a backpacker’ (Jensen & Hjalager, 2019, p. 468). Paris and Teye (2010) also found that older backpackers tend to be less concerned with developing close friendships or challenging themselves while travelling.

In Jensen and Hjalager’s (2019) study, they compare travel motivations among first time, repeat (second-time and third-time), and serial backpackers from Denmark, demonstrating the heterogeneity of motivations. They reached some very interesting conclusions: first-time and repeat backpackers are only significantly different from each other on 2 of the 13 motivational factors (self-actualising and recognition), rated higher among first-time backpackers; serial backpackers’ rate 8 of the 13 motivations is significantly lower than first-time backpackers (stimulation, escapes, visiting famous attractions, self-actualisation, sun and beach, creating friendships, volunteering, and recognition) suggesting that serial backpackers are less pushed towards backpacking by those motivations when compared to less first-time and repeat backpackers; all backpackers share motivations such as striving to enjoy nature sites and moving with a high degree of autonomy; and for first-time backpackers’ self-development and gaining recognition are important motivations. The importance given to the ‘sun and beach’ motivation factor can explain why destinations such as Australia and Asia are very popular among less experienced backpackers.

The motivations for first-time and repeat backpackers in Shanghai were analysed by J. L. Hsu et al. (2014). They conclude not only that for backpackers visiting Shanghai, push factors were stronger than pull factors but also that the average length of stay of those who are repeat visitors is longer than that of backpackers who arrive in the city for the first time (first time – 6.44 days; second time – 7.50 days; third time or more – 9.42 days).
Although the impact of length of stay has not been investigated, researches on the space–time behaviour of tourists show that the length of stay can have a significant influence on the way destinations are explored. The literature reveals that the length of stay has an impact, for example, on the number of activities or attractions that can be visited or on the perception of the distances to be travelled (Lew & McKercher, 2006). Longer stays promote spatial dispersion and multi-attraction amplitude (Fennell, 1996; Zillinger, 2007) so visiting more distant attractions, associated with a longer stay, has the consequence of a greater territorial amplitude (Mckercher & Lau, 2008). As Caldeira (2014) found, the option for an organised visit in Lisbon decreased as the length of stay increased, in line with the fact that city tours (commercial/tourist transport) are associated with shorter stays (Mckercher & Lau, 2008).

In Martins’ (2020) research, backpackers who visited Porto showed a positive correlation between the number of days of stay and the maximum distance travelled from the accommodation, that is, backpackers on a longer stay tended to visit attractions further away from the accommodation. There was also a negative correlation with the number of attractions visited, that is, backpackers on a longer stay visited fewer attractions, in line with the literature. Regarding the transportation used, this study reveals that backpackers with more days of stay tend to make less use of commercial/tourist transportation such as city tours. Cultural aspects seem to be a stronger motivation for first-time backpackers than for repeat backpackers. In general, repeat backpackers stay longer but are less motivated than first-time backpackers (J. L. Hsu et al., 2014).

Other studies found that the travel experience of backpackers increases with age, and as travel experience increases, backpackers tend to visit more exotic and distant destinations (Paris & Teye, 2010; Richards & Wilson, 2004b). According to Paris and Teye (2010), although relaxation/mental relaxation is a motivating factor for all backpackers, for those with little travel experience, relaxation activities might differ.

"Backpackers with more travel experience are generally older and have family, work, or time constraints that they did not have during their early backpacker trips. These constraints can affect their motivation. (Paris & Teye, 2010, p. 256)"

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BACKPACKERS AND MASS TOURISM**

As presented in the previous chapter, as travel experience increases, backpackers tend to perform more activities (Richards & Wilson, 2004b). The activities practised by backpackers are diverse, and it is expected that based
on descriptions found in the literature that these travellers look for novelty, spontaneity and informal activities. Backpackers also have a propensity to participate in leisure activities involving risk and adventure (Nash et al., 2006; Paris, 2010a; Reichel et al., 2007) rejecting the tourist label. But while travelling, backpackers are also likely to visit the same popular attractions at a destination as other mass tourists (Paris, 2010a), seeking greater contact with nature, culture and adventure. Escape from everyday work, the search for independence, personal development, making new friends, a sense of discovery and experiencing other cultures and environments are some of the motivations found in the literature to distinguish backpackers from mainstream tourists (Alves et al., 2015; Hecht & Martin, 2006; Maoz, 2007). Alves et al. (2015) state that the quest for independence and search for adventure are among the most recurring travel motivations in the backpacker literature, the latter being an important part of the backpacker identity (E. Cohen, 2003; Elsrud, 2001). In a study conducted by Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995), it is stated that in order to obtain the unique travel experiences associated with backpacking, backpackers are inclined to avoid mainstream tourists. They often stay longer and visit more locations than mainstream tourists (Chitty, Ward, & Chua, 2007); however, recent research has shown a converging trend that backpackers are becoming less differentiated from mainstream travellers in terms of travel motivation, pre-trip planning and risk perceptions. The progressive institutionalisation of backpackers examined in Chapter 3 has led to the blurring of differences between backpackers and mainstream tourists.

In previous research, backpackers are presented and characterised as visitors who are distinct from mass tourists (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Sørensen, 2003) while recent research has found that they have become closer to institutionalised tourists (Larsen et al., 2011). Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) argued that modern-day backpacking is becoming more structured, thus making closing the gap with mass tourism. Backpacking also requires more commitment than organised mass tourism (Brzózka, 2012) but several scholars have emphasised the importance of not viewing backpackers as one homogeneous group of travellers, who are different from mainstream tourists (G. Chen et al., 2014; Møller Jensen & Hjalager, 2019; Sørensen, 2003). In a study of tourists visiting Norway, Larsen et al. (2011) identified few motivational differences between backpackers and other tourists and only the need for luxury and relaxation were less pronounced for backpackers.

Reichel et al., (2007, 2009) also supported such a view, noting that Israeli backpackers are becoming more institutionalised and less distinct from conventional mass tourists, especially in terms of risk perceptions. For Larsen et al. (2011), backpacking is even becoming closer to traditional tourism.
because backpackers share most motivations with other tourists and there are few differences regarding psychological variables, as they are no more motivated by social and cultural issues than institutionalised tourists. However, they conclude that they are less apprehensive about risk, namely consuming food they do not know.

Brzózka (2012) describes the differences between backpackers and mass tourists and the nature of backpacker trips, focussing on the motivations of Japanese, Polish, German and Israeli backpackers. Mass tourists are usually characterised as travelling in groups, and their activity is limited to trips that last up to several hours. Their trips are organised by travel agencies, they do not usually express much interest in local culture and frequently they are confined to the hotel (Brzózka, 2012). Israeli backpackers make longer trips, usually alone, preferring cheap accommodation, visiting non-European countries, while the Japanese make shorter trips, alone, and stay in more expensive accommodation. They buy food in supermarkets and travel around Europe and other developed countries. Poles stay in very cheap or free accommodation (Hospitality Club members), buy food in local markets and visit Europe and Asian countries. Germans make medium-length trips, alone or accompanied, stay in very cheap or free accommodations, such as camping, buy food in supermarkets and prefer to visit countries in Europe, South America, and Asia.

WESTERN AND EASTERN BACKPACKERS

Despite the fact that there are more Western travellers, particularly of European origin, undertaking backpacker-style trips and that the large majority of internationally published studies have a strong emphasis on Western backpackers, some authors criticise the Eurocentric view of the majority of published studies on backpacker tourism (Muzaini, 2006; Teo & Leong, 2006).

Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the number of published articles presenting non-Western perspectives (G. Chen et al., 2020; H. Chen & Weiler, 2014; C. I. Ho, Lin, & Huang, 2014; C. Y. Hsu, Lee, & Chen, 2017; J. L. Hsu et al., 2014; Maoz, 2006; Ong & du Cros, 2012; Teo & Leong, 2006). Israeli backpackers have received much attention, especially from researchers in Israel (Enoch & Grossman, 2010; Maoz, 2007; Noy, 2004; Reichel et al., 2007, 2009; Uriely et al., 2002), and recently the same has happened with an increasing number of articles being published on Chinese backpackers, such as the analysis of Chinese backpackers’ postcolonial views of Macao (Special Administrative Region), a territory previously
administered by Portugal (Ong & du Cros, 2012) and issues related to cultural preservation as a consequence of the increasing number of backpackers in Tibet (H. Chen & Weiler, 2014).

Contrary to the Western-oriented view of backpacker tourism studies, Teo and Leong (2006) take a post-colonial approach to it. By studying some Asian enclaves, they verified that backpacker tourists of Asian origin and especially female tourists can be discriminated, although the increase in the number of Asian tourists contributes to a change in stereotypes. The motivations of South Korean backpackers were analysed by Kim, Pearce, Morrison, and O’Leary (1996), who concluded that different motivations, related to the tourists’ age, influence destination choice. Therefore, motivations of a cultural nature have led Koreans to choose mainly Europe and Oceania to visit.

The differences in backpacker subculture between two groups of backpackers (Australasia and Asia) were analysed by Paris et al. (2014), who identify shared values and differences in backpacker culture. They concluded that Asian backpackers are less flexible in trip planning, do not depart from existing routes and seek more structured and organised experiences, with family dining options and easy trip planning, using online booking, for example. Asian backpackers are therefore closer to the institutionalised tourist. Australian and New Zealand backpackers, predominantly male, are more adventurous and express a higher level of agreement regarding backpacker culture such as partying, drinking and sex than Asians.

Chinese culture is distinct from Western cultures but there is little empirical evidence confirming that Chinese backpackers have different motivations from their Western counterparts (G. Chen et al., 2014). These researchers confirm that Chinese backpackers are also motivated by social interaction, self-actualisation, destination experience and escape and relaxation. They also found that the motivational factor of self-actualisation was identified as a distinct feature from previous studies and is a combination of two correlated constructs mentioned in the literature: self-improvement and self-cognition (G. Chen et al., 2014).

According to G. Chen et al., (2014), in Zhus’s (2007) research, it was found that 31.2% of Chinese backpackers preferred relatively luxurious transport such as a self-driven or rented car whereas only 55.9% would choose the local public transport; in contrast, the majority (93.5%) of the international backpackers in China would choose the local public transport. Similarly, 53.8% of the Chinese backpackers travel for an average length of one week or less; in contrast, 32% of the international backpackers in China travel for a length of or less than one year in a whole backpacking journey, 20% for 1 month or less and 16% for half a year or less (G. Chen et al., 2014).
In Mohsin and Ryan’s (2003) study, backpackers from North America, New Zealand, Australia and the United Kingdom give more importance to motivation factors such as ‘the long desire to undertake travel’ and ‘advice of friends and relatives’ than Japanese and other Asian backpackers.

*The so-called convergence of Chinese backpackers with their Western counterparts in terms of motivations, can be largely explained by the coupling effect of the social demands for personalised travels in transitional China and the nature of backpacking.* (G. Chen et al., 2014, p. 365)

As this activity is strongly influenced by the globalisation process, it is not surprising that the studies carried out so far have not found significant contrasts between Asian and Western backpackers. Backpacker tourism has its roots in the counterculture movement of the 1960s, a phenomenon originally from the West and over the years it has attracted the curiosity of youth travelers all over the world.

Despite the differences in geographical location, young people in all countries today have access to a global information network, which plays a very relevant role in their non-formal education. The lifestyle and ambition of a young, Chinese, middle-class person will not be very different from the lifestyle and ambition of their Japanese, North American or French equivalent. There are certainly cultural issues that will always distinguish them, but over time, globalisation will blur these differences.
In this chapter, backpackers’ identity, authenticity and behaviours will be analysed from a time and space perspective. Described today as one of the most popular forms of tourism (Iaquinto, 2015), backpacking has experienced significant changes over the last 50 years with direct implications on the identity and behaviours of backpackers. At this point, some questions arise:

(1) What does it mean to be a backpacker today?
(2) Can we speak of the existence of a backpacker culture?
(3) What experiences are these intrepid travellers looking for?

This chapter discusses these questions, which have a significant impact on the main changes that have occurred in backpacker tourism worldwide.

Travelling backpacker-style is travelling in an independent and flexible way that gives travellers a set of emotions associated with freedom: freedom to go where they want, freedom to change routes when they want, freedom to be who they want to be and to do what they want to do.

The length of the trips, usually more extended, also gives the traveller an enviable amount of time to reflect on themselves and their future. Thus, backpackers have a different relation to travelling, distinguishing themselves from other tourists by taking holidays which are usually longer and include several destinations (multi-destination travel). This is in line with Martins’ (2020) research on backpacker tourism, where 85.3% of the participants were visiting Porto (Portugal) for the first time, and making an international multi-destination trip: before arriving in Porto, 41.6% had visited other country(ies), with Spain standing out as the most visited and 44.2% stated their intention to visit (an)other country(ies) after Portugal.
But the growing heterogeneity and subsegmentation that backpacker tourists have been undergoing makes it difficult to answer the previous questions.

Currently, backpacker travel enables travellers to experience real adventures that, with a greater or lesser amount of risk, will impact their lives. As Reichenberger and Iaquinto (2022) point out, travelling backpacker style not only helps to reflect on one’s professional career but also allows one to experience new identities and an individual exploration of each one. But the truth is that over time, trips made by backpackers share a large number of characteristics related to the way of travelling (Uriely et al., 2002), making them less distinctive compared to trips made by other tourists.

Some significant changes in relation to the first backpackers include their enormous territorial dispersion – it is possible to find backpackers almost everywhere in the world – and the fact that it is no longer a mainly Western, male phenomenon. Reichenberger and Iaquinto (2022) also highlight the fact that backpackers are no longer a group of alienated people in relation to the societies where they live, nor is backpacker tourism a low-cost tourism phenomenon.

Who are these daring and obstinate travellers who leave home in search of exotic places for more or less extended periods of time?

To answer this question, we must go back a few decades to the 1960s. It was in the 1960s that one could find the drifters – the predecessors of the modern-day backpackers, described by Cohen as adventurous travellers that go ‘furthest away from the beaten track and from the accustomed way of life of his country… [with] no fixed itinerary or timetable and no well-defined goals of travel’ (E. Cohen, 1972, p.168).

Belonging to middle or upper-class families, unpatriotic, with hedonistic and anarchistic characteristics revealing contempt for dominant ideologies, drifters were also known to beg, to seek and share food and lodging (Riley, 1988), and to be associated with the consumption of drugs.

Why do they leave the comfort of their homes and backpacking in search of more authentic ways of life?

According to E. Cohen (1973), drifters sought to establish a break with the modern world by searching for exotic cultures and new spiritual and emotional experiences. The alienation of many young people, expressed on scape, made the trip an opportunity to escape the routine of everyday life and in the case of the North Americans, an escape from the Vietnam War. They were looking for an anarchist experience, far from home, sometimes resorting to drug use.

This group was composed mainly of young male travellers from Western countries, mostly Europeans, who rejected the materialistic values of Western society and went in search of meaning in their own lives.
Comparable to Cohen’s description of drifters is the ‘budget traveller’ described by Riley (1988) as those with flexible schedules and itineraries who were ‘escaping from the dullness and monotony of their everyday routine, from their jobs, from making decisions about careers, and desire to delay or postpone work, marriage, and other responsibilities’ (p. 317). As with their predecessor drifters, a long trip provided an opportunity to reflect on their future life and on important decisions related to entering adulthood – a rite of passage to full adulthood, but in contrast with them, these young travelers that went backpacking in the 1980s did not beg and were not associated with the counterculture movement where escape from one’s responsibilities was a characteristic. Even if ‘budget travellers’ were neither explorers nor drifters, they had characteristics of both, and as Riley (1988) also found, they continued to establish close relationships and links with their families during their trips.

The limited budgets available, and the intention to travel for long periods of time implies an obsession with the search for cheap meals and cheap accommodation. Thus the search for WoM information with the best recommendations reinforces the need to establish friendships and good personal relationships among travellers.

Not even the emergence of the first travel guides like *Lonely Planet* replaced the importance of word-of-mouth information among travellers looking for the most exotic and off the beaten track destinations. Backpacking is based on ‘experiencing difficulties and non-tourist experiences’ (Riley, 1988, p. 313) and as this author summarises, for these travellers, ‘travel is not merely seeking specific tourist attractions such as ruins, sights, and the like, but seeking the travelers’ enclaves that offer good food, fun, social interaction, and affordability’ (p. 327).

In the 1990s, the progressive institutionalisation of budget travellers and youth tourism led to the emergence of the backpacker label to describe all the travellers who carry their belongings on their backs for more or less extended periods. Since then, the backpacker market has grown and attracted the attention of numerous researchers all over the world. It is curious to note that the use of the term backpacker defined by P. L. Pearce (1990) led to the institutionalisation of these supposedly non-institutionalised tourists (Zhang et al., 2018).

Reichenberger and Iaquinto (2022, p. 4) question themselves, ‘what makes a backpacker a backpacker?’ To answer this question, it is important to remember that not all backpackers are the same; they are not a homogeneous group that shares exactly the same motivations to travel for long periods and with low budgets. Literature says that different meanings are assigned to the
backpacking style travel and individuals’ motivations might change across time (Uriely et al., 2002).

More recently, S. A. Cohen (2011, p. 1535) conceptualises ‘lifestyle travelers’ in the context of backpacking as a way of life:

\[
\text{an ongoing lifestyle practice that both at a micro level provides a unique sense of self to its practitioners and at a macro level comprises a distinct and recognisable social identity.}
\]

These ‘lifestyle travellers’ go backpacking for long periods of time and make their travels their own way of life. Travel as a way of life is important for their own identities. They are different from backpackers because of their long-term travel involvement, the difficulties of cultural re-assimilation, work motivation and the problematic return home. S. A. Cohen (2011) points out that over time there is a blending of the practices and ideologies of the backpacker subculture with their own self-identities and value systems and that ‘lifestyle travellers’ seek a durable change of lifestyle.

From the concept proposed by P. L. Pearce (1990), Paris (2010, p. 239) suggests that a backpacker is someone who seeks experiences associated with budget travel, places emphasis on social interaction with local people and fellow travellers, is organised independently and flexibly within the constraints of time, money and destination, travels as long as possible within the constraints of their own life, and places emphasis on informal and participatory holiday activities.

Since the first research on backpacking, several authors have associated authenticity and freedom with the phenomenon.

Backpackers differ from institutionalised tourists in the duration of their trips, the flexibility of their itinerary and their tendency to spend less. It is mainly these factors that will determine the choice of destinations and of means of transport and accommodation. Although Uriely et al.’s (2002, p. 536) study was conducted only with Israeli backpackers, they found that self-identity as backpackers relies mostly on compliance with the previous form-related practices rather than with type-related aspects, such as motivations.

Just like drifters, the travelling identity still be an important source of ‘meaning-making’ for backpackers (Zhang et al., 2017) and the backpacker label is still used as an expression of identity (S. A. Cohen, 2010). For this reason, the identity of the backpackers is one of the topics that has drawn the attention of several researchers (Adam et al., 2021; Agyeiwaah et al., 2020; G. Chen, Zhao, Huang, et al., 2019) and deserves a more detailed examination.
IDENTITY

Social identity is attached to value and emotions and is not merely knowledge of belonging to a social category (Zhang et al., 2017); moreover, it is

that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63)

The search for authenticity is a central issue in the backpacker phenomenon and ‘existential authenticity was experienced in terms of self-development and self-identity’ (Reichenberger & Iaquinto, 2022, p. 10). Everyone who travels backpacker-style sets out in search of authentic experiences, to meet and see authentic people and places and participate in activities that allow them to get in touch with the authenticity of the cultures and places visited in order to realise their true selves. Consequently, to meet and know local people – one of the major purposes of travel – is very important to backpackers’ identity. Travelling for extended periods of time also provides the opportunity for backpackers to get to know themselves better without feeling the responsibilities and pressures they feel at home (G. Chen et al., 2014; Reichenberger & Iaquinto, 2022). Throughout the trip, they can reflect on their future life and the options open to them regarding the way forward in their academic, professional and personal life.

Nowadays, although backpackers continue to claim that they want to experience the authentic and make contact with the locals, their interaction with the local population is sometimes very limited. The progressive institutionalisation of backpacker tourism has contributed to this.

The existence of a vast international network of hostels and other low-cost accommodation and a range of other support services for backpackers in all major enclaves has made interaction with locals virtually unnecessary. Interaction occurs predominantly with other travellers, in line with other studies that suggest that backpackers have little interest in meeting with locals and learning about their culture (Maoz, 2007). Focussing on backpacker travel in India, Hottola (2005) concludes in his research that many travel to India because it is culturally different, and to seek the authentic and the desire to experience the Other, but ‘confused by intercultural experience and loss of control, backpackers seek relationships with those as close to their own culture as possible’ (p. 17).

It is widely accepted that the backpacker identity is socially constructed and maintained by the backpackers during their trips (M. P. Hampton, 2013).
Therefore, the most travelled and experienced backpackers have a higher status. The road status is another key issue in backpackers’ identity and according to Sørensen (2003) it can be obtained through the use of worn equipment (scuffing cloths and backpacks) or through the narratives of risk and adventure as explained by Elsrud (2001). The interactions carried out with other backpackers originate processes of socialisation that open the doors to this subculture. Road status is related to the backpacker subculture where more experienced backpackers obtain a higher position in the hierarchy. To get there, backpackers must have to manipulate travel information, scuff their equipment, demonstrate that they have mastered price knowledge, and as Elsrud (2001) also suggests, developing narratives of risk and adventure is another important strategy to achieve a higher status. All subcultures are internally fragmented but backpacker subculture is even more so due to the different origins of its members (Martín-Cabello, 2014). The backpacker culture ‘is neither located nor bounded’ (Sørensen, 2003, p. 855) and has a strong impact on the identity of each traveller, which is visible in the feelings of belonging to the backpacker community (Richards & Wilson, 2004b), strengthening the feeling that backpackers are different from tourists. As noted by Sørensen (2003, p. 849),

*backpacker culture is not only seen as the culture of people categorised as backpackers but is also recognised as essential in the continuous re-creation of the category of the backpacker.*

Most backpackers’ behaviours can be explained by norms and values founded in the home societies but there are also social structures, norms and values founded in the interactions among these travellers. It is in this context that the central role of road status must be understood.

Reichenberger and Iaquinto (2022) also suggest that certain values and ideals, such as the desire to have authentic cultural experiences or to travel for longer periods of time to places outside the main tourist flows, underlie the backpacker culture. While for some backpackers, the true meaning of travel is related to the freedom felt due to the distance they find themselves from home; for others, it is the travel experience itself and the social relationships established with other travellers and locals that have a profound impact on their lives (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2018). The feeling of belonging to a community or group facilitates the process of socialisation with other backpackers, and it is in the process of contact and exploration of other cultures that backpackers acquire a new way of seeing the world and another way of reflecting on themselves. Belonging to a backpacker culture/subculture also facilitates the contact that is established with backpackers of other nationalities and ‘to
safe and communal sense making of the other’ (Reichenberger & Iaquinto, 2022, p. 8).

G. Chen, Zhao, and Huang (2019) found that group self-evaluation (i.e., backpackers’ unique travel style, culture, and personality traits) was the least important component to backpacker identity. In a research conducted with Chinese backpackers, they conclude that the previously well-recognised ethos of backpackers may have been blurred and diluted in the Chinese context, possibly due to the convergence of backpackers and mainstream tourists.

In attempting to segment backpackers based on their social identity, Adam et al. (2021) found that backpackers differ greatly in their sense of belonging and identity, revealing different aspects of their social identity. They segmented backpackers into three distinct groups: the Pragmatists; the Purists and the Eccentrics.

The Pragmatists are described as backpackers with mixed social identities who choose to be backpackers when it suits them – backpackers for convenience. They are motivated by a desire for self-development to develop their skills and to interact with local people in destinations. The Purists are reported as reminiscent of traditional backpackers, they see themselves as representing the identity of backpackers in general and are socially attached to it. Their motivations are generally self-centred and based on the need for self-development. They travel to fulfil their missions and are not attracted by the culture of the destination or the desire to interact with the locals at the destination. The Eccentrics are characterised by a total rejection of the social identity of backpackers and do not associate themselves in any way with backpackers. But even if they do not identify socially with backpackers, it may be possible that on an individual level they identify as backpackers.

Not only do backpackers reject the tourist label (Richards & Wilson, 2004a), but many express also a strong rejection of the social identity of backpackers as revealed by Zhang et al. (2017) regarding the Chinese backpackers facing an ‘identity crisis’. These reactions are a consequence of the numerous negative connotations associated with these travellers, such as old and worn-out clothing, drug use or begging, among others. However, the progressive diversification of the backpacker segment may also help to justify this attitude.

FREEDOM

Another issue linked to the backpackers’ identity is that of freedom, related ‘to be[ing] free from responsibilities and commitments’ (Reichenberger &
Iaquinto, 2022, p. 9). These feelings of freedom felt during the trip also contribute to the process of self-reflection and are perceived as the absence of restrictions and expectations in the societies of origin (Reichenberger & Iaquinto, 2022). The distance from home allows backpackers to break barriers allowing them to do whatever they want. This distance also favours personal reflection that occurs without the restrictions found in the home society.

According to Reichenberger and Iaquinto (2022) freedom has a temporal and a spatial dimension: a temporal dimension when backpackers travel as an escape from the pressures induced by the lack of time related to work stress and a spatial dimension when they travel as an escape from the spatial restrictions caused by a crowded home, with no space to relax.

The search for meaning in life implies the development and discovery of the ‘self’, which can only be achieved without the temporal, spatial and social restrictions inherent to everyday life. Backpacking is therefore a way to reduce or relieve these restrictions through the longer duration of the trip (temporal freedom), the search for places on the fringes of the main tourist flows (spatial freedom) and social interaction with other travellers and local people (social freedom) (Reichenberger & Iaquinto, 2022).

BACKPACKERS FROM NON-WESTERN COUNTRIES

As a typical Western phenomenon, the backpacker market has been dominated for decades by travellers from western countries, namely Europeans and North Americans.

But the deepening of the globalisation process has facilitated the diffusion of new communication technologies and the development of transportation, on the one hand, contributing to the increasing number of international travellers and, on the other hand, contributing to the economic growth and consequent development of many countries that were long on the margin of the main international tourism flows.

M. P. Hampton (2013, p. 29) said that for Latin American or African backpackers, little was known or had been researched and speculated that for some their trip may also form part of a rite of passage as well. Most research about backpacker tourism in Africa or in Latin America is done with an emphasis on the international visitor perspective or on development contributions but some developing destinations, including Ghana, are becoming attractive to budget travellers, offering budget accommodation facilities and diverse activity-based attractions (Dayour Adongo, & Taale, 2016). With the increasing popularity of backpacker tourism in South Africa, Visser (2004) studies the
proliferation of backpacker tourism and its developmental impacts on this country. Rogerson (2007) analyses the challenges and strategic opportunities about the development of backpacker tourism in South Africa. In his research, the majority of backpackers were from Europe countries, Australia, New Zealand or North America. Backpackers from Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, China and Mexico were responsible for less than 1% each. In a research conducted by Adam (2015) in Ghana, only 8.3% and 3.5% were African and Asian backpackers, respectively; and Dayour et al. (2016) counted only 5.2% of backpackers with their origin in African countries.

In Latin America, there are also few studies. In Mexico, backpacking dates back to the early 1970s, when young Europeans and North Americans travelled alone or in small groups through Mexico and Central America. Most of them were not ‘hippies’ and followed the Gringo Trail, starting out from a northern border city or from Mexico City (Brenner & Fricke, 2007). The authors state that since then, backpackers have become more experienced and diversified. Still following a standard travel route based on travel guide information, in the 1990s, many travellers were looking for a more ‘adventurous’ form of travel than sun-and-beach tourism or organised cultural tourism (Brenner & Fricke, 2007).

Martín-Cabello (2014) studies the similarities between the backpackers’ profile and subculture worldwide and backpackers in Chile, suggesting the presence of a particular ideology among Latin American backpackers. In Chile, los mochileros as they are called in Spanish, share almost the same socio-demographic characteristics described in literature. They come from European countries (England, Netherlands, France, etc.), but the majority of backpackers come from Latin American countries: Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Honduras (Martín-Cabello, 2014). It was also found that backpackers from Latin America share a specific idea about ‘cultural community’ that distinguishes them from others backpackers. For non-Latin American backpackers, the Latin American unification is produced by exclusion (us/them), while for Latin Americans it is produced by inclusion (us/we) – they see themselves as one unique entity. This is an interesting finding that certainly deserves to be further explored in other contexts and geographies in the future.

Differences in backpacker subculture between two groups of backpackers (Australasia and Asia) were analysed by Paris et al. (2014), who identify shared values and differences in backpacker cultural values. They conclude that Asian backpackers are less flexible in planning trips, not departing from existing routes and seeking more structured and organised experiences, family dining options and greater ease in planning trips, for example, through online booking, and are therefore closer to the institutionalised tourist.
Australian and New Zealand backpackers, predominantly male, are more adventurous and express a higher level of agreement regarding backpacker culture such as partying, drinking and sex than Asians.

Backpackers from Asia

According to M. P. Hampton (2013), the growing sub-sector of Asian backpackers is characterised by travelling within their own region and because of that, their backpacker-style travel has perhaps less dramatic effects than, for example, a Western backpacker who goes to Asia and has a more intense culture shock.

Studying Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and tourist behaviours, Manrai and Manrai (2011) found that the influence of culture greatly influences tourist behaviour, not only on travel motivation but also on the tourist decision-making process involving preference and choice behaviours. Like travellers, backpackers are no exception and the culture of origin plays an important role in the backpackers’ behaviour and their experience before, during and after travelling.

With the accelerated economic development of this region of the world, it is expected that in the coming decades, cultural differences will continue to blur and that through business and tourism, the globalisation process will continue to favour multicultural contacts, promoting tolerance and the reduction of cultural impacts between visitors and hosts.

Some countries in Asia are no longer just a backpacker destination. The number of Asian backpackers has been increasing and gaining the attention of several researchers. In China, in the 1990s, this independent form of travel was perceived as ‘exotic’ and has become an important subculture of contemporary Chinese youths forming a unique understanding of backpacking (Zhang et al., 2017). In a recent study with Malaysian backpackers, it was found that stimulation is the most crucial motivating factor to travel and that backpackers’ motivation varied with travel experience (Latif et al., 2022). In general, backpacking is part of a process of leaving home and becoming an independent adult and Asian regional backpacking trips are a small but probably important step for some young people, who live in highly regulated education societies (M. P. Hampton, 2013, p. 29). Writing about the small numbers of Chinese backpackers permitted to travel at present, Ong and du Cros (2012) argue that experiencing post-colonialism in such places as the Macao SAR (Special Administrative Region) is more about the ‘spectacle’ and
the ‘superficial’ than being a search for authenticity. They contend that in this case, Macao acts as an ‘exoticised leisurescape’ (Ong & du Cros, 2012, p. 750) for these backpackers.

Given its size, the Chinese tourism market deserves special attention. Since the late 1970s, China has undergone numerous profound economic, social, cultural and technological changes. These transformations have resulted in truly spectacular economic growth, contributing to millions of Chinese becoming part of a middle class. But social and cultural changes were also very fast and intense, and young people in China, just like young Westerners in the past, are confronted with feelings of uncertainty, confusion, anxiety and doubts about themselves (G. Chen et al., 2014) and perhaps they also decide to travel at times of transition in their life (Riley, 1988).

Without the historical tradition of a counterculture, the emergence and the expansion of backpacker tourism in China must be understood in a specific context as described by Xie (2017, p. 5) in her PhD thesis, where some fundamental changes that occur in the context of a collectivist culture are highlighted:

- the Chinese economic reform;
- the globalisation process;
- the expansion of the middle class; and
- the emergence of several social problems.

China has a planned economy where each individual sacrifices his or her personal interests in exchange for general collective interests, resulting in a greater dependence of the population on the state. In the 1980s, the Chinese economy opened to the world through strong state intervention in which numerous privatisations were carried out, allowing the controlled entry of foreign capital. Consequently, in the late 1990s, technological advances, like the internet, provided important contributions to the progressive exposure of the young Chinese population to Western cultures. According to Statista (2021c), in 2020 there were 988.99 million internet users in China, representing more than one-fifth of the 4.66 billion internet users worldwide. As the emergence of backpackers in China coincided with the boom in the Chinese Internet industry, these numbers help to understand an important characteristic of Chinese backpackers – their high dependence on the Internet (Ong & du Cros, 2012). It is important to remember that the growth of virtual platforms in China and the
preferences for travelling in the company of others has facilitated the interaction of travellers (Zhang et al., 2017).

The economic reforms have led China to impressive economic growth, with the average annual GDP growing by 9.3% between 1980 and 2020 (The World Bank, 2021a), which resulted in the expansion of the middle class and consequently to the development of consumption. Travel became possible for millions of people and in few years China turned into one of the largest tourism markets in the world with 154.6 million departures in 2019 (The World Bank, 2021b) and 66 million international arrivals in the same year (World Tourism Organization, 2020).

How have such transformations, induced by economic reforms with neoliberal approaches, been understood by people that live in a non-democratic country where the Communist Party continues to control the economy? The answer to this question helps to understand and contextualise the backpacker phenomenon in this Asian giant.

The population’s lifestyles and values are changing but politically, as everyone knows, China still is a Communist state. This issue was discussed by Xie (2017), who stated that economic growth also resulted in income inequality, increasing commodity prices, high costs of housing loans and child education, discrimination against migrant workers, moral bankruptcy, environmental crisis and rapid urbanisation with all the problems it causes. It is in this social context that development of backpacking in China should be understood. This dramatic social change was responsible for the emergence of a generation in transition who live between old and new social norms and values (Xie, 2017). This generation in transition is similar in age to western Millennials and Chinese parents have high expectations of their academic success to find a good job in the future. Furthermore, the ‘trust crisis’ caused by the imperfect legal system and isolation and deficient socialisation among the younger generation have also been referred to as outcomes of China’s tremendous changes (G. Chen et al., 2014, p. 364). Chinese youth are now confronted with feelings of anxiety and doubts about themselves (G. Chen et al., 2014), facing an ‘identity crisis’ while travelling, rejecting the backpacker identity in the end or continuing to struggle to (re)negotiate it (Zhang et al., 2017).

The literature states that Chinese backpackers are motivated by social interaction, self-actualisation, relaxation, escape and destination experience (G. Chen et al., 2014), so, they are no different from their Western counterparts in terms of travel motivation. However, while social interaction and self-actualisation are in line with motivations identified in previous studies (Loker-Murphy, 1997; Maoz, 2007), G. Chen et al. (2014, p. 364) found that
self-actualisation turned out to be a combination of two correlated constructs mentioned in the literature: self-improvement and self-cognition.

Recent research conducted with Chinese backpackers (G. Chen, Zhao, Huang, et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2018) also reveals a certain homogeneity of its elements, leading Adam et al. (2021) to conclude that backpackers share a single social identity. According to Zhang et al. (2018), Chinese backpackers’ social identities are linked with external-oriented motivation, work alienation and detachment from home centres. Therefore, some characteristics related with Chinese backpackers’ behaviours have a very limited relationship to their identities in China. Although they share some characteristics, some differences can be found between Chinese and Western backpackers. Chinese backpackers prefer relatively luxurious transport, such as driving their own car or hiring a car, and travel for an average length of or less than one week (G. Chen et al., 2014).

G. Chen et al. (2014, p. 366) highlight that

behavioral differences between Chinese backpackers and their international counterparts could be explained from the traditional Chinese culture (e.g. Qiongjia Fulu: to practise thrift at home but be amply provided while travelling), institutional arrangements (e.g. public policy for holidays) and the social psychology of the Chinese society in a rapidly and tremendously transforming period.

Studying how backpacking is perceived and practised by young Chinese people and the differences among young backpackers regarding travel motivations and life attitudes, Xie (2017) concludes that the popularity of backpacking in China is based on the representation of freedom and independence as a process of reflexive awareness by young Chinese people. This study reveals that the popularity of backpacking can be understood as primarily due to how the activity represents ‘freedom’ and ‘independence’ within the context of China. Backpacking is not merely a consumption-led mobility, but also widely employed as a process of reflexive awareness by young Chinese people.

Four types of backpackers were identified by Xie (2017):

- the amateur,
- the dreamer,
- the escaper, and
- the alternative seeker.
To the amateur and to the dreamer, backpacking is a way to escape from the daily routine and find self-fulfilment through meaningful activity. The escaper and the alternative seeker tend to question mainstream values and traditional expectations and conventions, seeking to examine the self and help to find a personal way to measure success and happiness in their life. In this sense, backpacking becomes a debate among young people regarding the norms and values of a worthwhile life and reflects the profound cultural and social change taking place within contemporary China as mentioned before. Zhang et al. (2017) concluded that the process of becoming a backpacker in China is dynamic and contextual and backpackers’ identities are products of interaction between socially constructed images and individual actions, or strategies.

Xie (2017) argues that traditional expectations and conventions, namely stages within one’s life, such as getting a job, settling down in a city, getting married and having children, are questioned and challenged. Most participants in this study are understood to possess respect for backpackers who pursue freedom and their dreams, as ‘freedom’ is perceived to represent strong individual capabilities and critical thinking. However, they also realise that anxiety consistently accompanies this freedom, particularly within an individualised society such as China’s. In general, the conflict between individual interests/desires and the family/social obligations is highlighted by participants in a society where backpacking has been stigmatised as being irresponsible.

For G. Chen et al. (2019, p. 11), group self-value, self-categorisation and group self-evaluation are the most salient component of Chinese backpacker identity, indicating that the benefits of personal development, as well as perceived contributions to local communities, have been perceived to be the most important element in constructing the backpacker identity.

While it is widely accepted that the backpacker identity is socially constructed and maintained by backpackers during their trips (M. P. Hampton, 2013), for many Chinese, being a backpacker is a dynamic identity which is actively and continuously re-constructed (Zhang et al., 2017).

**Israeli Backpackers**

Despite backpackers still being predominantly of Western origin and culture (from North America, Australia, New Zealand and Western Europe), Maoz (2007) also highlights that several backpackers of Israeli and Japanese
nationality could be found. Young Israelis are one of the most studied traveller groups within backpacker tourism.

Israeli backpackers associate different meanings to backpacking, participating in very different activities during their trip/travel, suggesting that motivations change over time (Uriely et al., 2002). In the context of a society geographically located in the ‘Middle East’ with a complex conflict with Palestine where military tension is always present, for Israeli backpackers, travel works as a kind of ‘decompression chamber’ after the rigorous and dangerous compulsory military service (Maoz, 2004; Reichel et al., 2009). It is important to note that they do not travel in search of a new lifestyle and they are not alienated from their own society (Maoz, 2007), and consequently they do not expect their trips to result in significant personal changes. Maybe for this reason, although the Israeli backpackers mentioned that backpacking was important in their lives, they did not report any major crisis on their return home (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2018).

They spend a long period of their lives in the army and that implies responsibilities and strict rules because they always have to be prepared to operate in war scenarios. Travelling is therefore a way for younger Israelis to escape from fear, anxiety, injury or death after military service (Maoz, 2007).

Collins-Kreiner et al. (2018) studied the effect of time on the impact of the backpacking experience among Israeli backpackers and conclude that many of them later repeated trips in line with the lifestyle travellers where some individuals may extend backpacking to a way of life (S. A. Cohen, 2011). The literature describes Israeli backpackers as tending to behave in a more permissive way in terms of drug use and disregard for local norms (Maoz, 2007). They also spend much of their time in Israeli enclaves limiting their interaction with the local population (Maoz, 2004).

The host–guest interaction between Israeli backpackers and locals was analysed by Maoz (2006) in three enclaves in India. Typically, backpacking involves Western middle-class to upper-class guests and Third World lower-class hosts; and according to Maoz (2006), this can be seen as a form of imperialism and colonialism. While they visit India,

 Israeli backpackers continue their 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 (2006, p. 227)
They are not alienated from their own society (Maoz, 2007) and, like some Asians, are inclined to travel in groups.

**CHANGES IN THE MAIN INTERNATIONAL ROUTES**

Since E. Cohen’s (1973) drifters, the backpacker phenomenon has been strongly influenced by the globalisation process. Today, the practice is no longer exclusively associated with Europeans or Americans. And as cultural factors are expected to explain variations in travel behaviour (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede, Garibaldi de Hilal, Malvezzi, Tanure, and Vinken, 2010), the increasing numbers of Chinese, Taiwan or South Korean backpackers are changing the backpacking geography.

According to WYSE Travel Confederation (2019), there is a wide range of aspects that can influence backpacker destinations including exchange rates, visa policies and fashion. A combination of factors associated with the international context, such as the technological evolution in transport and telecommunications, changes in world geopolitics, the emergence of economic and financial crises and the most recent SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, among others, have been responsible for more or less significant changes in the main routes and destinations of backpackers.

Since the beginning of the hippy trail – overland route from Europe to South Asia – in the 1960s, the number of young people travelling backpacking-style has been increasing. As M. P. Hampton (2013, pp. 7–8) describes, young people in Europe travelled mainly to the more Western countries, Greek islands, Morocco and later the Middle East. In the United States, young people from the west coast mainly sought destinations further south, along California, Mexico, Central American countries and later, South America. On the east coast, they travelled towards Europe to start the mythical Road to Kathmandu or to seek a flight to other Asian destinations. The more adventurous Australians and New Zealanders sought to travel towards the UK overland from South Asia.

The predecessors of the backpackers followed the oldest route which was part of the so-called 3Ks of Asia: Kabul (Afghanistan), Kathmandu (Nepal) and Kuta (Bali, Indonesia) (M. Hampton & Hamzah, 2010). In the 1970s, the end of the Vietnam War, the oil crisis and the illegalisation of cannabis in Nepal reduced the number of travellers on the hippie trail and in 1979, the revolution in Iran and the invasion of Afghanistan by Russia definitively interrupted this land route to Asia, leading to the end of drifters
and the emergence of the backpacker phenomenon (M. P. Hampton, 2013) as we know it today.

Because of their limited travel budget, backpackers often use the cheapest means of transport. They look for the cheapest air travel to reach their destination and once there they usually travel by train or bus. If the journey includes island destinations, ferries or low-cost airlines are also used. Word of mouth is also important to find the best destinations and means of transport.

In the 1990s, the backpacker trail in Southeast Asia started in Bangkok. Travellers arrived by air and this city became a main international air travel hub (M. Hampton, 1998) for backpackers that travelled to the southern Thai coastal and island destinations (Fig. 5.1). They travelled by train, bus or ferries to Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Bali and eastern Indonesian islands (M. Hampton & Hamzah, 2010). The Banana Pancake Trail is a name that goes back to the early days of backpacking in Asia and is related with the selling of banana pancakes and other comfort foods to backpackers (Marec, 2019).

Today it is possible to find several backpacker trails all over Southeast Asia, and the Philippines has become a new destination to visit.

Despite the growing interest and diversification of researched themes, there are no relevant studies on the main international routes/tracks used by backpackers or on the reasons that explain the changes that have been occurring in the meantime, which is why M. Hampton and Hamzah (2010) analysed the main backpacker routes in Southeast Asia. Verifying that significant changes have occurred, namely with the emergence of new routes: Bangkok – Cambodia – Vietnam – Laos (Fig. 5.1), the authors state that their emergence was already expected due to the fact that backpackers are continuously looking for new places to visit, although they conclude that the route changes are mainly due to low-cost airlines and new transportation networks, political instability and terrorism and the growth of regional competitiveness for this market segment by exotic destinations such as Vietnam and Cambodia.

On the map in Fig. 5.1, it is possible to observe the location of the main backpacker routes and the number of hostels by country. Regarding hostels, only the countries that had 10 or more hostels registered on the well-known website hostelworld.com in 2019 were mapped (TheHostelHelper, 2019).

In the American continent, there is the Gringo trail,¹ which starts in Mexico and follows the entire American west coast up to Chile. This is a very appealing region of the world for backpackers. From a natural point of view,
the beaches, the jungles, the volcanoes and the big mountains are the main attraction. From a cultural perspective, the ruins of the ancient Inca, Aztec and Mayan civilisations are important attractions. Many continue southwards, travelling through Chile, Argentina and Brazil.

The traditional Europe trail starts in London or Paris and follows the main European capitals, including Berlin, Prague, Vienna or Budapest, but there is not just one single route to follow. Many travellers focus only on the Mediterranean countries like Greece, Italy, Southern France, Spain and Portugal; others also visit the Balkan countries like Croatia, Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, Eastern countries like East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania among others became among the most popular countries to visit.

The Silk Road enables travellers to explore the countries of central Asia. It starts in Turkey and passes through the countries of the Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan) towards Kazakhstan. It is one of the least known routes but with enormous potential for discovering many interesting cultures and with possible links to the far east (Mongolia and China). On the African continent, the countries to the north (Morocco or Egypt) were among the first to be discovered by backpackers.

South Africa followed and, due to its important international air connections, became an important destination for this segment. With a good

Fig. 5.1. International Backpacker Routes and Number of Hostels by Country. Sources: Global Gallivanting (2021), M. Hampton and Hamzah (2010), Marec (2019) and TheHostelHelper (2019) (own construction).
network of hostels and land connections to some neighbouring countries, the Southern Africa route also passes through Namibia and Zimbabwe. In recent years, Ghana has also attracted the attention of backpackers from all over the world.

India’s best known tourist circuit is the Golden Triangle, which connects the national capital Delhi to Agra and Jaipur. The journey starts in the capital Delhi, towards the Taj Mahal in Agra, and then on to the desert landscapes of Rajasthan. But a country, the size of India, offers an endless amount of places to visit and consequently a wide variety of routes. The map in Fig. 5.1 depicts one major route, close to the west coast, which follows the main cities and attractions from the north to the south of the country.

Australia is one of the best-known countries for backpackers and the most mature destination for this market segment. There are many possible routes all over the country, although the best known is the Cairns–Melbourne route, which crosses the whole east coast of Australia, passing through cities like Brisbane, Sydney or Canberra.

The WYSE Travel Confederation’s New Horizons Survey (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2019) reveals that between 2007 and 2017 the general regional distribution of backpacker trips was relatively stable with an increase for Asia – the only world region registering an important increase. During the same period, Western and Eastern Europe and Africa lost market share. The same report justified this dynamic with more backpackers venturing further afield over time (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2019).

Table 5.1 provides a comparison of the countries most visited by backpackers between 2007 and 2017. It is possible to see that the United States has overtaken Australia as the main backpacker destination, probably due to changes Australia made in 2016 to the tax rules for backpacker/working holidaymaker income, which reduced the possibilities for tax-free earnings. There are six European countries on the list, with France and Spain among the most popular destinations in the world in 2017, with 3rd and 4th position, respectively. Asia and Africa have only one country in the rankings, and South America is not represented.

**BACKPACKER BEHAVIOUR**

With a preference for going alone or in pairs, backpackers behave differently at destinations. As their motivations are equally diverse, the literature has shown that there are groups of backpackers who try to behave according to the social and cultural norms of the host societies, immersing themselves
in the culture of a destination (Peel & Steen, 2007), dressing with their traditional clothes and consuming local food (Enoch & Grossman, 2010). There are also backpackers who, unlike the former, do not seek contact with locals, preferring to spend time with other backpackers they meet in the hostels and enclaves they pass through, frequenting Western fast-food restaurants.

There are also those who travel with a focus on fun, consumption of alcohol and drugs and practising unsafe sex (Allon & Anderson, 2010). Bonny-Noach (2018) states that Israeli backpackers use drugs while travelling, and one of the main motivations for them to visit India is drug use. These behaviours have negative impacts on destinations, namely changes to the locals in their dress codes, diet, drinking culture, religious value, and personal relationships (Sroypetch, 2016). Although these, sociocultural impacts should not be attributed exclusively to backpackers, but to tourists in general, it is important to highlight that drug consumption among backpackers is not generalised and is similar to that of the general populations from which the backpackers originate (Riley, 1988), meaning that it is part of the experience and not its main aspect, as Binder (2004) emphasises.

A relevant contribution to the backpacking experience has been the emergence of internet and technological gadgets such as smart phones, tablets, laptops, digital cameras or iPods. Besides allowing permanent contact with family and friends, they play an important role in maintaining a constant

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connection to backpacker culture, both on the road and virtually (Paris, 2012) and mediating experiences between travellers.

With the new technologies, backpackers can also book accommodation and transportation and can better document their trips, sharing texts and photos about their experiences, working as an electronic word of mouth. A search for ‘backpacker travel’ in an online search engine returns almost 200 thousand results with thousands of blogs and websites of experienced travellers sharing their experiences, the best places to visit, the best and cheapest places to eat and sleep, and above all, the best tips on how to get there. With internet and smartphones, backpacking culture can be virtualised and accessible any time at any place, ending the once geographically and temporally fragmented backpacker culture (Paris, 2012).

For this reason, it is increasingly difficult to find unexplored places and travel off the beaten track, because as soon as someone shares that information, it spreads quickly on the web.

The search for authenticity leads backpackers to seek new places to visit but the literature reveals that both backpackers and non-backpackers tend to visit the same types of places (Mohsin & Ryan, 2003), including visits to cultural attractions, well-known tourist destinations and popular places (Alves et al., 2015), and have the same type of interests as other tourists (Reichel et al., 2009; Ryan & Mohsin, 2001).

In a study on the behaviour of backpackers in an urban destination classified by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, Martins (2020) concludes that historical monuments/buildings, the historic centre, viewpoints, churches/religious temples and bridges were the most visited attractions, in line with other studies carried out at an international level, which indicates that visiting historical sites and monuments is quite popular among backpackers (Richards & Wilson, 2004a). Although the literature usually describes backpackers as more likely to take risks, the visitors who participated in this research did not confirm this: they did not have a very exploratory attitude, did not stray far from their accommodation – reflecting a limited territorial dispersion – and when they did, it was almost always in tours organised by private companies. The WYSE Travel Confederation Report also states that between 2002 and 2017, the number of different activities undertaken by backpackers while travelling fell, particularly visits to museums and to nightclubs (WYSE Travel Confederation, 2019). This diversity of activities carried out in the destinations visited reflects the heterogeneity of this tourist segment, and the changes that are being registered in the way backpackers consume destinations reflect the impact of the rapid globalisation process on young people all over the world.
As examined in the course of this chapter, through travelling, some backpackers search for their individuality and forms of self-expression and after a long trip, returning home requires a period of adjustment. Some backpackers report that they ‘began the trip as one person and returned as someone else’ (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2018, p. 410). Other travellers re-evaluate their previous job, others return to school. They also bring ‘a greater awareness of the waste in the developed world, disdain for materialism, and a desire to live a more simple, unencumbered life’ (Riley, 1988, p. 325). Others mention that backpacking for an extended period allowed them to work and develop self-confidence helping to make them more self-reliant, flexible and open-minded (O’Reilly, 2006).

Despite the changes that have occurred in recent decades, namely in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics, backpackers are still travellers who seek experiences which are linked to authenticity and freedom. Such experiences are expressed through social interactions among backpackers and between backpackers and the local population. Collins-Kreiner et al. (2018) report that backpackers consider their travel experiences as highly meaningful, allowing them to know themselves more deeply. These trips initiate a profound process of personal change (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2018) that allows them to reflect on how they see the world and develop ideas by themselves in line with the idea that backpackers continue to experience their trips as highly significant, to the point of being transformative (O’Reilly, 2006). For this very reason, it is secure to say that the transformations experienced will not fade away over time.

Until the 1990s, it was easy to identify a backpacker. The growth of the phenomenon and its progressive institutionalisation resulted in the expansion, not only of the network of hostels and other low-cost accommodation around the world but also of a number of other services that support this segment. Backpacker enclaves emerged in various destinations around the world and the mediatisation of this form of travel attracted even more young people eager to visit exotic destinations and cultures where they could learn about and experience new things.

The growth of backpacker tourism has led to a diversification of travellers, making it more heterogeneous in motivations and travel characteristics. Consequently, backpacking is becoming closer to traditional tourism as they share most motivations with other tourists and there are few differences regarding psychological variables (Larsen et al., 2011). However, it is still an activity that gives a certain status to those who practise it (O’Reilly, 2006).

That is why it is so difficult nowadays to identify what makes a backpacker a backpacker.
In recent decades, the average length of backpacker trips has fallen, confirming the large growth potential for short-term backpacker tourism as estimated by Sørensen (2003). This can be explained by the price reduction of long-haul air tickets, the growth of low-cost air companies operating at regional level, the proliferation of hostels and other supporting services around the globe. The effects of globalisation have led this market segment to a progressive diversification, but this does not mean the end of backpacker tourism. We will continue to find young travellers backpacking all over the world in search of exotic places and cultures and staying there for long periods of time.

*Just as drifting didn’t die […] and was soon reborn as backpacking, backpacking remains a ‘mobility fantasy’, and will continue to draw dispersed individuals to see movement as a vehicle to explore new subjective experiences.* (O’Regan, 2021, p. 8)

Globalisation is not killing backpacker tourism, it is shaping it!

The next chapter will raise a number of important issues about backpackers that may encourage further debate among academics, students and practitioners.

**NOTE**

1. “Gringo” means foreigner in Spanish.
This book documents the experiences of backpacker tourists and covers the main topics discussed in the scientific literature with a fresh overview and a comprehensive synthesis of contemporary backpacking. We hope that we have been able to share with the reader some of our enthusiasm on the subject, which is described by some authors as one of the most relevant tourism research topics.

Over time, the economic, sociocultural, technological and economic changes brought about by the globalisation process have gradually led ‘drifters’ to become a residual phenomenon. They have been replaced by backpackers, who are taking advantage of all the facilities and opportunities resulting from the improved accessibility and lower costs of air travel. The gigantic network of hostels and other low-cost accommodation that has sprung up all over the world has also made a major contribution to the expansion and popularity of backpacker tourism.

The book offered a systematic and longitudinal review of the field of backpacker tourists and backpacker experiences. From the original travelers, rooted in contracultural ideas, to the non-consensual subsegments and conflicting interpretations that have been recently identified, the backpacker’s socio-demographic characteristics were presented, and it was also described how they plan and organise their journeys, with emphasis on the new technologies that have revolutionised the way backpackers travel today.

The growth of the Asian economies has contributed to the shift of the centre of world tourism activity, still largely concentrated in Europe, to southern and eastern Asia. Therefore, backpacker tourism is also changing with an increasing number of young people from this region of the world travelling
backpacker style. For this reason, it was opportune to proceed with a comparative analysis between Western and Eastern backpackers, comparing their travel motivations and the way they experience a destination. Finally, the backpackers’ identity, authenticity, behaviours and backpacker culture were analysed, presenting the main changes that occurred from a space–time perspective.

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to highlight the main topics, concepts and issues raised in the previous chapters.

In Chapter 1, a brief presentation of the backpacker phenomenon was provided through an overview of its evolution, describing backpacker tourism development from marginal activity to an important global industry in the twenty-first century. Acting as true global nomads (Richards, 2015), the growing number of young people travelling with backpacks has become more diverse, complex and heterogeneous, as revealed by their different motivations and behaviours and their psychographic and social characteristics.

The development of backpacker tourism in recent decades has benefitted from the process of globalisation, namely political-economic changes, technological innovation in telecommunications and transports, socio-cultural transformations or new marketing strategies. But most important ones were the emergence of the internet, the establishment of a gigantic network of hostels around the world and the changes in the liberalisation of airspace, which have led to the emergence of many low-cost airlines in several regions of the world.

Young tourists, and contemporary backpackers in particular, are an important market for the future, and those responsible for destination management organisations (DMOs) should be aware of that. The literature on backpackers mentions that these travellers generate important impacts on the destination they visit (Martins & Costa, 2017). As outlined in Chapter 1, backpackers sometimes spend more money than other tourists and are more likely to return to the same destination. Another relevant issue is the fact that backpackers are recognised as more resilient to eventual crises, being among the last to leave and the first to arrive when crises begin to be resolved. Given their greater mobility and territorial dispersion in the destinations visited, they spend most of their money in local communities, making an important contribution to other economic activities (UNWTO, 2016; UNWTO & WYSE Travel Confederation, 2010). It should not be forgotten that some of the best-known tourist destinations in Asia were discovered in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s by young travellers setting off from the United States and Europe with a small backpack towards off-the-beaten-track territories. Over time, these places have emerged from anonymity to feature in the world’s most famous travel guides such as
Lonely Planet, attracting other visitors. On an economic level, backpackers spend more money than other tourists, due to their longer stays, contributing to a significant influx of foreign currency. They usually do not buy luxury products but spend more on local goods and services such as catering, transport and accommodation.

Chapter 2 was dedicated to the concepts and the segments of backpacker tourists identified in the literature. A historical overview of backpacker tourism in the last decades was presented, giving prominence to the concept of the backpacker tourist and to the various subsegments. The central aim was to describe backpackers referring to the differences between contemporary backpackers and those of the 1960s. As some researchers have mentioned, there is a lack of consensus and the existence of inconsistencies in the backpacker concept used in published researches, and thus it was important to highlight this issue. There are no uniform criteria for the operationalisation of the term backpacker and that leads to incorrect identification of backpackers in some research and therefore some studies published on backpackers may not actually be about backpackers.

The institutionalisation of backpackers is the focus of Chapter 3. Sociodemographic characteristics and their main changes were discussed. Backpackers are getting older. Some have stopped travelling with backpacks on their backs, and have got a job and got married. But others still seem to be attracted by this peculiar way of travelling, which facilitates greater contact with the local communities and their cultural aspects. Even when travelling alone, it is easy to find another traveller who shares the same motivations, the same enthusiasm for discovering new places and new people. The experience that is obtained will last a lifetime and will help to shape and enrich future men and women with skills that led P. L. Pearce and Foster (2007) to use the expression ‘University of Travel’. These authors conclude that effective communication, being open-minded, self-confidence, decision-making and general knowledge are some of the main contributions of travel to self-reported individual skill development. According to the rating of importance of generic skills to backpackers and the amount of improvement due to the travel backpacking experience, participants in this research highlight independence, dealing with pressures, emotions and stress, tolerance and understanding and awareness. But effective communication and adaptability and self-confidence are also relevant skills attributed to travel.

Backpacking thus contributes to providing experiences such as leadership and sensitivity to other cultures (P. L. Pearce & Foster, 2007), as well as more tolerance and respect but also more language skills and the unique experience of living on a budget. The literature also reveals that backpackers remember
the trips intensely and as rewarding experiences that played an important role in shaping their personality and their own life choices. The experiences lived during the trips turned into meaningful memories that last for years (Collins-Kreiner et al., 2018).

This chapter also examined the importance of the information and communication technologies (ICT) that led to the establishment of a wide network of hostels and low-cost airlines. As stated in the introductory chapter, low-cost airlines currently have considerable market shares worldwide, offering conditions for travel to many young people and boosting the backpacker market. But the 36,000 properties registered in February 2022 on the well-known online booking website Hostelworld.com cannot be ignored either. With hostels, guests have the possibility of booking a bed in different types of rooms (shared dorms, private rooms, etc.), and there is a hostel almost everywhere offering services to suit practically all tastes and moods, in line with an eclectic and diverse clientele.

The information sources consulted by backpackers before departure was another topic analysed in Chapter 3, where studies carried out between 2004 and 2020 were compared. In addition to travel guidebooks such as Lonely Planet, which continue to be widely used by backpackers before and during the trips, WoM information among family, friends and other travellers still plays a central role. But it was the internet, particularly online search engines (e.g. google.com), which has been identified as the most used source of information prior to the visit and has a greater impact on backpackers’ space–time behaviour during visits to a destination.

Chapter 4 addresses backpacker motivations for travelling. The analysis of backpackers’ travel motivations demonstrates the heterogeneity and complexity of this market segment and has shown the existence of a diverse set of motivations. Backpackers are interested in different types of experiences during their visits, and their motivations differ between backpackers. Research on motivations based on backpackers’ typologies that identify different types of tourists and travel profiles are relevant for tourism marketing in destinations.

Among the theories on the analysis of travel motivation, the push and pull motivational concepts are one of the most accepted conceptual models for examining travel motivations. The push factors refer to the internal forces, the social–psychological motivators that motivate people to travel and explain the desire and decision to take a trip; people are attracted (‘pulled’) by external forces known as a destination’s outward features, factors that influence the selection of the travel destination according to the destination attributes.

Several authors also explored the differences arising from the nationality of backpackers and some issues related to cultural differences in the promotion
of backpacker tourism and concluded that nationality and culture play an important role in influencing backpackers’ motivations.

Research on travel motivations confirms that travel motives are inherently dynamic and change over time. Prior experience influences motivations for an upcoming decision. Findings reveal that travel experience of backpackers increases with age, and as travel experience increases, backpackers tend to visit more exotic and distant destinations. These backpackers with more travel experience are generally older and have family, work or time constraints that they did not have during their early backpacker trips, and these constraints affect their motivations and their travel decisions.

Generally, backpackers are presented and characterised as visitors who are distinct from mass tourists. However, recent research revealed that in relation to motivations and behaviour characteristics, and activities practised, backpackers have become closer to the institutionalised tourist. The ‘modern’ backpacker is becoming more structured, shares more motivations with other tourists and has fewer differences regarding psychological factors, as they are no more motivated by social and cultural issues than institutionalised tourists, narrowing the gap with mass tourism. However, some studies reveal that backpackers are less apprehensive about risk, often stay longer and visit more locations than mainstream tourists, and that backpackers do not see themselves as tourists. It can be concluded that there is a converging trend making backpackers less differentiated from mainstream tourists in terms of travel motivation, pre-trip planning and risk perceptions.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of published articles discussing the perspectives of non-Western and Asian backpackers. Studies reveal that Asian backpackers are not so different from their Western counterparts in terms of travel motivation, despite the common belief that Asian culture is distinct from Western culture. However, some studies demonstrate that Asian backpackers are less flexible in trip planning, do not depart from existing routes and seek more structured and organised experiences.

Chapter 5 explores the main changes that occurred in a historic and geographic frame on backpackers’ identity, authenticity, behaviours and on backpacker culture, including mobility and changes that occurred in it during the last decades. This chapter raises a number of interesting questions. What does it mean to be a backpacker today? Can we mention the existence of a backpacker culture? What experiences are these intrepid travellers looking for? Who are these daring and obstinate travellers who leave home in search of exotic places for greater or lesser periods of time? Why do they leave the comfort of their homes and go backpacking in search of more authentic ways of life?
The search for authenticity is a central issue in the backpacker phenomenon and Backpackers travel in search of authentic experiences, to meet authentic people and places and to participate in activities that allow them to get in touch with the true nature of the cultures and places visited in order to realise their true selves.

Recognised as essential in the continuous re-creation of the category of the backpacker culture and in the backpacker behaviours, road status and backpacker culture were also discussed. The literature reveals that not only home society norms and values are important but also the social structures, norms, and values found in the interactions among backpackers. It is in this context that the central role of road status must be understood. This chapter also argues that freedom felt during the trip contributes to the process of self-reflection because the distance from home allows backpackers to break barriers, allowing them to do whatever they want. Perceived as the absence of restrictions and expectations, distance favours personal reflection that occurs without the restrictions usually found in the home society.

Another important conclusion is the fact that several countries in Asia are no longer just a destination for backpackers. The number of Asian backpackers has increased in several countries such as Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, China, Malaysia or Thailand. In recent decades, China has experienced a number of profound economic, social, cultural and technological changes supported by robust economic growth, which have contributed to the growing Chinese middle class. The changes were so fast and intense that Chinese youth started to be confronted with feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and doubts about themselves. Chapter 5 ends by noting that despite all changes in backpacker tourism that led backpackers to a progressive diversification, it is reasonable to say that traditional backpacker tourism did not die. All around the world, we still find travellers backpacking in search of exotic places and cultures because backpacking remains a ‘mobility fantasy’.

As long as there is an exotic place to discover, there will surely be an intrepid traveller, inspired by his predecessors, to explore it.

The following section is dedicated to the unprecedented global emergency related to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the backpacker market, as travel and tourism is among the most affected sectors.

**IMPACT OF COVID-19**

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism activity were dramatic. There were travel cancellations all over the world; many countries
imposed restrictions on the entry of foreigners and started strict controls on the movement of individuals. According to UNWTO, 46 destinations (21% of all destinations worldwide) had their borders completely closed to tourists on November 26, 2021. A further 55 (25% of all global destinations) continue to have their borders partially closed to international tourism, and 112 destinations (52% of all destinations) require international tourists to present a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or antigen test upon arrival (World Tourism Organization, 2021). For a long period of time in many countries, several tourism businesses and public services that are essential for tourism were temporarily closed and many have not reopened. In the history of global tourism, no other natural or anthropic event has had an impact as significant as the COVID-19 pandemic. The tourism industry is among the most vulnerable in the world with 100–120 million direct tourism jobs at risk and losses of 910 billion USD to 1.2 trillion USD in exports from international visitors’ spending (World Tourism Organization, UNWTO, 2020).

Backpacker tourism was no exception. Restrictions on long-stay visas or visas based on income (O’Regan, 2021) are among the main difficulties for backpackers. According to youth, student and educational travel organisations, the most relevant and frequently reported actions taken in response to the COVID-19 crisis were the modification of cancellation policies; the increased of their marketing efforts with new partnerships and a shift in marketing to local or regional domestic markets through the development of new products and the reduction in capacity to adjust to falling demand (Richards & Morrill, 2021). One of the main impacts of the pandemic on backpacker tourism can be observed in the accommodation sector. Hostels are one of the most popular accommodation categories among backpackers, and their managers had to proceed with a number of significant changes. Characterised by the existence of dormitories with several beds per room and social spaces designed for socialising, such as kitchen, bar or lounges, putting social distancing measures into practice does not seem to be an easy task for guests and may jeopardise the economic viability of these accommodations because their business model depends on a rather small floor area per guest, as pointed out by Richards and Morrill (2021). During the pandemic, hostel managers developed new products and adopted and improved new services to capture the attention of digital nomads, compensating for the smaller number of guests with longer and possibly better-paid stays.

At the time of the pandemic, destination management organisations (DMO) had the opportunity not only to rethink tourism development strategies in order to find the best measures to reduce its impacts but also to redefine objectives and action plans related to the sector’s recovery in the post-pandemic
period. Taking into account the concern of visitors with crowded places and the need for destinations to continue to promote tourism in their territories, there may be a tendency to direct their marketing strategies towards smaller market segments with greater financial capacity. Could this mean the end of backpacker tourism?

The answer is no. Over recent decades, backpackers have been able to overcome many obstacles of an economic, social and political nature, which have limited or even restricted their movements. They have been able to adapt and have searched for new destinations, turning a marginal phenomenon into one of the main trends in world tourism, as was demonstrated in the course of this book. In addition, as COVID-19 is more harmful to older people or individuals with associated diseases, younger healthy travellers will take this into consideration when assessing the possible risks of infection. It is very likely that as has happened in the past with other diseases, this pandemic will become endemic and everyone will have to learn to live with it. Even if in the recovery of tourism activity, destinations give priority to more exclusive and therefore more expensive, tourism products, this will not mean the end of backpackers. The whole infrastructure and global services supporting backpackers, even if reduced, will continue to exist. Backpacking is not only travelling for long periods and with a low budget, it is also a way of travelling which allows destinations to be experienced in a different way and gives more experienced travellers recognition and status that many will continue to aspire to.

The pandemic was, and still is, at the time this book was being written, a major challenge for all humanity. But the differentiating characteristics of backpackers may contribute to a faster recovery of the tourism activity of this market segment. Given backpackers’ reputation for adventure and risk-taking, they can be seen as essential for re-starting the tourism industry post-COVID-19 (Reichenberger & Iaquinto, 2022). The implementation of measures to control the pandemic, such as social distancing or isolation, gave rise to feelings of depression or alienation, but all these consequences could act as a motivating trigger for backpacking. The search for places without crowds, one of the characteristics associated with backpackers, according to Reichenberger and Iaquinto (2022), will reinforce the backpacker preference for ‘off-the-beaten-track’ destinations, contributing to their rapid development. It will also be important that around the world, tourism management authorities break free from the prejudices associated with backpackers and understand that this form of tourism can make important contributions ‘to help rural destinations and small businesses recover’ (O’Regan, 2021, p. 8).
FUTURE BACKPACKING TRANSFORMATIONS

It was always the intention of the authors of this book to make a brief reflection on potential future transformations for backpackers. Not having a crystal ball, the purpose is to provide a sense of the future from the main technological, economic, demographic, cultural and even geopolitical trends that have influenced international tourism activity.

To carry out this mission, past trends were analysed; and on the basis of a literature review on backpacker tourism, it was possible to provide a vision for the future. The following trends were selected and discussed:

- Fast economic growth in developing countries such as India, China, Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria or Indonesia.

- Demography: ageing population and the largest youth generation in history.

- Youth tourism is still growing.

- Sustainability and climate change.

- Geopolitics.

- Developments in ICT, 5G technology and artificial intelligence (AI).

As reported by PwC (2017), the global economic order will change by 2050. With the projection that the world economy could more than double in size in the next 30 years, emerging economies, namely Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia and Turkey, will continue to be the growth engine of the global economy, increasing their share of world GDP from around 35% to almost 50%.

Economic growth will lead to an expansion of the middle class in these countries and consequently, the number of people travelling will increase. Among them, young people will constitute an important segment as happened in the past in Western countries. Many of these young people will continue to be attracted by the adventure and freedom offered by backpacking. For cultural and financial reasons, they will be more attracted to countries located in the same region of the world as where they live. The experience gained in the meantime will be the necessary impulse for future backpackers to move further away from their home country.

If in China, nowadays, backpacker tourism already has many followers, countries such as India or Indonesia will no longer be only the hosts of Western backpackers but will become equally an important outbound market in the backpacker segment. In the Americas, the same will happen in Brazil and
Mexico, and in Africa, apart from South Africa, Nigeria will stand out as an important outbound country.

The current demographic dynamic is another factor to take into account when reflecting on the future of backpacker tourism. The decrease in birth rates and the growing increase in average life expectancy have led the most developed countries to progressive ageing of the population which will, in the next decades, result in a stabilisation or even a reduction of the population. But at the same time, the world is home to 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 – the largest generation of youth in history (United Nations, 2022). Based on these facts, we can assume that the age of backpackers originating in Western countries will continue to increase and will no longer be a phenomenon exclusive to young people. As we have seen throughout this book, some studies have already identified older backpackers. On the other hand, the birth rate in most developing countries and the continuous improvement of quality of life will continue to result in significant population increases. It will be these young people, from non-Western countries, who will sustain the growth of backpacker tourism in the coming decades.

The expansion of the middle class will thus provide continued growth of youth tourism, namely backpacker tourism. As stated by the UNWTO & WYSE Travel Confederation (2010), younger visitors have a higher probability of visiting the same destination again (loyalty) and tourist destinations with more youth tourists are more resilient, recovering more quickly from potential crises. The literature also reveals that backpackers travel and stay in destinations for longer periods of time and spend more money than other tourists (M. R. Martins & Costa, 2017).

Environmental issues will also be at the centre of the backpackers’ future transformations. Young people are clearly aware of the impact human activities have had on the environment, the challenges and risks presented by the climate crisis and the opportunity to achieve sustainable development brought by a solution to climate change (United Nations, 2022). The United Nations (2013) also recognises the key role that youth play in tackling climate change, and a publication coordinated by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat (United Nations, 2013) mentions that is broadly accepted that all over the world young people are motivated to fight climate change, and are pushing their governments to do more. This awareness among younger people that their future is at risk due to environmental problems such as global warming will certainly have implications on the way they will travel in the future.
Backpackers are often described in the literature as environmentally responsible. They usually have low resource consumption, a preference for local products and a greater probability of engaging in more sustainable and environmentally responsible travel (M. R. Martins & Costa, 2016). Backpacker accommodation consumes substantially less energy per year and per guest (Becken et al., 2001; Iaquinto, 2015), and they prefer to travel in groups, using land transport, public transport and carpooling (Iaquinto, 2015). While travelling, backpackers usually live with lower levels of consumption (Iaquinto & Pratt, 2020), and they also respect the local culture and environment (X. Luo et al., 2015; Rodrigues & Prideaux, 2012).

Recent research such as that of Agyeiwaah et al. (2020) found that backpackers’ self-image as ‘good’ travellers inspires them to feel compelled to affirm this self-image (to themselves and others) by performing the role of sustainable travellers through their actions (learning the local language, history and culture). In a 2015 article, Iaquinto (2015, p. 595) concluded that ‘backpackers practised sustainability unintentionally rather than by design’; however, in a more recent study, it was found that backpackers’ sustainable behaviour is a way of afirming their social identity (Agyeiwaah et al., 2020). All this means that

*the experiences people have as backpackers can be highly significant and have the potential to shape their ongoing engagement with sustainability issues. Nevertheless, achieving sustainability remains an ongoing challenge for the backpacking industry.* (Iaquinto & Pratt, 2020, p. 3)

As backpacking is a more sustainable form of travel, tourist destinations and their stakeholders must therefore prepare themselves to introduce significant changes that minimise the environmental and social impacts of tourist activity. Destinations labelled as more sustainable will certainly have a competitive advantage over their direct competitors.

Concerns over climate change have led countries to sign agreements on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and on the gradual replacement of fossil fuels in energy production and transport. These commitments have contributed to a significant increase in energy prices and transport costs. If the energy transition does not take place in the short term, travel could become more expensive and thus backpacker tourism could be affected either by the decrease in visitors or by the selection of destinations closer to their own countries.

International relationships between countries on a political or economic level are fundamental for understanding the world today, but also for projecting
its consequences on tourism. Peace in Eastern Europe is currently threatened by the invasion of Ukraine by Russian Federation due, among other things, to fears of the expansion of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation). This ‘new cold war’ causes great instability, and tourism activity will have more difficulty recovering in this region of the world. New regional-free trade agreements and new agreements on mobility in several parts of the world will facilitate movement between countries, encouraging tourism. The recent agreement on mobility within the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) creates a system that makes short-term, temporary stays and residence visas within the community more flexible, giving an opportunity for young people from several countries such as Brazil, Portugal or Cape Verde to study and work abroad.

Finally, the developments in ICT, 5G technology, the internet of things (IoT) and AI will also have a significant impact on the future of backpacker tourism.

Internet technologies have revolutionised travel planning and reservations. Backpackers are now in a position to make their own reservations and to better plan and organise their trips. Social media applications brought more transparency to travel service quality and provided platforms for travellers to advise and influence their social networks (Scott & Gössling, 2015). In the next decades, with AI, computers will replace humans and perform tasks that usually require human intelligence. AI will recognise our tastes and preferences and will personalise all the activities we will do during our trips in detail. Visiting experiences will be strongly influenced by the suggestions provided by the computer, which might lead many backpackers to prefer ‘old-fashioned’ travelling, resorting more often to travel guidebooks and to traditional word of mouth.

The 5G technology will foster the expansion of the IoT. With IoT, all physical devices can be connected to the internet, enabling automation and personalisation. Customer experience will be improved and will reach a level never seen before. It will be possible to control and access all kinds of information through travellers’ smartphones, and backpackers could be notified about local attractions, visit schedules, public transport services, among others. But for those backpackers who like to explore destinations at their own pace without time constraints, these new technologies may not have a great impact because they will remove the surprise effect from the visiting experience, which is so important for those who like to travel.

Before concluding this section dedicated to future transformations for backpackers, it would be interesting to reflect on what will happen when unexplored and exotic places on the Earth’s surface no longer exist? Will it be the end of backpackers?
Conclusions

Probably not. The escape from stress and routine, the search for different places from the home country and the freedom provided by a flexible trip with fewer time constraints will certainly continue to attract millions of travellers to this form of tourism.

FUTURE AGENDAS FOR RESEARCH

This final section is dedicated to important issues for further debate among academics, students and practitioners. First, it would be beneficial if researchers around the globe could find common criteria to operationalise the backpacker concept without disparities and deviations in order to better understand the global differences among backpackers.

The issues that influence backpackers’ risk reduction strategies remain unexplored, and as Adam (2015) mentions, future studies could investigate the influence of socio-demographics, travel experience and perceived risk on the type of risk reduction strategies used.

Future studies could also explore: the influence of low-cost airlines or favourable exchange rates on backpacker sustainability practices (Iaquinto, 2015); Asian backpacker tourism, notably Malaysian backpackers at various stages of their travel careers (Latif, Ismail, Matniyozov, & Ramli, 2022); cultural transmission between backpackers and local communities (P. Pearce et al., 2009) and more experienced backpackers (O’Regan, 2021). Longitudinal studies of backpacker travel through mobility biographies are suggested by P. Pearce et al. (2009). This could be useful to understand the legacy of the counterculture and its promise of liberation, community and non-consumerist relationships with others (O’Regan, 2021).

The intensive utilisation of new communication technologies among backpackers also needs more attention in order to explore the role of social media and mobile communication in enabling or inhibiting the backpacker’s quest for authenticity and freedom as suggested by Reichenberger and Iaquinto (2022). In a time where social changes happen at an overwhelming speed, O’Regan (2021, p. 6) mentions that it is important to explore if the push to give backpacking order leads to mechanisms of exclusion and inequality associated with different groups as LGBTQIP2SAA, disabled or older backpackers, among others.


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