Master’s thesis

Two years

Kulturgeografi 15 hp

Human Geography 15 credits

Backpacker Institutionalization
Towards an Experience-Based Typology

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ABSTRACT

Backpacking is becoming an increasingly commonplace rite of passage for today’s independent travellers. So much so that it is not only a small niche segment anymore but is turning into a sizeable market for some destinations. Backpackers seem to lead the way into unexploited regions, subsequently opening the door for other forms of tourism. In effect, the normalization of backpacking brings with it questions of sustainability. This thesis sets out to explore the transition of tourism segments in destinations, particularly that of backpackers into the mainstream. It does so through a participant-observer data collection in the Philippines. The material is then analysed by grounded theory and presented in an ethnography format through a thematic review. A typological framework is the product, which brings an experience perspective to existing classification systems. Findings suggest that there are indeed nuances within the seemingly homogenous backpacker segment and that a continuous change of visitor profiles within destinations seems likely. Institutionalized backpacking turns out to be the missing link that accounts for the change from purism to mass tourism. Future explorative research is then advised, to find relationships between visitor types and to construe concrete suggestions for likely causes to the observed categorical transitions.

KEYWORDS: drifter, backpacking, institutionalization, sustainability, experience, ethnography
BACKPACKER INSTITUTIONALIZATION:
TOWARDS AN EXPERIENCE-BASED TYPOLOGY

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A Masters Thesis
Submitted to Mid-Sweden University
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master in Tourism, Cultural Geography

September 2011

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A big thanks to my thesis supervisor, Dimitri Ioannides, for his consistent and constructive feedback throughout this process. I would also like to recognize the contribution made by the rest of the abundantly competent staff at the Mid Sweden University Tourism Department for providing me with a driven learning environment and solid knowledge base. For the opportunity to conduct research abroad, I want to extend a thank you to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Finally, I want to express my sincere appreciation to my family and my girlfriend; Bo Stenson, Eva Wallstam, Maria Wallstam, and Sara Pettersson, for their unconditional love and moral support through all my endeavours.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. PROBLEM STATEMENT .......................................................................................</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Aim ........................................................................................................................</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Objectives and Research Questions ..................................................................</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. Prerequisites to Reading ...............................................................................</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. LITERATURE REVIEW ..........................................................................................</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Backpackers in Context ...............................................................................</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.1. Backpacker Theory ......................................................................................</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.2. Backpackers and Mass Tourism ....................................................................</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1.3. Backpackers and LDCs. ...............................................................................</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Myth and Narratives in the Backpacking Experience ...................................</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1. The Experience Perspective .....................................................................</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.2. A Myth that Justifies ‘Anti-Tourism Tourists’ .......................................</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.3. The Narrative Role of the ‘Backpacker Bible’ .........................................</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.4. Experience as a Dimension for Tourist Classification ............................</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. Plog/Butler Conceptual Framework ................................................................</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1. Plog ................................................................................................................</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.2. Butler ...........................................................................................................</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.3. Conceptual Synthesis of Plog and Butler ...............................................</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.4. Application to Case Study .......................................................................</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Literature Review Summary ..........................................................................</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. STUDY AREA ....................................................................................................</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. METHOD ............................................................................................................</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ANALYSIS .........................................................................................................</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1. Themes in the Backpacker Experience .......................................................</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.1. Freedom, Adventure, Discovery: Motivation .............................................</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.2. Participative, Immersive, Spontaneous: Authenticity ..................................</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.3. Don’t Benefit Tyrannies, Be Fair: Ethics ...................................................</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1.4. Comfort, Practicality, Experience Accumulation: Compromises ................</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. List of Interviewees ................................................................................................ 26
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Pine and Gilmore’s Experience Realms.................................................................13
Figure 2. Plog’s Psychographic Traveller profiles..............................................................19
Figure 3. Butler’s Destination Lifecycle Model.................................................................20
Figure 4. Destination Life Cycle According to Traveler Type..............................................21
Figure 5. Map of the study route - the Philippines.............................................................23
Figure 6. The Experience Involvement Typology.................................................................45
1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Given its rapid growth, tourism will naturally have considerable positive and negative implications wherever it appears. Its revenue generating potential is one major reason as to why developing countries (1LDCs) often see international tourism as a quick fix solution to stagnating economies. Additionally, countries of lesser means (in terms of natural resources) may consider tourism as the only viable option to stimulating significant economic activity (Telfer and Sharpley, 2008). Benefits of tourism include small business development, foreign exchange earnings and the so-called ‘multiplier effect’ (Scheyvens, 2002). The type of tourist usually sought after in these regions is the higher end consumer that can afford ‘western’ goods and services. Further, as Scheyvens (2002) recognizes there is an all too often occurring overdependence on foreign imported goods and expertise resulting from trying to cater to mass tourists. Hence, a considerable part of profits made is repatriated to the generating regions through import costs. Government planners in LDCs often overlook this economic leakage in their hunger to boost tourism earnings. In addition to leakage, a large number of negative impacts have been associated with mass tourism on both the social and environmental levels (Holden, 2008).

A sub category of tourism often overlooked in development strategies is the backpacker segment. The lack of a clear definition and insufficient research on the backpacker phenomenon has left this segment largely dismissed in most LDCs as providing only a token contribution to tourism earnings (Hampton, 1998). As a result, there are no clear figures indicating the share of the backpacker segment within the international tourism market. Nevertheless, due to the growth in services and infrastructure that cater to backpackers as well as increased observations of their inconspicuous presence in destinations around the world, one can assume a significant growth in this segment. An indicator of the significance of backpackers is provided by Tourism New South Wales (approx. 2005) that estimates backpackers to have constituted 25% of visitor nights in Australia 2004-2005. Less accessible countries or ones that lack the traditional three Ss (Sun, Sea, Sand) also tend to be ones with a higher proportion of backpackers. This means that increased tourism in such areas naturally leads to an assumption that there is a growth in backpacker arrivals (Sörensson, 2008).

Furthermore, if one would assume that backpacker tourism grows proportionally too, or more than the total tourism arrivals then this could serve as an indicator as to its global significance. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Travel Barometer (2009) estimated

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1 Acronym for ‘Less Developed Country’, which in this thesis will imply all developing and emerging economies, not to be confused with its other common meaning: ‘Least Developed Country’.
international tourist arrivals at 922 million in 2008, a 1.9% growth from 2007. These figures are highly sensitive to global events as Telfer and Sharples (2008) note. For example, a comparison can be made with 2004 figures, which had exhibited a growth rate of 10% from 2003. Regardless, the strong increase in popularity of backpacking as a form of travel means that one can consider it a growing influence within the sector irrespective of the total growth rate (Sörenssson, 2008). In fact, considering the nature of backpacker tourism (flexibility, ‘risk-creation’, longer travel itineraries and a longing for independence) it can be deduced that changes in total tourism arrivals are less indicative to the number of backpacker travellers than they are to the conventional mass tourist (Cohen, 2004).

Hampton (2008) suggests that for LDCs, alternative forms of tourism such as backpacking, represent more appropriate development strategies to that of traditional mass tourism. The arguments he presents include its small scale, higher number of local employment opportunities, minimal economic leakages and overall lesser negative impacts (unsustainable usage of natural resources, pollution and alienation of host communities). In addition, capital spent by backpackers tends to enter local economies in a more direct fashion (Scheyvens 2002). The smaller scale nature of backpacking, and more primitive infrastructure demanded by backpackers in general, often means that local entrepreneurs can set up small guesthouses and food and beverage establishments without external investments and influence, thereby also being able to claim the full amount of any profits made. These attributes are considered better fitting for LDCs of limited means (i.e. countries such as Cambodia, Laos and Peru) that are aiming at sustainable tourism development. Moreover, backpacking is generally deemed a more ethically sound form of travelling both by backpackers themselves and mainstream consumers (Richards and Wilson, 2004a). The strong association between backpackers and respectful tourism has emerged partly due to the above mentioned attributes and partly due to its historical link to the hippie movement that promoted the well-known ‘peace and love’ creed.

However, as backpacker tourism starts to become a more important component in development strategies, questions need to be raised regarding the long-term implications of this form of travel. As early as 1973, Cohen identified a contradiction in the ideologies of drifter tourists (now known as backpackers) and the increasing institutionalization of budget travel. He suggested that over time, backpacker tourism will become normalized, and although unassuming, backpackers will progressively demand more services, products and whole destinations shaped to their needs. Hence, as numerous mass tourism destinations in LDCs have encountered serious issues of sustainability through uninhibited development (Dielemans, 2008), does a similar paradigm shift face backpacker destinations? This predicament leads me to the research problem:
Are backpacker profiles starting to show mass-tourism like traits?

‘Profiles’ refers to the consumption habits, demographic and psychographic characteristics of a tourist segment.

1.1. Aim

The ambition of this study lies in finding out whether new forms of mass tourism are developing through the mergence of backpacker ideals and values with mass tourism characteristics.

The following areas need to be covered more in depth for such a study to be comprehensive:

1.2. Objectives and Research Questions

To approach the above aim, a review of previous typological research and frameworks on backpacker travel in literature is first needed, discussing this in relation to definitions and examples of mass tourism. As the case study is the Philippines, backpacking will be discussed in a developing-nation context as well. I then need to build an understanding of the production process behind the backpacker experience. To further venture into the topic, I will try to complement theory by working with themes identified in this study, to help explain the development of backpacking. Finally, the primary research applied requires an ethnographic approach. This enables me to study the backpacker sub-culture up close and acquire a solid data foundation, on which a framework can be based. These objectives form the following questions:

**Question 1:** What are the differentiating characteristics between the two tourist segments and does backpacker tourism exhibit a development trend towards the latter?

**Question 2:** How is backpacker tourism marketed, produced and are there dynamics that allow for a transition of backpackers from purism to the mainstream?

**Question 3:** What tendencies does tourism development exhibit in LDCs?

**Question 4:** What are the most fundamental backpacker specific values? Do these present criteria according to which all tourists can be categorized?
1.3. Prerequisites to Reading

1. - The terms ‘tourist’ and ‘consumer’ are used interchangeably with both ‘backpacker’ and ‘mass tourist’.
   - ‘Conventional’ and ‘high-end’ tourist, are both specifically used as replacements of ‘mass’ tourist.
   - The terms ‘traveller’ and ‘drifter’ are specifically used as replacements of ‘backpacker’.

2. In effect, this thesis makes one simple assumption; the existence of two polar opposites: ‘mass’ tourists and ‘backpacker’ tourists. Instead, it is the nature of the spectrum in between that is under discussion here.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Backpackers in Context

2.1.1. Backpacker Theory.

A long-standing perception of backpackers as low budget (insignificant economic impact) and undesirable (especially by destination developers) has resulted in a lack of research on them until recently. Furthermore, their relatively unstructured travel habits and ‘nomadic’ existence make them a notoriously difficult segment to conduct empirical research on (Richards and Wilson, 2004a). The ‘non-institutionalized’ tourist still lacks a unifying set of criteria that can confirm him/her as a backpacker. However, a few tendencies can be identified when studying the backpacker phenomenon. Based on the demographics found in research, one such tendency is the strong link between the backpacker market and what is known as the ‘young independent traveller’. For example, in a study conducted in New Zealand, Newlands (2002) revealed that 76.8% of respondents were between ‘up to 19’ and 29 years of age. In terms of behavioural traits, older studies have characterized the backpacking market as encompassing the following: use of cheap lodging, flexibility, personally arranged itineraries, attributing significant weight to social interaction with fellow travellers and a comparatively longer duration of travel than the mainstream market (Pearce, 1990, 1995).

What should be noted is that the definitions based on such assumptions are often externally derived; meaning that the supposed ‘backpackers’ are not consulted on their own view of their travelling identity (Hannam and Ateljevic, 2008). This echoes the dichotomy in backpacker theory as was identified by Richards and Wilson (2004). They found a tendency for backpacker research to originate from either anthropological or market based perspectives. The market/policy-based approach is concerned with identifying external characteristics of backpackers that can work towards increasing the effectiveness of a destination in meeting their needs. Thus there is a focus on aspects such as the purchasing behaviour, decision-making processes and travel pattern of the subject. Conversely, anthropologically angled studies investigate the intrinsic qualities of the backpacker and the social dynamics amongst backpackers groups (Pearce, 1990).

In this study a combination of the two is used. First, one should adopt a market-based perspective to facilitate the identification of research subjects. Wilson and Richards (2008: 11) describe the main weakness of the cultural-anthropological definitional approach by highlighting its sensitivity to the often-subjective researcher. These types of participatory studies tend to be
highly qualitative and based on interviews whereas the author and his/her subject both are backpackers. This allows for the author’s own preconceived ideas of what a ‘true’ backpacker is to potentially exclude a large segment of the non-institutionalized traveller segment. Therefore, in the interest of avoiding such bias, a set of external (i.e. objective) features will be selected by which the study sample will be chosen. Secondly, participatory data collection is then used as a means to obtain, categorize and further explore traveller profiles and development trends. Hence, the role of traveller definitions offered are to act as points of reference to a wider spectrum of backpacker psychographic profiles ranging from the ‘Venturer’ to the ‘Dependable’ tourist (Plog, 1974). The following section outlines characteristics used in this thesis to generally identify backpackers and their destinations: Hampton (1998: 642) typifies a backpacker destination as using ‘minimalist’ infrastructure; this is a result of the backpacker’s low requirements of amenities and services as opposed to the capital-intensive prerequisites needed to cater to a mass tourism market. Moreover, sets of complementary structures tend to develop alongside the basic requirements. These include certain types of restaurants, international second hand book stores, networks of travel agencies aimed at organizing cheap tickets and private bus lines operating between backpacker-trail destinations (Riley, 1988).

When seeking a profile of the common backpacker, one has to first understand the motivations behind this form of tourism. There is a range of reasoning in the literature regarding the fundamental backpacker travel rationale. Westerhausen (2002), for example, sees the backpacking phenomenon as a product of the increasing sense of alienation of the youth by their home societies. Some authors are more pragmatic in their approach in defining backpacker motivations, citing:

...people desirous of extending their travels beyond the cyclical holiday, and, hence the necessity of living on a budget... (Riley, 1988:317)

Richards and Wilson (2004) explore several other perspectives on travel motivations for backpackers. They found a variety of statements amongst scholars on the nature of push and pull factors for backpackers. From the wish to live adjacent to ‘authentic’ cultures through travelling on a budget, to the desire within some to achieve a measure of solitude and ultimately adventure through the ‘risk factor’ inherent to independent travel. Yet, what most studies have in common is identifying a need for differentiation from mainstream society amongst members of the backpacker cluster; instead, the nature of this differentiation has now become the subject of debate.
Nevertheless, lacking an absolute definition for backpackers, Loker-Murphy and Pearce’s (1995:840) description, although broad, was deemed most appropriate for the current study:

*They (backpackers) prefer to stay in budget accommodation, they spend more time travelling around (…) than the average visitor, and they enjoy interacting with people, both locals and other travellers. They are also more likely to independently organize their travels.* (Note: The same parameters can also be found in Pearce’s (1990) initial typology research on backpacker tourism)

The relative nature of the language (*prefer, enjoy, more likely to*) in this definition avoids exclusion of ‘grey area’ travellers that deviate at times but adhere to backpacking philosophies as a general rule.

### 2.1.2. Backpackers and Mass Tourism.

The ‘mass tourism’ concept does not have an elaborate theoretical definition but is, instead, often discussed in rather loose terms. This, as one may argue, is simply because it only infers a quantity or a certain scale in tourism numbers. Nevertheless, it has historically been equated to the form of leisure tourism that was pioneered in southern Europe after the introduction of jet travel that made possible the movement of large numbers of tourists to Mediterranean resorts\(^1\). Despite the lack of conceptualisation, Poon (1993) does offer a set of principles whereby the classic mass tourism product can be identified including:

- Economies of scale and an ‘assembly-line’ like mass production and promotion of the tourism product.
- Prominent standardization and highly limited flexibility of the product.
- An ‘inexperienced’ consumer.
- The important role of technology throughout the production process (jet aircraft and other transport, computer reservation and accounting systems, credit cards etc).
- Environmental destruction through, for example, pollution and partly unregulated infrastructural development.

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\(^1\) The origin of mass tourism dates back to early seaside resorts in the UK and continental Europe that became popular as annual leaves were introduced and rail connections made possible the mass movement of people from urban areas to rural and seaside hot spots.
• A socio-cultural disintegration of the host society through imposing the generating region cultures on the destination, an increase of crime (including prostitution), tourists generally antagonising hosts and the introduction of disease.

Once a backpacker destination and its visitors start exhibiting these characteristics, a conceptual merging of backpackers and mass tourists starts to take place. As Marshall (1998: 58) hinted, this might already be happening:

*We’re not “travellers”. We’re not even backpackers. We’re package tourists with differently shaped luggage … Our guidebooks lead us along a backpacking superhighway where lodgings are always cheap, natives always speak English and restaurants always serve banana pancakes.*

There are additional arguments highlighting a subtle institutionalization of the supposed ‘non-institutionalized’ backpacker. As mentioned earlier, in Cohen’s (1973) seminal work *Nomads from affluence: Notes on the phenomenon of drifter-tourism*, he finds a paradox in the ideologies of drifter tourists and the simultaneous institutionalization of independent travel. According to him, this institutionalization manifests itself in the form of ‘fixed travel patterns, established routines and increasing development and commodification.’ of the drifter and their destinations. A production-reproduction reaction is the underlying cause where one traveller seeking escape and differentiation triggers the same purchasing decisions amongst individuals of the same values and belief-systems. Once increasing numbers of such travellers arrive at this previously unexplored destination, the ‘institutionalization’ process begins.

Although mass tourism has often been haunted by an image of being unsustainable, there are advocates for its successful synthesis with ‘sustainable’ tourism. For example, Weaver (2001) suggests that ecotourism can work in symbiosis with mass tourism through a ‘knowledge-based platform’. It implies that the sustainability of the tourism activity does not depend on the scale but instead on the effectiveness of the management practices in a particular context. He provides the example of tribes in Papa New Guinea that started a few guesthouses to provide for small numbers of international tourists. Inter-clan conflicts were exacerbated because of this newfound wealth and the outcome was socially unsustainable. This outcome is in conflict with assumptions associated with the type of responsible tourism that was meant to take place. Furthermore, mass tourism operators are increasingly adopting policies of promoting responsibility on behalf of their clients.
For the sake of clarity, this thesis will equate full institutionalization of backpacking with the mass tourism paradigm. Institutionalization in this context is the standardisation and complete regulation of backpacker products and services to include whole destinations, transit regions between these destinations as well as the consumers themselves. I recognize that fully institutionalized backpacker tourism would manifest itself differently from the stereotypical ‘Spanish model’ of mass tourism. Keep in mind that, as stated earlier, the aim is finding out whether a new form of mass tourism is developing.

2.1.3. Backpackers and LDCs.

When discussing backpacker dynamics in developing countries, one should first understand the basic characteristics that tourism development takes on in such socio-economic contexts. It is also important to point out that both ‘developing’ (or LDC) and ‘developed’ are relative referrals to economic wealth. Therefore, in the interest of clarity, the International Monetary Fund, IMF, (2009) listing of developing and emerging economies will be used to define LDCs.

What sets LDCs apart from more developed regions is the level and nature of state involvement in tourism (Harrison, 2004). Corruption and inefficiency within government authorities are two attributes present in a considerable number of LDCs that hamper the delivery of the tourism product and prevent the potential positive impacts of tourism to trickle down to the local level. Although generalised, it does present a common problem for destinations around the world. Examples of such conditions for development can be seen in Brazil, China and the Caribbean (Lew, 2004; Santana, 2004; Weaver, 2004).

Harrison (2004) also highlights dependency as another characteristic that the relationship between LDCs and the tourism industry takes on. For those lacking natural resources or a competitive manufacturing sector, it is common for LDCs to start over relying on tourism for income and in the process do not work to diversify their economies. This leaves them inherently vulnerable to sudden events that inhibit tourism flows into the country in question. Small island nations are notoriously known for facing this problem, as tourism has become such a large part of government strategies due to the lack of other industries and resources. The tsunami in 2004 demonstrated the vulnerability of tourism destination regions to global changes in travel patterns as travellers became hesitant to visit regions that lay in potential tsunami risk zones. For example, a drop of 27% in tourist arrivals between January 2004 and January 2005 was observed in
Thailand, presenting serious challenges to an economy that had come to rely heavily on the industry (Airline Industry Information, 2005).

In scrutinizing backpacker impacts on LDCs, it should be noted that they utilise a different set of infrastructures and services than those that typify mainstream tourism. Hence it would be logical to assume that negative environmental impacts brought about by significant hotel and resort developments, are largely absent in backpacker-dominated destinations. The negative social impacts brought about by higher end tourism developments (such as the privatisation of beaches in Goa and the Dominican Republic where local residents no longer have access: Holden, 2008 and Dielemans, 2008) should also be avoided in backpacker regions where tourism-oriented establishments are virtually always small, simple, local and privately owned (Hampton, 1998). This also means that although on smaller budgets, backpacker spending enters the local economy in a considerable more direct fashion than the capital spent by the average mass tourist in large, often foreign owned, resorts. Irrespective of the seemingly lesser negative externalities of backpacker tourism on environmental and social levels, there is concern amongst sources in academics and the industry that the rosy ideals behind this form of travel do not reflect practice.

Destination management teams in various locations across the world have been known to show a strong preference towards mainstream, high-end tourism. Thus, exploring the reasons for this tendency might reveal some hidden traits of backpacker tourism that makes it a less favourable proposition for an aspiring sustainable destination. Scheyvens (2002) highlights two Developing World examples, where the destination management in Goa (India) and Botswana have worked to actively discourage the facilitation of backpacker tourism. Reasons cited for this policy in both cases refer to a net loss for the destination due to the low spending nature of these travellers coupled with the strain they put on already thinly stretched public facilities and resources (such as overcrowding roads and campsites/ the environmental damage caused). The Goa management team was also quoted as referring to ‘hippies’ and backpackers as simply not bringing in enough money, in comparison to their preferred luxury tourism. As Scheyvens later points out, ‘having the best interests of local communities in mind’ is frequently used as a motivation for most such policies. There is however little evidence that these impoverished regions can cater to high-end tourism without sustaining considerable social and environmental damage. As history dictates, high-end tourism developments in LDCs rarely amount to a better quality of life for local residents; in fact the contrary often proves to be the case (Dielemans, 2008).

The assumptions, philosophies and characteristics that underlie the backpacker phenomenon have also come under scrutiny in the literature. One of the questionable facets of
backpacker travel is the supposed inherent socio-cultural sensitivity that these travellers bring to their host communities. Goodwin et al. (1998) observed an increasing concern amongst backpackers to travel as cheaply as possible, to the extent at which it almost became a game where the subsequent haggling and bargain hunting took the front seat to respecting locals and paying more reasonable, still affordable prices. They find that ‘status’ within this traveller segment is closely linked to the degree to which one achieves a spartan lifestyle and avoids spending money. Competitiveness amongst backpackers is confirmed by the research of Wheat (1995) who found that they also lost awareness and did not register the host communities’ perceptions of them as rude.

Moreover, Butler (1990) points out that in contrast to mainstream tourists, backpackers tend to travel to more socially, culturally and ecologically sensitive regions. The typical backpacker generally wishes to obtain highly authentic and unique experiences through integration with people and living close to nature in remote locations. In effect, his/her interaction with the host communities and the natural environments in these destinations is also of a more intensive and invasive nature than that of the conventional tourist.

A discussion on implications needs to be grounded in solid definitions. Although this section has tried to outline some pervasive perspectives on what constitutes backpacking, a more nuanced theory needs to be built. This thesis aims to contribute in this regard and will continue by looking at the backpacking narrative. In other words, what is the mythological backdrop to backpacking? Can it assist in the creation of an artificial backpacking experience that passes as the ‘real thing’?

2.2. Myth and Narratives in the Backpacking Experience

2.2.1. The Experience Perspective.

Welk (2004) suggests that in the construction of ethnicity, communities most often seek to differentiate themselves by identifying and contrasting themselves to groups that exist in close proximity to their own. As geographical closeness cannot be applied to global tourist typologies, groupings instead use similar external features to identify neighbouring communities. To simplify, the backpacker community identifies mainstream tourists as their closest ‘neighbour’, leading to the emergence of values and beliefs based on doing the opposite of this group of people. In effect, backpackers usually express distaste to all things ‘touristy’ and believe that by doing so they can take part in more ‘authentic’ experiences.
However, increasingly similar features and the coexistence of backpackers and conventional tourists in numerous destinations leads one to wonder about how to pinpoint where one segment ends and the next begins. It is the presence of this contradiction between ideals and values of backpackers with their encroachment on the mainstream that calls for further explanation. Following is an argument for an experience-based rationale.

The backpacker trip can in crude terms be seen as an idealised form of travel that seeks out liberation from the constraints of modern society or everyday life (Richards and Wilson, 2004a). Beneath this conceptualisation is a host of other benefits and motivations that can help to illustrate why this consumer segment has seen such considerable growth in recent years. Sørensen (2003) identifies one central function of the backpacker trip as being the acquisition of cultural capital. Cultural capital that in turn can be converted to social capital upon return home. Ideally, cultural and social capital will help an individual market themselves for jobs, in turn gaining economic capital. This process is a whole other body of knowledge and will not be discussed in depth in this thesis. Nevertheless, with Sørensen’s elaboration in mind, what is generally accepted in literature is the key role of experiences in deciding the ‘success’ of a trip.

Two distinct aspects of travel experience combine to decide the final outcome in the eyes of the individual backpacker; the quantity of experiences accumulated (Cederholm, 1999), and the nature of each individual experience (i.e. level of uniqueness, authenticity).

Pine and Gilmore (1999) argue that the experience economy differentiates itself from services in that the latter simply implies buying intangible activities carried out on behalf of the consumer. Experience based products are characterised as memorable occasions that can be purchased and engage the consumer on a personal level. For these to exist, there needs to be a producer that actively designs, creates, sets a price and markets these experiences. Four experience realms were created to categorize the type of experiences that a consumer can live. They can be placed along two perpendicular axes representing the level of customer participation, with one dimension ranging from passive to active, the other from absorption to immersion (See Figure 1, following page).
For example, attending a music concert falls under passive participation and absorption; making it an ‘entertainment’ experience in this framework. In effect all experiences that a tourist may take part in can be placed somewhere amongst these four realms. An experience that manages to encompass all four realms is considered as being in the ‘sweet spot’.

It should be made clear that, especially in the case of backpacker tourism, experiences exist on different levels. Whilst Richards and Wilson (2008) discuss the enclave experience, there are also smaller ‘sub-experiences’ to each enclave (e.g. meeting locals, snorkelling, nightlife) as well as larger ‘meta-experiences’ implying several enclaves, or even broader; a whole trip. In other words, experiences can also be identified and explored on spatial and temporal scales to complement Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) qualitative model.

In this thesis, the backpacker experience is framed as the ‘meta-experience’ of the whole trip as defined by the time passed between the departure from and return to one’s home environment. This is the logical approach given that the aim encompasses scrutinizing the experience of being a backpacker, not each individual experience during the trip per se. Moreover, it is important to note that the backpacker experience is not one product sold by one company.
Rather, it is a blend of products derived from different producers on different levels. Many times, especially with the local small scale experiences, the producers have not developed a strategic outlook on producing experiences but rather still view their businesses as selling goods and services.

In light of this, this section seeks to understand the co-production of the backpacker experience between different commercial and non-commercial actors in society.

2.2.2. A Myth that Justifies ‘Anti-Tourism Tourists’.

Stamboulis and Skayannis (2003) briefly review the production process of experience-based tourism products in their discussion on ICTs and innovation strategies in experience creation. They identify the main components of experiences as infrastructure, context, content and ‘myth’. Infrastructure implies the technical and tangible situational factors, context refers to the specific place and services that bring the experience to the consumer, content is the nature of the experience itself and myth is the marketing component.

The myth has different properties from regular product marketing. In short, myth development can be understood as creating:

…a narrative over a text of signs. This is a knowledge intensive process …
Knowledge must be created and utilized in the production process with respect to the generation of the theme, the technologies involved and the customer’s anticipated interests and tastes. (Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003: 39)

The myth is also unique from a time perspective. Known to the consumer before the trip, it is also the motivating factor behind the choice of destination. Once in the destination, the tourist seeks to live the myth. Upon the tourist’s return, a well-constructed myth will remain alive for this individual (Stamboulis and Skayannis 2003). The key here is that the consumer ‘lives’ the experience assisted by the myth, and that it ultimately becomes the subjective reality of the consumer.

I argue that the success of the backpacker myth is what enables these tourists to become increasingly institutionalized whilst maintaining the purist values and ideals that originally characterised them. A dichotomy of this kind, between the perception and the reality of an experience can be partially explained to what Cohen (1988: 373) described as a ‘false touristic consciousness’. According to him, tourists are often manipulated by tourism promoters (e.g. travel
agents, marketers), into seeing authenticity in manufactured situations. This should hold especially true to backpacker regions, where questions of authenticity and ‘anti-tourism’ are important USPs (Unique Selling Propositions) in differentiating product offers.

As mentioned earlier, the myth consists of two main components; a narrative and a set of signs/symbols. Narratives tell the consumer what to expect and how to feel whilst the symbols serve as visual confirmations of the narrative. The role of LP (Lonely Planet) guidebooks as a narrative medium in the backpacker myth is an important one and the company has become synonymous with this type of travel. It is thought to be crucial that the different actors (infrastructure and context) and cues in the destination that are components of the experience (content); have to be consistent with the myth as narrated by, for example, LP. If the local actors do not adhere to the myth, the myth and subsequently the experience lose credibility and their market value is dissolved (Stamboulis and Skayannis 2003).

In short, the backpacker experience is a melting pot of different activities over time and space fed by one myth, and the LP is a consumer product that makes a living for its various authors on maintaining the vividness of this myth. Following is a look at the underlying attributes that help to make the LP so effective in this role.

2.2.3. The Narrative Role of the ‘Backpacker Bible’.

LP is not the only publisher on the market (e.g. the Rough Guide and Let’s Go represent similar concepts), but is the focus of this thesis due to the brand’s market dominance and social significance amongst backpackers (Welk 2008). The considerable influence of the LP myth narrative can be broken down into theme, rhetoric discourse and effective brand marketing. The theme has worked to identify and appeal to the right target markets, the rhetoric designed in such a way that it enlivens the myth and the strength of the LP brand name ensures consumer loyalty. Stamboulis and Skayannis (2003) highlight a central function of myth narratives to be the creation of a theme (subject of discourse). In the case of the backpacker experience, an appealing theme should be tailored around three elements: 1. The natural and cultural features of the destination, 2. Practical and general travel considerations, and 3. The backpacker ideology. The resulting theme from combining these three is then integrated into the narrative process. The natural/cultural features and backgrounds of destinations as well as general travel practicalities are by default covered in each publication. Instead, it is the level of backpacker ideology friendliness in the narrative that needs to be examined.
As Welk (2008) suggests, the increased assimilation of backpackers into mainstream tourism activity has left LP in a tough spot; namely how to identify its main target group. In effect, some of the nonconformist tone set in earlier editions has been negotiated as to not deter the fuzzier and often wealthier consumers (Friend 2005). This transition also reflects in the ‘sleeping’ (accommodation) sections of the current editions where midrange and top-end facilities are over represented (Bloom, et al., 2009). The above already embody two compromises to backpacker ideology, namely to disregard taboos of ordinary life (e.g. language, controversial opinions) and to travel on a low budget (part of the five ‘badges of honour’, Bradt 1995), respectively.

Such inconsistencies may lead one to question how LP still produces comprehensive myths. One answer is that although iconoclastic views may have been removed, the footloose type rhetoric has remained largely unaltered. Welk (2008: 85) sums up the LP model appropriately by characterising it as:

…tailor made for the backpacker market by simulating the casual conversation tone among backpackers with their colloquial, anecdotal style…

Appendix 1 presents a set of excerpts from the LP guide on the Philippines by Bloom, et al., (2009), that I chose in an attempt to reflect the narrative quality referred to by Welk. These examples are but a fraction of the full offer of informality in the LP Philippines guidebook. This leads on to the third factor, namely brand strength. The narrative is legitimized by the credentials of the contributing authors. They are allocated a section in each edition where their obsession with detail, incorruptibility, adventurousness and overall passion for travel is stressed. Moreover, these authors make their own acknowledgements towards travellers they met along the way and that contributed to their section, indirectly serving as a backpacker ‘Hall of Fame’. For the readers that become aware of the source of the information they read, LP takes on a role as the ‘institutionalized arm of the informal backpacker communication network’ (Welk 2008: 91). Their guidebooks are subsequently viewed as almost interchangeable with regular traveller word-of-mouth (the traditional, purist means of backpacker communication). Friend (2005: 2) confirms this tendency, asserting that travellers that spend several months with a LP guidebook that speaks to them in an intimate and chatty way, eventually renders it a ‘bosom companion’ for them. Welk (2008) points out that projecting such an image is key to retaining a segment that possesses great distrust to anything corporate or commercial. Their catchphrase until 1997 was ‘Travel Survival Kit’, which further enforced the image of LP as a travel essential in the risk-taking experience, lending itself to backpacker ideology and identity construction (Welk 2008). LP eventually
dropped this tagline as a part of the market repositioning mentioned earlier, it was considered outdated to label developing countries as hazardous (Joe Cummings: interviewed by Welk 2008). Nevertheless, it reflects the type of marketing that propelled LP to stardom as a brand, and (although softened to cater for a wider audience) still continues to enthral loyal and new consumers alike.

In summary, the interplay of the LP theme, rhetoric and brand strength produces a solid narrative upon which the backpacker myth is based for many independent travellers. A transition from extreme to mainstream was identified in the literature with reference to LP’s brand development, which would coincide with the wider shift in traveller characteristics in destinations across the globe. Altering the narrative makes sense in this context and works to facilitate increasingly institutionalized travellers to still live a perceived ‘backpacker experience’. In the process, the more seasoned travellers refrain from using guidebooks, as they have become a symbol of the ‘common’, relatively inexperienced traveller (Sørensen 2003). In other words, the effectiveness of the LP narrative is relative to the tourist in question. For example, the Venturers on Plog’s (2001) scale of tourist psychographic profiles will probably be more critical of and less likely to use the guiding and narrative functions provided by LP. Regardless, the power of the LP brand extends beyond its immediate readers, also steering travel patterns of people whom wish to avoid the institutionalized ‘LP crowd’ (Welk 2008).

2.2.4. Experience as a Dimension for Tourist Classification.

The argument put forward in this section is not a conclusive one, but rather a suggestion for a new approach to analysing changing tourism trends. The postmodern discourse regards the knowledge based, experience economy as a new paradigm in which economic growth can be understood. As such, exploring different aspects of experience-based tourism can give insights that further explain phenomena such as the institutionalization of backpacker travel.

The conclusion is that there is a possibility of travellers entering the mainstream whilst being under the illusion that they are far-out physically and mentally, living on the periphery of the dullness represented by their home societies. Whether such an escape is perceived or objectively real is of great importance to the credibility of this analysis. As Cederholm (1999) and Cohen (1988) pointed out, authenticity is a subjective, social construct that can easily be moulded by parties with a commercial interest in a destination. In this regard, LP is simply playing its part in creating ‘authentic’ backpacker experiences through its role as a myth creator/marketing tool.
Some considerations should be made when taking in the conclusions presented here. Given that the experience framework is a fruitful one to examine at the mainstreaming of backpackers, it ought to be made clear that LP is just a contributing factor to backpacker myth creation. Other influential stakeholders in this industry can be found in the popular culture projected through new media and Internet 2.0; all of which contribute substantial narrative and symbolic input into the backpacker myth. Generalisations have also been made as to the effectiveness of the myth on consumers. Naturally there will be a wide range of different reactions to the myth and the experience. Just as not all consumers become immersed in the Starbucks experience, such is the case with the backpacker myth and experience. Regardless of the nuances of consumers, seeing tourism in terms of experiences does illuminate this field of research from a novel perspective.

2.3. Plog/Butler Conceptual Framework

In the interest of exploring the evolution of consumers and destinations vis-à-vis backpacker traveller numbers, this literature review will look at two recognized theoretical frameworks, namely Plog’s *Psychographic Personality Types* (1974, 2001) and Butler’s *Destination Life Cycle* (1980).

2.3.1. Plog.

Plog’s theory identifies five traveller profiles that range from the Dependables (Psychocentrics) to the Venturers (Allocentrics) over a normal distribution curve that displays traveller numbers. It aims at categorizing travellers according to their personality types where the Psychocentrics represent the cautious, predictable segment that tends to travel to culturally close, home-like destinations. The other end of the spectrum comprises of the Allocentrics that travel in small numbers, go as far as possible, interact with different cultures and environments and take more risks. Figure 2 illustrates these different behavioural profiles and indicates the direction of influence in travel patterns.

Plog’s research was conducted in North America and is, therefore, likely subject to the cultural conditions of the context where applied. However, one can assume that the same approximate range of traveller psychographic profiles and the same rough distribution curve is present in any country where such a study would be conducted. According to Plog’s description of Venturers and Dependables, classic backpacker travellers fit into the right side of the bell curve. Personality traits inherent to the Venturer include:
• ‘Face everyday full of self confidence and personal energy.’
• ‘Often prefer to be alone and somewhat meditative.’
• ‘Prefer a day filled with varying activities and challenges.’
  (Plog, 1974)

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The respective characteristics amongst the Dependables were fundamentally the reverse from those described for the Venturers. Plog does divert from opinions expressed by popular backpacker research on one point. In the category of spending discretionary income, he rates Venturers as more likely to spend whilst Dependables are rated as more restrictive, not wanting to commit financially to leisure activities. This lies in contrast to common backpacker definitions that tend to refer to budget mindedness as a key element of such travel (Riley 1988, Pearce, 1990; 1995). Nevertheless, both camps can claim an element of truth in their views. Backpackers, in their search for the remote and exotic, tend to spend more on transport and ‘unique’ experiences during the trip than Psychocentrics. However, in the everyday life that fills out the time between experience acquisitions, the budget mindedness of the backpacker tends to be in effect and spending of discretionary income again becomes more planned and restrictive.
2.3.2. Butler.

Butler’s Destination Lifecycle

![Figure 3. Butler’s Destination Lifecycle Model.](Butler, 1980: Figure modelled by Ryan, 2002)

Butler’s (1980) *Destination Life Cycle* curve has been widely used in academia as one of the most resilient theories of tourism development presented to date. It describes the chronological order of evolutionary stages in a destination lifecycle going through exploration, involvement, development, consolidation and stagnation to finally decline or rejuvenate. In this framework, the curve also shows tourist numbers. The exploration and involvement stages represent low visitor numbers when the first tourists and entrepreneurs start realizing an interest for the destination and explore opportunities. The development phase is what could be considered the healthiest stage where tourism revenue is being generated whilst there is still room for additional development. Consolidation implies a saturation of infrastructural development but a continued increase in visitor numbers. Stagnation is where the destination has hit its theoretical carrying capacity in either or both social / natural resource perspectives. This is where it is crucial for a destination to be innovative, move into new markets or find more ways to review current value chain and efficiency management. Doing so successfully would lead to rejuvenation and continued growth, if left unattended it could instead result in a decline with numerous negative implications for the destination. This theory is presented above in Figure 3.
2.3.3. Conceptual Synthesis of Plog and Butler.

Several developments and modifications have been made with the original Plog and Butler theories as underlying frameworks. However, Plog (2001) conceptualised a destination lifecycle in symbiosis with the psychographic typology he had earlier contrived. He produced theory where the type of visitor psychographic category is put into direct correlation with the lifecycle phase of a destination. Butler does mention Plog’s traveller typology framework but leaves the idea of a conceptual merging largely unexplored. The final product was a bell curve that lines up five destination life cycle stages with the traveller psychographic segment that characterizes the majority of visitors at the destinations at that point in time (Figure 4). An in-depth description of the different stages can be found in Appendix 1.

2.3.4. Application to Case Study.

The Plog (2001) model is here considered from both the theoretical perspectives it contains, namely the destination life cycle stage and the traveller psychographic profile. The purpose of using this framework as a point of reference is to better understand the relationship between the type of backpackers observed in the study and their respective destination regions. The hard tourist numbers represented in the model will be little considered, as the tools available
to the researcher do not allow for a quantitative measurement on this level. Although more ambiguous, the perceived popularity or crowding of a destination or transit region might be taken into account when gauging traveller characteristics. Themes identified in the grounded theory analysis can subsequently be used to develop the concept and complement potential shortfalls. In the process, this conceptual framework can also contribute new hypotheses.

2.4 Literature Review Summary

The literature review has covered theory domains that concern the following:

- Definitional issues related to backpacker tourists.
- Mass tourism and its relationship to backpacker travel, where the two merge.
- The dynamics of tourism, plus backpacking more specifically, in developing countries.
- The marketing and production of the backpacker experience.
- Previous frameworks that explain divergences amongst backpackers and that relate the type of tourist to a destination’s level of development.

In the process, the review also brought to light insightful perspectives that could be used in categorizing tourists more effectively. In particular two attributes were identified as possible building blocks in the development of a new tourist typology:

1. Experience – consumer participation and involvement (2.1.1).
2. Tourist psychographic profiles (2.3.1).

This literature represents a solid foundation on which backpacker tourism classification and backpacker institutionalization can be further explored in the field. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), a theoretical groundwork provides a good point of reference also in the later analytical stages of grounded theory.
3. STUDY AREA

The study area consisted of a backpacker route in the Philippines. This ‘route’ was constructed from a combination of suggested itineraries as provided by the Lonely Planet (Containing elements from a ‘Manila Plus One’ and ‘Water world: Palawan’ and ‘Doing Time Island Style’ which are itineraries taken from the categories ‘Classic Routes’ and ‘Roads Less
Travelled’) (Bloom, et al., 2009). Given the combined itineraries, a wider spread of different types of backpackers was made accessible as prospective study subjects. Throughout a two month period, I visited 11 identifiable tourism enclaves (Vigan, Sagada, Banaue, Batad, Manila, Sabang, El Nido, Boracay, Panglau, Siquijor, Malapascua) of different characteristics where I collected eight in depth interviews and made various observations. In studying a route and not the enclaves separately, I got a comprehensive account of what the backpacker experience in this region consists of. As a traveller segment on the move, the backpacker transit route regions and the mode/time of transport between enclaves/local destinations becomes as much a part of the experience as the time periods spent stationary.

The Philippines was chosen as a location for the study due to several favourable factors. Firstly, English is a commonly spoken language, thus facilitating work for the conduct of this research. The country has also been categorized as a developing economy, which qualifies it for the study given the role tourism plays in the economy and the nature of tourism development in LDCs. Further, it has considerable tourism development but has reputedly not reached the levels manifested in Indochina, Thailand, Malaysia or Indonesia (Travel Independent, 2010). As there are still areas of relative remoteness and absenteeism of tourist activity, the Philippines seemingly provides the ideal conditions for exploring backpacker profiles that range from ‘Venturers’ to ‘Dependables’ (Plog, 2001).
4. METHOD

This thesis is ethnographic in that it studies the composition, nature and general tendencies of a group of people that identify with each other and share a common culture. A host of ethnographic studies exist that deconstruct various aspects of the backpacker group. They make a strong case for validity of ethnography as an approach for studying this culture. These articles include: segmenting different levels of backpackers in southern Thailand (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003), a study on backpacker motivations and the tourism ‘other’ (Binder, 2004), a study on innovative ways of measuring consumer satisfaction in alternative tourism (Bowen, 2002), a generic study on backpacker culture (Sørensen, 2003) and an investigation on socioeconomic incentives to travel leading to the mainstreaming of backpacker tourism (O’Reilly, 2006).

Ethnographies are immersive, and as such, participant-observation is a common way to collect the kind of in-depth data needed. Hence, I adopted an overt participant-observer approach in collecting the data for this study. This is when the researcher takes part in the daily lives of the subject, but is open about his/her intentions as someone who studies them (Finn, et al., 2000). This way the investigation attained an up-close account of the backpacker phenomena. Taking on the role of an overt participant-observer, the subjects’ awareness of the researcher allowed for straight questions in interview form, addressing numerous ethical considerations in the process. The interviewees were also given pseudonyms to ensure full anonymity. Social particularities can be simultaneously observed to enrich the understanding of uninhibited social behaviour of the study sample. Moreover, participatory approaches are considered particularly valid in research on subcultures such as backpackers, where successfully studying a group implies being a part of it (Veal, 2006).

It can be argued that more critical than the collection of observations is the presence of the researcher in the environment where a phenomenon takes place, boosting the theoretical sensitivity of conclusions drawn in a study. Immersed in the context where the culture exists, the researcher becomes better able to understand behaviour, terminology used and opinions expressed by the subjects, strengthening the reliability of the analysis given he/she does not ‘go native’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Considering the inherent mobility of the backpacker segment, a participatory approach allows the researcher to see the subject in different contexts and stages throughout the trip, giving a longitudinal dimension to the study.

After spending time in the field, as a participant-observer I obtained information through interviews (see fig. 4.1.) and through general observation on the following areas of interest: travel motivation, backpacker experience criteria, general attitudes on tourism, behavioural traits and
tourism products, transport and services used. Eight interview respondents were engaged before data saturation was considered reached. This saturation level was justified by an evaluation of the variation of responses and taking into consideration previous ethnographic studies on backpackers. These seem to be of considerable scope but relatively modest sample sizes, largely due to the richness of material collected through participative approaches (Binder, 2004; Cohen, 2011; O’Reilly, 2006).

Table 1. List of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Length of trip</th>
<th>Interview Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casper</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Sabang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>Puerto Princesa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Volunteering,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>3 weeks</td>
<td>Puerto Princesa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(visiting Sam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisabeth</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>12 days</td>
<td>Siquijor Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(University course,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>2 months</td>
<td>Manila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>Manila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nienke</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>Sagada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1.5 years</td>
<td>Batad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Names have been changed for the sake of anonymity

By ‘blending in’ and utilising a backpacker like mode of travel (Cohen, 2011) I quickly encountered people who fit the general description of a backpacker. By then casually conversing, usually at transport, accommodation or eating establishments, a friendly banter developed
whereby I gained the interviewee’s trust and was able to confirm their identification with backpacker culture. Digitally recorded interviews where then held between a couple of hours to two days after the researcher/interviewee acquaintance had been made to ensure a sufficient level of familiarity and openness. Several encounters were made along the way where initial introduction had been made with a potential subject, but a revelation of the motive made him/her hesitant or uncomfortable to the level where the quality of any prospective data collected would have been compromised. In these cases the pursuit of an interview was discontinued. Furthermore, by using a set of external characteristics identified in the literature review, I screened potential respondents to exclude obvious compromises to the validity of the study sample. One example is an American couple encountered at a restaurant in Boracay. After a short chat it became clear that they did not fit the general characteristics of what denotes a backpacker. They were in Boracay for two weeks, as a part of a chartered group that had been ferried straight to the enclave from Manila. Activities and accommodation were pre-booked, and they were to travel straight home in the same manner. However, given the diverse ways in which one can travel, allowances also had to be made to not exclude backpackers that did not fit these exact external characteristics. Elisabeth was one of them, where she was only out for 12 days when I met her, but the implicit nature of her current trip (and previous experiences) gave strong indications of a backpacker type ambition.

A descendant of the constructivist epistemology, grounded theory (GT) was chosen as the most applicable method in analysing the nature of backpacker institutionalization as experienced by the subjects. Strauss and Corbin (1990) underline the appropriateness of inductive research for studies that aim to reveal underlying reasons and intricate details of thus far little understood phenomena. As the typology of backpackers is central to this study, using a qualitative method will allow for understanding backpackers’ views of themselves whilst also observing the reasoning behind activities undertaken and tourism goods and services consumed.

Qualitative research is mainly considered as emergent, which involves creating theory/hypotheses as the research evolves, as opposed to proving/disproving existing hypotheses (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). However, some suggest that existing theory can be a useful tool in strengthening inductive work (Maxwell, 2005; Strauss and Corbin 1990). With this in mind, Maxwell (2005) also stresses that whilst a solid theory is able to provide in-depth knowledge in one area, it leaves other areas uninformed. Therefore, logically, the Plog (2001) conceptualization is therefore used merely as a general reference and guideline in this study, not a rigid hypothesis to be proven/disproven. The current thesis will not be constrained by theory presented in literature review.
Rather, established theory will be utilized in the manner prescribed to by grounded theory research:

The literature can be used to stimulate theoretical sensitivity by providing concepts and relationships that are checked out against actual data. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 50)

As these authors aptly put it, it is important to enter the analysis process uncorrupted by the trains of thought provided by previous work. However, as new material takes shape, it can be sound to integrate relevant aspects of existing theory. The analysis of the field material follows a traditional grounded theory approach encompassing coding, conceptualization and categorization of data pertaining to a phenomenon. Although the grounded theory method encompasses the capacity to use for explorative analysis, in this thesis a paradigm model was not made and the findings were left descriptive.

The steps of the grounded theory analysis of this study can be found in appendix 4. I used regular paper to get a better overview, compare, contrast and move between categories and phenomena to get an overview of different categories that form. Through this process a new conceptual framework materialized.
5. ANALYSIS

A few important points need to be clarified before a thematic analysis of the interviews is undertaken. There are tacit and explicit aspects to tourism classification. On the one hand, tacit aspects represent the psychographic preconditions that dictate what kind of experiences a tourist will seek out. Explicit aspects, on the other hand, are made up of the actual nature of the experience that the tourist receives when in contact with the destination product, partly influenced by psychographic tendencies.

Psychographic characteristics of the consumer are, however, no guarantee of a corresponding consumption pattern. Rather they tell us only what the tourist wants to perceive, leaving a gap between perceived and actual experience. In effect, the idea of experience involvement is central to tourism and should, therefore, also form the basis for any classification of tourists (as noted in section 2.2.). From here, the natural progression is to look at what constitutes backpacker travel in terms of perceived experience, the range of possible experiences, and, on that foundation, build a conceptual framework that can explain how backpackers enter the tourism mainstream.

The following narrative goes into detail on different themes of the travel process. More precisely, it aims to define what sets backpacking apart from other forms of tourism seen from the consumer perspective. It will cover the motivations behind engaging in backpacking, how the ideal backpacker experience should be structured, ethics as well as actions that compromise backpacker values. Lastly, construction of identity and distinction from conventional mass tourism is discussed.

5.1. Themes in the Backpacker Experience

5.1.1. Freedom, Adventure, Discovery: Motivation.

Tourism is the consumption of experience. The motivation to travel can be ultimately linked to the functions that a product serves the consumer. The need fulfilled by tourism consumption can actually be associated directly to a higher level need as according to Maslow’s classic ‘Hierarchy of Needs’ (1943). If aligned to his model, one can see that tourism serves two such needs; namely ‘esteem’ needs and the need for ‘self-actualization’. Esteem needs can be summed up as: firstly the need for self-esteem (fitting in, being able to feel respect for oneself) and secondly reputation (respect, esteem from others).
Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world. But thwarting of these needs produces feelings of inferiority, of weakness and of helplessness. (Maslow, 1943: 382)

Self-actualization pertains to the desire to do what ‘one was meant to do’. So for a person to be ultimately happy, they need to achieve their full potential. For example, if I have the mindset and means to go backpacking, I should do so to avoid the feeling of restlessness that I otherwise will carry around.

…the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming. (Maslow, 1943: 382)

It is important to note that these two levels of needs can only be appeased once the lower level needs (such as physiological needs) have been met. This explains why an average person in a developing country might not see it necessary to travel, given that they might already be struggling to secure their survival on a daily basis.

We found ourselves in the little mountain village of Batad, a place of very limited infrastructure, no Internet or cell phone coverage and completely cut off from the outside world except for a little path requiring an hour to get to the nearest main road. I was part of a small group of travellers who had, as often is the case, read about this little gem in the Lonely Planet and decided to team up to get there. Upon arrival we discovered a group of houses perched on a mountain ridge that seemed to live up to everything we were hoping: a great view of the rice terraces and a cheap guesthouse with minimal facilities and very few westerners. Anything that catered purely to us backpackers (such as western style foods) had painstakingly been carried into the village by enterprising locals. Later the first evening, David, a 27 year old from the UK explained to me what drives him to travel:

Adventure…freedom, well I’m a person who in my future life maybe wants a family and the normal things you get at home but whilst I still have no ties I think it is an
amazing experience to see amazing places, amazing animals, meet different people and different cultures, broaden your horizons whilst there is still time. Although currently I feel like I never want travelling to end.

The above type of representation of motivational factors seemed quite common throughout the whole study. Although they might be tossed around quite loosely at times, there are deeper meanings to terms such as ‘adventure’ and ‘freedom’.

To start with ‘adventure’, also something described as ‘putting myself out of my comfort-zone’ (Elisabeth, 23), in its purest sense will in this thesis be described as a romanticized form of controlled risk-taking. In reference to Maslow (1943), controlled risk taking can be a way of attaining a sense of achievement/self respect as well as improving esteem from others who hear of one’s exploits. In short, boosting one’s own social capital by making a statement about oneself through partaking in something perceived as risky in the home society.

‘Freedom’ on the other hand is not so much associated with esteem but rather a relief from the constraints and obligations represented by one’s home society. Most forms of tourism have this motivational element, which is most commonly associated with the annual holiday that working people in the Western hemisphere enjoy to ‘release some steam’. The constraints usually come in the form of laws, social norms and expectations and commonly result in the well recognizable party tourism that exists in areas such as the island of Koh Pangan, Thailand. It occurs when a tourist all of a sudden can behave in a way that would not be acceptable back home. Obligations allude to more functional elements like deadlines at work or daily chores. Freedom in a motivational sense hence becomes applicable to self-actualization.

Another motivational factor that can be extracted from what David explained was the perishability of an experience, to do travel whilst he was still young, able and non-committed. Other travellers reflected similar concerns, such as Casper (23) who described how becoming more settled work-wise is going to become an obstacle to experiencing the benefits of backpacking in the future:

I get back to Holland I will look for a job again, work a year and then travel again to Asia or another part of the world. Who knows? I’m 23 years old so I’m still young, I can work my whole life you know, so why should I work when I’m still young since I can work my whole life? Bottom line is that I never plan.
A second aspect of urgency is the fragile existence of destinations and their physical perishability due to climate change or other environmental destruction. This came out during numerous informal discussions with other travellers about the need to see places before they disappear.

On the little quaint island of Siquijor, Elisabeth who was travelling on her time off a university course, had just arrived. It was a familiar experience to her, having travelled extensively throughout South-East Asia, Australia, South America and Europe before. Experiencing other ways of life is a key component to her travels:

To go to new places where I get to experience a new culture, a new language, new surroundings. Challenging myself, seeing new things and reminding myself that that the life that I live is not the life that everyone lives. Being reminded of that I think is really healthy.

A sense of discovery, curiosity and interacting with the tourism ‘other’ also appeared to be a reoccurring theme throughout my time in the field. Binder (2004), who identified backpackers strong desire to find the ‘other’, realized that this curiosity is based on wanting to re-evaluate the ‘self’. This is a driving force often accompanied by moral pre-texts such as charity or, as with Elisabeth, a desire to remind ourselves how fortunate we are as westerners.

5.1.2. Participative, Immersive, Spontaneous: Authenticity.

Now we have discussed the broader motivations/purposes for people to partake in backpacking. The next point of interest then becomes the nature of an ideal backpacking experience. In other words, the previous section addressed the why and when while this section will look at the how and what. The travel product is made up by largely functional and aesthetic elements. In this category fall the physiographic factors (climate, environment, topography), tourism superstructure (tourism specific infrastructure), events, entertainment, market ties and activities (Ritchie and Croucht, 2005). However, the socio-cultural and historical core attractions are subject to the most scrutiny by the contemporary, nitpicky tourism consumer. The thing that makes the consumption of socio-cultural resources such an issue of debate boils down to one word: ‘authenticity’. One could argue that the authenticity of physiographic resources is equally important. Yet, it seems that evaluating the authenticity of, for example, a forested area in most cases is a simpler task. For the tourist it merely involves estimating the level of human influence,
which is a matter of visual impressions and does not require further background information or analysis. For example, if a tourist is visiting a natural area, he/she can relatively quickly discern whether it is artificial (i.e. planted forests) and the extent of human activity that is taking place in the vicinity. If the tourist in question seeks solitude, then authenticity can be measured by the amount of people that person encounters. If the purpose is seeing a certain animal then authenticity can be seeing this animal free in its natural habitat. The list goes on like this. Nevertheless, what makes socio-cultural authenticity a grey zone is its reliance on guest-host interaction of some sort and that it has a temporal dimension with history being an aspect of culture. Due to the importance of the ‘other’ in the backpacking product, authenticity will be explored as a filter in the social interface between the guest and the host.

Being a seasoned traveller, Elisabeth is wary of the true distance that exists between conventional mass tourism and local societies. She is eager to point out examples such as cruise boats anchoring in the Bahamas only to visit a small area of Nassau (the capital), which is 100% geared towards tourists. That tourism enclave displays a very inaccurate image of local culture, as the only Bahamians present have been trained to maximize revenue through promoting only commercially valuable aspects of their culture. This day we had decided to take a scooter trip around the island of Siquijor, where we had first met a few days ago. The island is small by Filipino standards, and harbours only around a dozen small hotels and little guesthouses. At that time of the year there were very few other visitors as the cyclone season was fast approaching. Regardless, Elisabeth seemed to embrace the relative solitude as an opportunity to get up and close with locals without other tourists spoiling the experience:

...anywhere you go, the people are real and authentic people. But it’s more about how you relate with these people because that is where the experiences are created and authenticity formed. So either it is a relationship where you can talk with and learn from these people or is it one where there is too much of a divide between you as the tourist and them as the person and you can’t relate at all because you are stuck in this skewed power relationship. … [it depends on] whether you are watching them like animals in a zoo or whether you are engaged in some way. So you can be physically somewhere but that does not imply any level of authenticity, it is how the two actors relate; the tourist and the local environment.

Ergo, authenticity is an important part of the backpacker experience and is clearly related to power relationships. If you aspire for an authentic experience you need to create contact with the local population on equal terms by eliminating spatial, economic and cultural barriers. On the other hand, it could be argued that by simply travelling to a place, an asymmetric power relationship is formed; a phenomenon some refer to as neo-colonialism (McMinn, 1997; Matthews, 1977).
However, in the interest of explaining only what backpackers consider pure experiences, such questions can be considered redundant.

Instead, the issue then arises; how exactly does one minimize the unequal power-relationships that so easily occur in a tourist’s experience consumption? Karen, 32, from Holland is adamant that authenticity is a product of the level of intent and planning in an experience:

*I think those are the nicest experiences, when they are not tour guides or people that want to sell you something, but instead local people who are interested in meeting you and showing you something from their own life. Those are the kind of experiences that just happen to you and you cannot plan for. It’s not like you can say ‘today, we will go and interact with some locals’ because you never know when it will happen.*

In line with Karen’s reasoning, the key to spontaneity is that local inhabitants do not succumb to power dynamics by finding and engaging tourists based on some perceived economic value. A few weeks later in Batad, David pointed out an instant when our little group of backpackers had been on a trek through the rice terraces and encountered an old Ifuago man sitting in a little shelter by the path. He was dressed up in full traditional attire, making him very eye catching. When some members of our group became eager to take pictures, this man had in turn demanded a certain amount of money. It became quite obvious that him sitting there was nothing more than a business idea. A couple of us, including me, went on to take pictures, but any feeling of awe or excitement over a great ‘native’ experience went out the window. Hence spontaneity not only indicates a meeting with the ‘other’ on equal terms, it also often implies uniqueness, something that is a great source of social capital for a backpacker in the eyes of his/her peers.

Immersion and participation in the daily life of locals is another way to diminish the cultural distance between guest and host, often accompanied by some form of learning. David describes the importance of the organic experience and gives the example of taking part in the daily life of locals:

*And again other experiences, like just recently, when we travelled on the Jeepneys from place to place in North Luzon, with local people and their products and geese coming straight from the market. That experience sitting on the roof of this four by

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1 Native people of North Luzon, the Philippines

1 A uniquely Filipino form of local transport. Rebuilt old U.S. army jeeps, which have been elongated to accommodate more people. Often flamboyantly decorated.
four and talking about their businesses and their families, felt organic and natural as an authentic travel experience.

Participating in daily life (transport) reflects the intent of a tourist trying to be on par with the ‘other’. As with most social encounters, finding common ground can be important to understanding and acceptance. Showing a willingness to live on the same conditions as destination host communities is therefore a way to find authenticity. On the same note, Sam found that living in home stays was the best way to achieve authenticity. He noted that this could be a key as to why Couch Surfing\(^2\) has become such a success; because it allows tourists to learn ‘what the local cultural values are’.

The view on authenticity presented here can be linked to what MacCannell (1999) follows Erving Goffman in describing as the ‘front’ and ‘back’ regions, where ‘front’ represents staged life and the back region the real life. The front is the artificial representation of a society where a significant cultural, economical and/or geographical distinction exists between locals and tourists as explained earlier. He uses the simple analogy of a restaurant where the front is the dining area with tidy staff and decoration signifying local culture. The back is the kitchen where conditions are what the staff really experience but do not project upon the guests. Logically, backpackers aspire to share the back region with the locals whilst regular tourists are content with the front or simply observing the back region at the most (open kitchens). With regards to the frame of this study, he appropriately observes:

Touristic experience is circumscribed by the structural tendencies described here. Sightseers are motivated by a desire to see life as it is really lived, even to get in with the natives, and at the same time, they are deprecated for always failing to achieve these goals. The term “tourist” is increasingly used as a derisive label for someone who seems content with his obviously inauthentic experiences.

(MacCannell, 1999)

My current theoretical stance is the assumption that true authenticity in a touristic setting can only be found in the structural back region, in other words: ‘real life’ absent from staged representations of local culture. Thus, the example of the Ifuago man mentioned earlier represents a front region in this sense.

\(^2\) Internet-based social networking where the main premises is regular citizens housing tourists for free, in their homes.
Another backpacker-specific attribute identified in the study as significant in determining experience is the level of independence of the traveller. I had met Sam and Karen whilst on route from the archipelago gateway of El Nido to the main city of Palawan, Puerto Princesa. Sam was volunteering in the Philippines for a year and Karen came to visit, after which they went travelling for a couple of weeks. Both identified differences in the experience dynamics between being in a group and backpacking alone. Sam found, from previous experience backpacking by train in Europe, that being in a group and even more so tied to some kind of arrangement, is detrimental to the validity of the experience.

…I encountered a group of travellers who were doing a package tour in Eastern Europe and I was doing solo travel in Eastern Europe. …this might have been just in my mind, but I sort of felt like I was having a “real” adventure and they were having a sort of “sheltered” adventure. Because they would have a tour guide with them 24/7 …so they were really kind of “spoon fed”, you know? Whereas for me it was like “well I hope my accommodation works out tonight and if it doesn’t I will have to try to find another one”, and I guess to me, it feels like more of an achievement.

Couch Surfing in Eastern Europe by himself was a great source of merit to Sam and clearly demonstrates the link between independence and experience. Similarly, Karen described her days of travelling in the Middle East and South East Asia as markedly different as she was by herself at the time. She recognized that being independent also pushes the traveller to be more social as now travelling with Sam; they were spending more time with each other and became less concerned about making new friends. As was shown by Richards and Wilson (2004b) and Pearce (1990), social interaction with other travellers and local communities is one of the core elements of backpacking. Hence, although it might seem contradictory, independence and social interaction are strongly linked.

As noted above, independence influences an experience in two regards: the number of people who are travelling together and; the amount of external guidance one receives whilst travelling. Peter, 21, from Sweden was in the Philippines as a part of a larger Asia trip that was to take two months. He recognized the Lonely Planet guidebooks as a reason to why authenticity is so hard to achieve. Using the Lonely Planet usually means that you will be in places and do activities as prescribed by the book. When that happens and more people start using the same itineraries and talk to the same locals then the element of spontaneity is lost, and so is authenticity:

…so if I do something that nobody else and I have never heard of then I guess it is the real thing. Something spontaneous, like doing something with the local people
that you didn’t expect to do, something that you can’t read about in the Lonely Planet. If you can’t read about it is real. So the Lonely Planet can be a good indicator…

Here, and to several of the other interviewees, the LP guidebook was used as reassurance and a ‘bosom companion’, something that, through facilitation, admittedly detracted a bit from the strength of the experience.

Budgeting and the length of trip are attributes that help to build cultural capital through achieving authenticity. Strongly linked to immersion and participation, living on lesser financial means can reduce power imbalances caused by economic inequality. ‘Living on the cheap’ also serves the more pragmatic purpose of being able to stay out travelling for longer than would otherwise be the case. The length of stay also has a strong connection to backpacking in this sense. As with Nienke (25), who argued that having an authentic experience is time dependant;

*I noticed that you have to be in one place for a while to really get to know the people and the culture. So I think it’s difficult when you are travelling and stay in one place a couple of days, to get really into the culture: I am really up for that and want to do that, but I also recognize that it is really difficult.*

Moreover, the trip length coupled with the number of enclaves visited seems to be an important facet of backpacking as seven out of eight interviewees were visiting 5 or more locations whether they were inside the Philippines or international. This ambition to cover an extensive itinerary can make it difficult to spend any significant amount of time in one place and ‘get into the culture’, something that exposes one of the several paradoxes in modern day backpacking.

Length of stay and the type of budgeting are external characteristics and will not be lengthily investigated in this thesis except for their potential connections to tacit elements such as the authenticity of experience.

5.1.3. Don’t Benefit Tyrannies, Be Fair: Ethics.

Although there are certain characteristics that the ideal experience should take on, a backpacker is simultaneously subject to a certain moral code that lays out the parameters within which an experience takes place. This moral code concerns the travellers’ behaviour vis-à-vis
socio-cultural and environmental stakeholders in the destination. However, the interviewees tended to overlook environmental concerns whilst discussing travelling, in and out of the interviews. Environmental sustainability was mostly covered in terms of the local community’s praxis, whether this is deforestation of pristine virgin rainforest or dynamite fishing. Backpacker environmental impacts, one could induce, are considered minimal in the eyes of these backpackers and ‘green travel’ seen as a given.

Upon arrival in Puerto Princesa, the first order of business for Sam, Karen, a girl named Sara and I was to arrange transport from the bus terminal to a hostel we had found in the *Lonely Planet*. As a temporary voluntary worker in another part of the Philippines, Sam was quite familiar with local price levels and was keen to reach a fair price in his discussion with the tricycle driver. The driver wanted 100 pesos per person whilst Sam insisted that no more than 50 pesos was what a local would pay for the same distance. Finally, by agreeing to all squeeze on one singly tricycle, one driver reluctantly agreed to take us for 40 apiece. In the interview, Sam later explained what motivated him to spend this significant amount of time to save us something that would equate to roughly 1 dollar per person: ‘not getting ripped off’, he said, is one of his key principles to travelling. However, Sam did also explain that being fair in the appropriate moments is highly important, by not paying right above break-even constantly. Karen later stressed that ethical travel in foreign communities not only involves not bargaining everything to the extreme but also not overpaying. Being a hassle by over-bargaining does not make a backpacker more accepted by locals, neither does paying a week’s wage for something that should be much less. If people start paying too much then economic power-imbalances takes the forefront of guest-host interaction and this taints future experiences for people visiting the place in question. Both scenarios present a threat to authenticity. Sam’s sceptical approach had developed through extensive travelling experience through which he had learned to be on his guard:

*Unfortunately it’s just a common feeling that people are out to get you and you just have to try to be on your guard a little bit. For example, and unfortunately it is the case, we stayed at this place in El Nido for five nights and we just checked the bill this morning and they charged us for six. In these instances you want to think the best of people, but having travelled for a long time you get a bit cynical and realize that these little mistakes happen every couple of days, and you realize that when you add them all up, they are very rarely in your favour. Like nobody accidentally charges you for four nights instead of five.*

Through his illustration, one could argue that Sam presents two sides to morality when travelling. Ensuring that right and wrong is clear in terms of one’s own sense of equity towards locals, but
also being very aware of others fairness towards oneself. The traveller’s perspective is often forgotten in the ethics debate as, understandably, the destination peoples are often at a disadvantage when it comes to standard of living. This predicament most often sees locals earning the benefit of the doubt in the eyes of third parties when issues arise.

I have so far addressed instances of direct interaction between guests and hosts. The other category is ethically charged consumer decisions that affect host communities indirectly. Elisabeth covered this well. Departing from Siquijor we arrived in Demaguete, a port town on the south tip of Cebu Island. Here the presence of tourism was noticeably larger as it is a hub for ferries to islands all throughout the south part of the Filipino archipelago. Groups of package tourists gather in Demaguete as a stop on the way to their ultimate destination; places like Bohol, Malapascua and Boracay. Elisabeth found that these types of tourists have a cultural shield through the presence of their peers and the purpose of their trip, which in the case of the Philippines usually is leisure or activity (diving) based. She found that, by coming in a cohesive group from the generating region, people have to make no effort to even adapt to other travellers, and hence become somewhat desensitized to local opinion as they are caught in the social dynamics that they have brought from back home. A group of considerable numbers will also be more noticeable in the local socio-cultural landscape, magnifying any immoral behaviour simply through their visibility.

By this logic, non-intrusiveness is achieved by not belonging to a larger group from the same place. In other words, a group of backpackers that have joined up impromptu are less likely to exhibit the same impacts on local cultures as they also have an element of caution/sensitivity towards each other’s moral values. According to her ‘backpacker code’, tourism should not only be as non-intrusive as possible but also be beneficial to local actors, meaning that there should be some reciprocity in the consumption of the backpacker experience. In other words, not only should the traveller be able to enjoy access to a community, in a genuine backpacker experience, the community should see some benefit, usually of an economic nature but also through social development, through the backpackers presence. A common example where travellers may inadvertently be taking part in an experience that does not lead to local development is where government takes a big role in restricting where and how tourism takes place in a country. As Elisabeth later explained:

*I think I would avoid travelling to a country where there are serious human rights abuses and your money goes to some dictatorship, that’s always tricky to because*
you do not want to isolate a country completely from the world although you have to be careful. So basically being conscious about where your money is going.

As above, one might be allowing their travel capital to bypass local stakeholders through buying package type deals with foreign owned business. Alternatively, the money spent might be indirectly sponsoring a government through taxes, which in turn uses tourism income to fund oppression. In effect great care needs to be taken by the ethical traveller while exercising his/her consumption power. As Sam aptly put it: ‘[Backpacking] …is a minefield of ethics’.

5.1.4. Comfort, Practicality, Experience Accumulation: Compromises.

Manila, North Luzon: Peter and John had both arrived from overseas a couple of days earlier, whilst I came from Malapascua, an island in the south. Peter was travelling with his girlfriend and John by himself, his first ‘proper’ independent travelling experience. Although the popular image of backpacking often is that of young ideological travellers ‘roughing it’ and being less materialistic (Binder, 2004), this not always corresponds to reality. As John’s first big trip out of Europe (for which he was dedicating almost two years), he felt that accumulating travel stories and experiencing things that others have not was one of his main priorities. He, as most of the other interviewees, dealt with budgeting in a highly intuitive and unstructured manner:

*I literally spend what I feel is right and just deal with the consequences later. And just check my account every now and then when I get a chance really.*

Having been to Borneo before the Philippines, John had already acquired an idea of what types of experiences he aimed for. Climbing, diving and jungle trekking were all part of his most fond memories from his approximate two weeks there. These are all activities that dig considerable holes in a traveller’s wallet. The stories suggest that his travel motivations are activity based; he regularly spends high-end tourism amounts although he uses a backpacker format for transport and accommodation. The paradoxical nature of Johns travel highlights the grey zone that exists in tourist classifications to date. In other words, a tourist might categorize him/herself as A, be driven by motivations of travel type B and use travel products and services created for C. Karen later reiterated, when asked how her budgeting rationale impacts her travel, that when it comes to specific experiences a traveller should not be constrained by financial concerns:
...if I’m going to a place like this then I don’t want money to be the reason for not seeing for example, the Taj Mahal. So when you go to places that you know you’ll only be once or twice in your life then things like money shouldn’t restrain you.

Again, one might be led to ask if a tourist can transition between typological categories throughout an experience. The tendency to disregard budgeting in an apparent indiscriminate manner diminishes chances of achieving cultural authenticity as it is described in section 5.1.2. Meanwhile, authenticity serves as one of the central experience elements in purist backpacking. The idea of ‘urgency’ as a motivating factor (section 5.1.1) could serve as a partial explanation as the backpacker feels a need to accumulate a certain experience whilst the opportunity exists. Experience is perishable from both a consumer and producer perspective. To the tourist, it might be the only time he/she will visit an area as next time somewhere new takes priority. As a producer, the ability to recreate an experience can be threatened if that experience is dependent upon certain situational determinants that are vulnerable to external forces (e.g. a nature-based experience that is subject to climate change and direct human interference).

Budgeting aside, the general preference for convenience and practicality amongst a large segment of backpackers puts them at odds with authentic experiences as they become spatially removed from the life of the ‘others’. Casper added that aside from experience accumulation, comfort and convenience, safety is another consideration whereby he makes his consumption decisions:

*We never sleep in dorm rooms however because that is like a privacy thing, and of course dorm rooms are cheaper than private ones but you don’t have any privacy and sometimes it can be a bit risky as well because you don’t know what type of roommates you will get in the same room so that’s why we always book private rooms.*

Privacy can be likened to a form of comfort/convenience as it is not essential but gives Casper a peace of mind. Personal safety guides Casper as it does others and indicates how a backpacker needs to balance the risk-taking element of ‘adventure’ (section 5.1.1) and the desire to make it back with one’s economical, psychological and especially physical well-being intact. This balance often goes in favour of safety over real risk, which illustrates another compromise to the purist backpacker experience. Physical comfort, however, seemed in general to be of less concern for the
travellers although Casper admitted to taking a flight instead of a bus in some cases, as his legs were too long for local modes of transportation in Indonesia.

5.1.5. Parented, Sheltered: Conventional Mass Tourism.

A strong sense of identity is another typifying factor for subcultures as they set out to distinguish themselves not through physical criteria such as geographical proximity or biological similarity but rather on subjectively constructed guidelines such as attitude, opinion and behaviour (Cohen, 1985). Naturally, this can be complemented by external symbols (e.g. clothing) for members to help identify a kin.

One manifestation of identity for certain subcultures is the rejection of things associated with mainstream, as is the case with backpacking. In this specific context, Welk (2004) further identifies an ‘anti-backpacking’ culture. Its emergence is a reaction to the backpacking phenomenon’s massive growth, where the line between individual conventional tourism and backpacker tourism has been blurred. In effect, travellers who see themselves as purists have been disillusioned with their previous romantic image of backpacking and work to maintain it through ‘anti-backpacking’.

Regardless, the most pervasive and recognized class-difference in tourism is that between conventional mass tourists and backpackers. All interview subjects also had fairly strong ideas as to what constitutes mass tourism and backpacking respectively and why backpacking is a more valuable experience.

In Boracay, the Filipino answer to Phuket, hordes of what one could be quick to label mass tourists were to be found. Whereas Phuket caters mainly to western markets, Boracay has a large South Korean and Japanese contingent that, although exhibiting different national cultures, share the same general traits of conventional mass tourism that western tourists possess. Having joined me at this enclave, Sam could quite clearly point out the types of differences between conventional mass tourists and backpackers that he had been alluding to before in Puerto Princesa:

…there is almost a negative connotation with the word “tourist”. “Tourist” sort of implies someone with a big heavy camera and everything is planned for them and they are staying at expensive hotels. Whereas I think now the preferred word is maybe “traveller”, so it becomes the “traveller” versus the “tourist”. So I guess I would like to think of myself as a “traveller” rather than a “tourist” although technically I guess I’m both.
There is clearly a recognized divide between the nature of mass tourism and that of backpackers, at least in the eyes of the backpackers themselves. Furthermore, David points out what to him seems like the existence of ‘mass-backpackers’:

_Australia is an obvious choice when discussing the more mass-touristy backpacker tourism. The whole thing where people are doing the East coast, in some cases is not too dissimilar from two weeks in the sun and having a beer up with some mates. But for example groups of French or British people meeting up, hanging out with each other and not mingling with other travellers outside the group... Not so much the “rough-and-ready”, even all the tours they can take are quite “packagy”. Like you could book a resort for two weeks wherever and hang out by the pool every day, the same way on the East coast of Australia you can get on a bus that goes all the way up and down the East coast, jumping on and off. You probably end up with the same people, same stops, same hotels and probably not branching out as much. So in these cases I mentioned I feel that people use backpacking as a pre-text for partying or working their way into the country._

This description reflects a sentiment that can be likened to that of the ‘anti-backpacking’ movement (Welk, 2004). David depicts mainstream backpackers as mass tourists of sorts, ones that use the backpacker label and some of its commonplace symbols coupled with a very conventional-tourism-like consumption pattern. In other words, a form of travel characterized by normalized routes, tourist-specific transport and accommodation whilst the tourist him/herself keeps a focus on hedonistic pleasures as opposed to aiming for local socio-cultural authenticity in the experience. David seems to identify external traits amongst so-called backpackers that set them apart from his perceived image of his own tourism segment. This way, he and his subculture’s views on others can help to categorize tourists and also show the nuances within what traditionally have been viewed as relatively homogenous groups.
6. TOWARDS A NEW TYPOLOGY

6.1. Introduction

Plog’s (2001) synthesized model provides a reasonable classification of tourists according to psychographic qualities, and provides a possible linkage to the destination life cycle. However, it does not adequately explain the different types of contemporary tourists. Firstly, Plog’s ‘Venturers’ and ‘Dependables’ are partially defined by the geographic location of their destination vis-à-vis their home region, where the longer the distance the further the tourist goes from being a Dependable to a Venturer. Plog also offers a psychographic profile to go along with each category.

As described in section 2.2 there are dynamics in modern tourism, especially with the backpacking product, that allow for gaps in perceived and actual experiences. It means that a person can aspire to live a certain experience whilst inadvertently taking part in a well-established product that bears more resemblance to another type of tourism. In effect, a classification that merely looks at internal characteristics of the tourist and type of destination visited overlooks the experience attained. Hence, a conceptual framework binding psychographic characteristics with life cycle stage will inherently be insufficient. What if well-seasoned travelers are present in a destination (signifying a corresponding ‘discovery’ phase in the life cycle curve), but the destination is just a popular stop-over spot? Perhaps local communities manage to project an innocent, unexplored image whilst in actuality being well-experienced in dealing with foreigners. Countless discussions between other travelers and myself reflected this phenomenon, where a hot topic was whether to avoid Lonely Planet recommendations, as they increasingly can be equated to the imminent commercialization of a place.

To fill this gap, I have developed a classification that looks more to the actual experience. The experience in turn is evaluated from two standpoints:

1. The level of involvement with the Destination Community.
2. The level of involvement with one’s home community during the experience (the Home Anchor)

Based upon these two pillars one can more accurately deduce tourist categories in the field, in a framework that goes beyond intended to actual experience. Following is an explanation of the different components of the framework (Figure 6). It should be kept in mind that the categories are often ephemeral and transgressive, since a tourist can move between classifications during one
trip. Therefore, the classifications should be seen more as dynamic within a spectrum and not rigidly definite. As with all classifications that are not market research based, the current classification cannot be clearly deduced through hard external figures of the experience such as length of stay, capital spent or demographic traits of the tourist. It, therefore aims more towards providing a new perspective on the topic and to procure a thematic description for further explorative and explanatory research.

The applicability of this framework is more clear in a classic North to South (i.e. developed to developing) type tourism. It can be applied for South – North, North- North and South - South scenarios as well but the clarity of the classification then becomes less obvious. This will be discussed further in the conclusion.

Using a backpacking-based terminology makes the framework consistent and avoids confusion. Several other typologies categorize tourists based on rather vague and subjective terms such as ‘alternative tourism’, ‘responsible tourism’ and ‘ecotourism’. This framework does not
deny the existence of such classifications but rather includes them in new umbrella terms based on
the two broad categories of ‘backpackers’ and ‘mass tourists’. This is because they represent
polar opposite forms of tourism, two extremes just like Plog’s (2001) ‘Venturers’ and
‘Dependables’. For example, ‘Mass Backpackers’ is an umbrella term for a range of different
variations of independent mass tourists.

6.2. The Tourist – Psychographic profile

This is the experience consumer. It encapsulates the psychographic profile as per Plog, and
shows the range of possible classifications tourists can embody. Parallels can also be drawn to
Plog in the sense that Resort and Sightseeing-based Conventional Mass Tourists are more likely to
project characteristics of a Dependable, and on the other end of the spectrum there are the Purist
Backpackers that would correspond to Venturers in most cases. Again, this framework allows for
the possibility of Venturer taking part in an experience that technically is closer to that of, for
example, near-Dependables.

6.3. Home Anchor (HA)

The Home Anchor represents the tourist’s level of use of tangible and intangible comforts.
Tangible comforts include practical matters such as transportation, food and lodging. It implies
utilizing products that bear resemblance to the corresponding products in one’s home region. Tacit
comforts refer mainly to frequency and modes of social interaction.

In short, a strong Home Anchor is typified by heavy use of home comforts. For your
average western tourist this could imply:

1. Pre-purchasing a package deal, where the tourist only achieves minimal contact with
destination inhabitants plus minimal, on site planning and arrangements being needed of
the tourist him/herself.
2. Staying in a high-end western style hotel.
3. Purchasing upper class tickets in transport or taking more quick, comfortable transport than
   is readily available for locals.
4. Eating cuisine from one’s home region.
5. Heavy social interaction with other tourists from the same region.
6. Keeping close and frequent contact with friends and kin from home, e.g. through Internet
and phone communication.

*Home Anchor* can be summed up as the use of tools and means that are not readily available to the broader local community. Therefore, the nature of what constitutes *Home Anchor* is contextual and varies between destinations. It depends on the economic and social preconditions of the society in question.

### 6.4. Peripheral Home Anchor – Involuntary (PHA)

The *Peripheral Home Anchor* includes the same items as the *Home Anchor*, however, being peripheral means that the consumption of such products is actively involuntary or unintentional on behalf of the tourist, such as:

1. Having to use tourism-specific transport to travel a certain route or access a certain experience (e.g. seeing a glacier that requires using a tourist boat).
2. Using seemingly local facilities that, however, have been developed as a result of locals seeing a demand by tourists.
3. Using recognized routes that have been rendered tourism specific and that have developed infrastructure geared towards facilitating the usage of this route and the destinations/experiences along it.
4. Using common, home region travel tools to facilitate and maximize the experience (guide books – e.g. *the Lonely Planet*).

### 6.5. Destination Community (DC)

As it sounds, this is the level of interaction any given tourist has with the *Destination Community* in terms of the people (social aspects) and culture (symbols, language, lifestyle). A full immersion into the local community necessitates a full rejection of the *Home Anchor*. For experiences, it is here where socio-cultural authenticity is or is not achieved. As found in section 5.1.2, the type of socio-cultural experience gained by the tourist is largely dependent on his/her power relationship in regards to the local community members and only when both actors are on equal terms can true authenticity be discussed (as according to the consumers themselves). Hence the level of involvement with a destination community affects what type of experience is attained.
and this in turn plays a deciding role in what type of tourist category is most fitting. Only with nature-based tourism does the level of involvement with a destination community not have an impact on the final experience.

6.6. Commodified Socio-cultural Artefacts and Symbols (CSAS)

Just as with the Peripheral Home Anchor, CSAS is a sub-category of the broader Destination Community component. It consists of the manifestations of the local community that are tourism specific, which one could argue, are made up of the more marketable aspects of a host community. Figuratively speaking, CSAS represents the ‘front’ region of the tourism consumption space (MacCannell, 1999).

This is the extreme end of the spectrum in terms of unequal guest-host power imbalances and demonstrates the type of ‘local’ experience most backpackers would not deem authentic. A good example of CSAS are souvenir shops selling mass produced artefacts and symbols of a certain culture, usually the ones most popular amongst tourists, regardless of its meaning to host communities. Another would be local evening dance shows in all-inclusive hotels, as can be found on numerous Pacific islands for example. These representations of culture are often created with the sole purpose to earn money (sometimes to educate), and gives a skewed image of destination cultures to a tourist that does not access the real society of the destination.

6.7. Experience Involvement Tourist Categories


This is one of two CMT categories and probably the closest classification in this framework to Plog’s ‘Dependables’ or ‘Psychographics’. The RCMT are in full use of the Home Anchor throughout their experience. They have no contact with the Destination Community apart from cultural representations in the form of souvenirs or shows.


These are the mass tourists whose main motivation is sight-seeing. It is a pre-paid package style product where they are accommodated in western style lodging, usually have access to familiar foods and comfortable, tourist specific transportation (with their chartered group). Further, the sight-seeing concerns either nature or the Destination Community. In the case of
destination communities it is often pre determined areas they visit where locals are accustomed, prepared and often have some commercial secondary purpose in mind (such as selling handicrafts). Therefore, the SCMTs are bound to only interact with the peripheral aspects of the Destination Community (CSAS) when they are shown around.

6.7.3. Mass Backpackers (MPB).

MBPs include independent conventional tourists. This category travels standardized and pre-decided routes, use the same accommodation as others in the same segment, but can venture between full Destination Community and CSAS depending on the setting. This is because even though the overall experience is relatively predictable, their increased flexibility allows for more independent excursions into everyday life. Furthermore, interaction with the Destination Community is sought after as well since the token interactions such as buying bus tickets and eating local foods for example often make an important part of the experience for this segment. In terms of accommodation and transport for MBPs, it will not be as high-end as CMT but contain all necessary amenities as expected back home, lack of luxury is compensated by a heightened social factor where a traveler easily can find and socialize with other travelers. This social comfort is a strong Home Anchor as one can share an experience with someone whom can relate. Examples where this segment can be found in abundance include a lot of the backpacking trail in South-East Asia and Australia.

Moreover, the use of Home Anchor guiding tools like the Lonely Planet is central. With a guidebook, a MBP has easy access to the ‘where’ and ‘how’ to ‘must-do’ sights. The traveler also has the safety of a certain quality guarantee through the judgments of the experienced western travelers whom author the books. Lastly, using a guidebook is a sure way of finding likeminded travelers to socialize with by knowing where is popular to stay and what is popular to do. All these assurances and pointers facilitate the MPB experience but also hamper achieving socio-cultural authenticity in it. In this sense one can find a clear link between level of Home Anchor involvement and the level of Destination Community involvement.

Lastly, as identified by David in the previous section (5.1.5), MBPs use the backpacking format, largely as a means of enjoying hedonistic pleasures, such as the full-moon party tourism in Koh Pangan.

6.7.4. Institutionalized Backpackers (IBP).

‘Off the beaten track’ is a key concept for this segment, although discussed amongst
MBPs, it is not actively pursued on the same level as with IBPs. They partake fully in the Destination Community as exploring the ‘other’ is a main motivator and having this experience be authentic even more important.

They involuntarily use the Peripheral Home Anchor as some routes do not have full coverage with local transport and require actions such as hiring a mini van or a taxi that in itself goes beyond what a host community member would do for the same purpose. Moreover, social media and contact with the home region remains common trait with the IBPs as with the MBPs, maintaining contact in this sense is a Home Anchor characteristic and as such puts IBPs in the periphery. Contact with the home region compromises ‘adventure’ as explained in the section on motivational factors in travelling (5.1.1).

An example of this category would be a backpacker that actively tries to divert from the traveler crowds, find home stays and use local transportation in a place like India. Albeit, a strong emphasis is made by this segment to accumulate experiences, which provokes the use of facilitative travel tools on a regular basis. As mentioned in section 5.1.1, there exists an urgency where one wishes to tick off a list of ‘things to do’ in the destination region.


These are similar to the IBPs but without Destination Community interaction. An example would be Safari tourism in some African countries where one is obliged to use minimal tourism-specific transport and infrastructure to have a chance to experience certain types of nature. Such an scenario is similar to that of the SCMTs. Here the categories would rather be defined by nature of accommodation/amenities accessible to the tourist and the type of social group he/she interacts with.

6.7.6. Purist Backpackers (PBP).

They embody the most immersive and participative form of tourism. These tourists reject all forms of Home Anchor. In other words, anything that is not readily at the disposition of the average local inhabitant. In effect, this includes the use of guidebooks and other minor Home Anchor linkages. The interaction with the Destination Community is organic and the tourist-host relationship one of economic, cultural, geographical and habitual equality. Thus, we have a relationship where the tourist is immersed and fully participates in the daily life of the members of the Destination Community. In the case of PBPs the duration of stay is usually longer than that of the MBPs or IBPs. Where an IBP would be concerned to move on and see as much of a region as
possible (accumulate diverse experiences) before the trip is over, a PBP would be content to remain relatively static to favor immersion.


This is like the PBPs with an absolutely minimal *Home Anchor*, but without any *Destination Community* interaction. An example would be explorers/adventurers that base their experience in nature. Their stay there is based on their own capabilities to survive and where food, accommodation and transportation are entirely self procured (e.g. travelling by canoe or by foot in Alaska, sleeping in a tent and eating what one has brought or finds along the way).
7. CONCLUSION

This thesis set out to explore the institutionalization of backpackers. Themes that emerged from the backpackers themselves were researched to map out the independent travel experience. Through such primary research and by looking at literature for a foundation, I unravelled information that led towards the creation of a typology. In other words, literature provided an important part of the inspiration through which the framework was created. By discussing Butler in the literature review, I wanted to point to the link between type of tourist and the development level in the destination since such an assertion justifies raising concerns about the sustainability of tourist categories. In this case, the focus is on the long-term developments of destinations that receive their first tourists in the form of Purist Backpackers. However, in my theory Butler is left out in the interest of comprehensiveness and to narrow down the scope of the study. Rather, the experience participation (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) theory was conceptually introduced to the psychographic profiles of Plog (1974). A combination of these frameworks allows for a broader perspective to be gained by separating the intentions of the tourist and the objective reality. A middle ground emerges between the insightful but impractical anthropological/sociological criteria and market research that consists of pragmatic definitions based on clearly measurable indicators. There are numerous factors that come into play and affect the process between the initial idea of a trip and the total experience that has been gained upon the return home.

In short, by using these two theories, I make the underlying supposition that, not all external traits are full representations of the tourists’ will and not all internal ambitions translate to their corresponding experiences. Knowing what type of tourist represents what type of experience (inputs and outcomes), the ultimate aim is to become able to effectively understand destination development through a consumer-centred perspective. Returning to aim:

The ambition of this study lies in finding out whether new forms of mass tourism are developing through the mergence of backpacker ideals and values with mass tourism characteristics.

In response to the aim, the proposed central finding put forth by this research is as follows: ‘Mass Backpackers do represent a new form of mass tourism, driven by societal trends and a need for an alternative format to Conventional Mass Tourism. Institutionalized Backpackers form the link between the Purist Backpackers and Mass Backpackers and therefore provide a motivation for
simultaneous existence of both forms.’ Albeit, a more complete summary of the framework reveals a slightly clearer picture:

- In reference to the framework (Figure 6), the identification of IBPs and MBPs indicate that there are indeed traveller types that exhibit characteristics from both purist origins and mainstream tourism simultaneously. The general trend seems likely to be that of PBP leading the way for IBPs that in turn enable the presence of MBPs at a destination. In some cases, where the context allows, MBP destinations can see a move towards the CMT segment. This psychographic shift is likely to exhibit some sort of relationship to a destination’s life cycle as suggested by Figure 4.

- Lastly, the two pillars that determine experience (Home Anchor and Destination Community) should effectively be able to work as indicators of the type of tourists (psychographic profiles) that are present in a destination.

The experience involvement typology contributes a novel perspective to existing classifications. For now it presents a new set of concepts and a terminology that ought to be used in consumer research, to understand tourism types better, what they look for and what their implications are. Backpackers have generally been grouped together as one homogenous segment in the literature except for the occasional article such as Welk’s (2004) mention of ‘anti-backpacker’ travellers. The current framework cements the existence of a range of backpacker types that overlap with conventional mass tourists. The latter also consist of a constellation of different identifiable categories, again, some of who resemble backpackers.

A point worthy of emphasis is that the least clear division in the framework is where one draws the line between purist and institutionalized backpackers. Unlike the IBPs and the rest of the spectrum, (N)PBP are not dependant on the existence of other travelers at the destination to go there. IBPs do not come into existence without PBP having been there before. Conversely, the existence of PBP does not guarantee that IBPs will start arriving. IBPs demand certain characteristics in a destination that a PBP does not necessarily seek. As mentioned earlier, certain types of distinguishable experiences are needed for an IBP to consider a destination ‘worthy’ of ‘collection’. PBP are less likely to scrutinize a place in this sense as the very act of picking and choosing a destination based on first impressions or external features is an inherent characteristic of the mainstream tourist. (N)PBP can see the value in a place that apparently has none. Commercial marketability implies a level of inauthenticity, and therefore is not a travel criterion.
This distinction was important to make in light of the IBP-MBP link, where the presence of IBPs is a much stronger indicator of a transition to MBPs than PBPs is of IBPs.

7.1. Limitations

As mentioned above, the proposed framework applies strictly to a North – South scenario where the tourist originates from an industrialized region and visits a developing one. This covers the most typical picture of a backpacker. However, there is nothing that inherently prevents the framework being applied in a different scenario. An example of such a scenario would be a tourist visiting a country of the same type of culture, economy and general situation as his/her home region. Then, the circles in the model in Fig. 4 would be more overlapping, thereby demonstrating that the tourist is likely to be more familiar with the culture and conditions in a nearby country than with those in a more distant part of the world.

The fact that the researcher was an overt participant-observer may have affected responses as interviewees will, to some extent, consider the scrutiny of an academic study throughout their thought process. Another possible limitation is born from the seemingly small number of interviews conducted. This could be thought to prevent a nuanced and diverse enough response base. Nevertheless, saturation was considered reached with consideration to the richness of the material that had been collected and the absorption of useful information by the researcher in the field and through literature.

The framework claims authority on being able to categorize all tourists somewhere along the PBP – CMT spectrum presented. However, the field material is based solely on what was extracted from a relatively narrow segment of the full consumer base in tourism. Thus, I am obliged to also caution any reader who is eager to use it, before it has been tested in a wider set of contexts. Moreover, the case study is geographically and culturally limited to the Philippines, which potentially also influenced the reliability of generalisations made to some degree.

7.2. Sustainability Implications for Tourism

Understanding the complexity behind what differentiates one tourist segment from another lets us identify transitions in travel patterns and anticipate implications to a region that is undergoing these changes. For example, if precedents indicate that PBPs (Venturers) explore a
destination first followed by IBPs then MBPs and so on, then you can start to forecast the general type of development at a destination if you find increasing numbers of IBPs. Naturally, that is if one accepts the premise of the link between tourist psychographic profiles and life cycle stages (Figure 4).

A forecasting system along those lines would be invaluable to destinations that have just discovered the potential in tourism. It would encourage planners to proceed cautiously and gain some control over the type of tourism that develops. ‘Long-termism’ along these lines fosters the culture needed to enable sustainable tourism development.

7.3. A Few Words on the Future of Tourism in the Philippines

The Philippines was the location of the study, although the framework makes more general assumptions regarding the consumer end of the system. Based on the tourists that I encountered and interacted with there were some indicators as to the present level of development at the time of the study. The country seemed void of classic MBPs. Most enclaves did not have ‘backpacker guesthouses’ as can be found on the Indochina trail but rather regular small hotels or inns. In connection to that there were no big ‘party enclaves’ (except Boracay, which contained a melange of tourism profiles), hence it does not presently invite for 2 month hedonistic relaxation trips the same way Koh Pangan or Cancun do. The interviewees and other travellers met seemed to generally fit in well with the IBP classification. The ambiance amongst them was one of genuine interest in the Destination Community whilst wishing to stay out of their comfort zones and hoping to create challenges for themselves. In doing so there were, however, numerous instances where tourism specific transport and accommodation was used; as no local, remotely practical options were available (see IBP, section 5.2.7.4 above).

Given this evaluation of current tourist profiles, an assumption one could make is that as the backpacker phenomenon grows, MBPs will start to frequent the Philippines soon. This is likely to happen as other MBP-thick countries are reaching saturation and even hardened mass-backpackers can start to feel too ‘touristy’, causing them to spill over to similar but less exploited options. Such a development is not far-fetched given a scenario where the destination allows for that type of infrastructure to establish. If the Philippines maintain their current state of affairs, they can niche towards a more responsible form of tourism that promotes education and guest-host equality.
7.4. Suggestions for Future Research

With the establishment of this framework there also needs to be further exploration of the framework premises and empirical testing to verify its existence. This calls for statistical testing of tourists’ involvement with their *Home Anchors* and *Destination Community* in the travel experience. To enable deductive research, prerequisites are first needed in the form of hypothesised cause-effect relationships and measurable indicators. Hence the next step is to materialize these from the current framework.

In the long term, a study of tourist profiles in a destination over time and space is recommended. This could prove or disprove the idea that certain forms of tourism lead to others, that there is a certain direction of influence and that this is connected to the destination life cycle.
8. REFERENCES


As cited in:


As cited in:


9. APPENDICES

9.1. Appendix 1 – Lonely Planet Excerpts

(Bloom, et al., 2009)

‘Coastal Pleasures’:
‘You don’t need an X-games appearance on your resumé to enjoy…’ p.10
‘More adventurous travellers can pitch a tent on a deserted stretch of coastline and play solo Survivor for a few days.’ P.10

‘Destination Philippines’:
‘It’s not particularly bahala na to get all indignant about corruption…’ p.16
‘Filipinos pollute like they smile – copiously’ p.16
‘So there’s been some heady stuff going on in the Philippines … Describing the country is like trying to pick up a bar of soap in the bath: you may come close to grasping it, but it always seems to elude you.’ P.16

‘Food & Drink’:
‘…Filipino restaurants … about as common as flying bears.’ p.52
‘The bad news for lovers of animals (and vitamins) is that Filipino dishes tend to be long on meat and short on greens.’ p.52
‘The Philippines really, truly does have the best mangoes in the world. Period.’ p.53
‘Tanduay Rum is a perfectly drinkable travelling companion – and a handy antiseptic!’ p.53

‘Boracay’:
‘…beach walks, beach sports, massages, sunsets and time spent lolling in the most turquoise of waters. Oh, and cocktails, of course.’ p.285
‘…vendors … pester you like flies on honey, and the colourful paraw are sometimes lined up on the beaches as if it were a mall parking lot.’ P.285
‘Kiteboarding involves strapping your feet to a small surfboard, lassoing your torso to a 4.5m kite and letting the wind take you away.’ P.288

‘Cebu’:
(Kukuk’s Nest Pension House) ‘Wacky Murals and contemporary paintings adorn the walls, the artist in residence is an armless charcoal sketcher. After dark, its pumping 24-hour resto-bar attracts a motley crew.’ P. 239
‘For adventurous shoestringers … The biggest stall of them all is Carbon Market – we suspect the name is a reference to the state of the barbecue they serve here.’ P.241
9.2. Appendix 2 – Plog/Butler Synthesis: Stage by Stage Description

Following is a step-by-step description of the destination at the different life cycle stages with the respective traveller profile description as enumerated by Laliberté (2006):

The first stage is discovery (exploration-involvement); here highly psychocentric Venturers first visit the destination in search of something new and unexplored. This traveller segment can be described as the ‘purist’ Backpacker, living on a budget with a minimal demand on infrastructure and services. Additional Venturers are attracted by the destination's reputation through word-of-mouth (as no marketing or development efforts have yet been made).

Near-Venturers are the next segment to arrive, development is initiated as they are slightly more demanding in terms of infrastructure and services. Classified in relation to Backpacker tourism, these visitors may be considered ‘institutionalized budget travellers’, as mentioned earlier (Cohen, 1973).

Mid-Centrics follow during the stage of maturity, and are by far the largest market segment to discover the destination. This is in large part due to the power of the media, that not only brings in new visitors through direct marketing but also through travel magazines and other PR in the tourism generating regions. By this time Venturers and Near-Venturers have moved to other destinations except for when transiting or re-supplying necessities. The destination is now considered a mass-tourism centre and the great economic growth generated typically makes destination management forget about long term planning, this is what usually leads to stagnation and eventual decline in Butler’s model. Ironically, therefore great caution should be taken when things are at their supposed best.

Maturity-decline is when the mass-tourism has become unsustainable and the destination is starting to be labelled as ‘touristy’ by visitors and media alike. By now, the destination has developed to the point where it has lost most of its personal character and becomes hard to distinguish from other mass-tourism areas. Plog (2001) estimates that a decline of several decades is unavoidable if a destination receives 30% or more of its visitors through package deals, which is highly likely at this stage. Near-Dependables now frequent the destination; people who are likely to only settle for areas with the kind of brands, products and services that they would have access to at home.

The complete decline sees a worn out destination, a topography littered with hotel structures and an almost complete lack of local culture. Natural resources and local residents not directly reliant
on tourism have past carrying capacity and are put under strain. Only Dependables spend time
there now. These clients are very loyal since they almost exclusively want to go places where they
have been before. However, they spend less money than Mid-Centrics, stay a shorter time, indulge
in fewer activities and are lesser in number. The destination now urgently needs to reposition itself
in the market to achieve a measure of competitiveness again.
9.3. Appendix 3 – Interview Coding

Step 1:

Step 2:
Step 3:
9.4. Appendix 4 – Field Interviews

Interview transcript #1, 08/06/10, Casper, 23, Holland
(Sabang, Palawan, Philippines)

MW - Are you travelling in a group?

C – I have been travelling together with my brother for six months already... so just with my brother.

MW – So now you are just free for a while?

C – Yeah we went separate for one week now, sometimes we go separate. Sometimes you just want to do your own thing and it’s important to do that.

MW – And what is your main motivation to travel, to get out of Holland and travel?

C – Just to feel the freedom, to explore other cultures, to meet other people... I’m just really interested in other countries. I worked for one year, I quit my job and just decided to travel. I bought a one year ticket so I have twelve months...

MW – Ok, so it’s basically just the sense of freedom?

C – Yeah, just the freedom and (exploring) other cultures, that’s the main thing.

MW – So in general, how often do you try to travel and how often are you out for when you do? And do you do any smaller trips every now and then?

C – Yeah this is my... two year ago I travelled for one year as well in Australia. After that when I came back I found a job so I did that for one year, so after that year I quit my job and now I have been travelling here in Asia for six months. But last year I did not take any holidays, I just worked for one year, 80 hours a week so I could save a lot of money so now I can spend that money during this year.

MW – More specifically, what made you choose to include the Philippines in this trip? What was the appeal of the Philippines?

C – Well we decided to travel in South East Asia, and all the S.E Asian countries are quite close to each other and the flights are quite cheap so we flew from Malaysia to the Philippines for about 40 or 50 Euros. So it’s cheap and this is the one time you can do it, whilst you’re close to a country like the Philippines. Well that’s why we decided to visit all the S.E Asian countries, their proximity to each other and cheap flights.

MW – So (the Philippines) became a part of a bigger aim to see the whole of S.E Asia? Also due to price and accessibility?
C – Yeah that’s true, we always fly with one airline, and they have really cheap prices plus it’s easy to book a flight so... why not? This is the chance to do it you know, we are in S.E Asia so we want to see as much as possible from S.E Asia.

MW – So how long will you be in the Philippines for and how long is the bigger trip? And also what is your route (itinerary) in the Philippines?

C – This is the sixth month already and we still have six months left. And we planned to stay in the Philippines for about five weeks but on arrival in the Philippines we only got a 21 day visa so we had to go to the immigration in Manila to extend our visa for a couple of weeks. We stayed one week in the north of the Philippines, after we flew to Cebu island (the south) and then from Cebu I flew to Palawan and I still have about two weeks left (total). After this I will travel to the north of Palawan (Busuanga) and from there I will eventually take a flight back to Manila. Then I might spend some time around Manila, just south of the city there are some volcanoes so maybe I will spend my last few days there.

MW – Have you pre booked anything in the Philippines?

C – Like flights, accommodation and stuff like that? No, we never book accommodation, why should you do that? When we arrive anywhere we just ask some locals for accommodation tips, or, we also use the Lonely Planet guide and there you can find cheap accommodation. And for flights, yeah sometimes you have to book it in advance because you can get cheap discounts, like a week or so before. That’s the only thing however, like accommodation or package tours and stuff like that we never pre book. We just want to feel the freedom you know; if you book everything before and plan everything before then I think the freedom aspect is gone as well.

MW – So the freedom you talked about before, the reason to travel in the first place?

C – Yeah.

MW – Are you keeping to a tight daily budget? Have you calculated an overall budget that you are trying to keep to?

C – No we never do that. I know that there are a lot of backpackers/travellers who do that, they say: “I just want to spend maybe 10 – 20 dollars a day”. But we never do that you know, we always try to do everything the cheapest way like accommodation, tours and the flights. But that’s the extent of it. We never sleep in dorm rooms however because that is like a privacy thing, and of course dorm rooms are cheaper than private ones but you don’t have any privacy and sometimes it can be a bit risky as well because you don’t know what type of roommates you will get in the same room so that’s why we always book private rooms.

MW – So in terms of transport, what mode of transport do you usually use if you have a choice? Do you prefer the locals transport or your own for example.

C – It depends on in which country I am in. We also travelled in Indonesia, and the local transport was really horrible, it was a hell. They used really old busses without any leg space and I am very tall so I need some leg space. So that’s why, in e.g. Indonesia, we always try to avoid the local transport. So in Indonesia we flew a couple of times with domestic flights to get around the country. But in Thailand and Malaysia the public/local transport is really good. So that’s a good
way to save money as well, if it is good and everything works well and there is a functioning timetable, yeah why not?

MW – Do you also see it as a way to experience the local culture? To use the same transport as the people living there?

C – Yeah that is also a reason why it is nice to do that but it is not worth it in places like Indonesia. And here in the Philippines, it’s not like a plane of course, the public transport, it goes slow and so on. But here it is a nice overall experience (compared to e.g. Indonesia).

MW – You have already touched on this, but to reiterate; what type of accommodation do you usually use?

C – Always a double (private) room, but we always try to find the cheapest guesthouses and they usually have double and single rooms that we use. Like I said, we usually find these places by talking to locals or through the Lonely Planet guide.

MW – What type of technology do you usually use when you travel and how often? For example credit cards, internet, mobile phones etc.

C – Well we don’t have a laptop or things like that. Internet cafés we go to sometimes since you can find them in every country, to check our mail and to keep updated with friends and things like that. When we arrive in a new country we always buy a local sim card since it becomes much cheaper (than using Dutch sim cards) when me and my brother want to call each other. I also use it for my parents to call me on my local sim card, they call me from the internet and it becomes quite cheap. And with credit cards we just use it to book our flights because we always book them online. And to get cash I just use my normal bank card for the ATM, never the credit card. And when I do I always try to take out as much as possible so I only have to go to the ATM maybe once every two weeks only.

MW – What is your attitude towards the conventional mass tourism? the Sun Sea Sand package tourism in other words.

C – I really don’t like it. Sometimes, I really like the sun and the beach; the more touristic places, but just for sometimes you know. I really like the local life and seeing the local way of living and in the tourist places you cannot see that anymore. There are just resorts, hotels, bars, big restaurants; everything just built for the tourists. Sometimes I like it of course, only for a couple of days, not for a long time.

MW – And what about the tourists themselves, are you neutral towards them or do you have any particular opinions about conventional mass tourists?

C – Yeah I think they are another kind of people, tourists. I know the mass tourists, they like to lie down on the beach, to do nothing the whole day, drinking beer the whole day, to party the whole day. I think many people do that because they have holiday for 2 or three days and they’ll go to for example Thailand which is a popular destination at the moment. So many people go to Thailand, to the beach. They spend maybe two or three weeks and after they fly back. But if you have been travelling for a long time like me for six months already, yeah it’s nice for a week or
something but after that you want to see something else, you want to see the real life. That’s my opinion.

MW – And how would you label the type of travelling that you do? How would you describe it? And also do you have any do’s and don’ts when you travel? E.g. things you try to avoid vs. things you try to do as often as possible.

C – I’ve been travelling together with my brother so I think that sometimes it is important to go separate like now, to do your own thing. I think that’s important. And you should also try to be yourself you know, everywhere you meet a lot of other tourists and people, but always try to be yourself and don’t forget to try to relax. Also many tourists I know when they travel around want to see as much as possible in a short time whilst my brother and me never do that. When we arrive in a new country, we just want to do a couple of highlights but we never try to do all of them. For example if there are ten highlights in a country, of course you can do all ten of them. But you can also choose five and the rest of the time you can relax a bit and you can take your time to visit the highlights.

Many people I know will try to see as much as possible because there are so many interesting places in a new country, but you have to make choices you know. Its impossible to see everything in little time, well everything is possible of course but if you do that I think then my question is “Is it still holiday?”, so its no good.

MW – So how would you describe your way of travelling?

C – Year I really don’t know, most people call themselves backpackers, and most of these backpackers use a backpack of course. But when you can call yourself backpacker and when you can call yourself traveller I don’t know. I think nobody really knows (what they are) even though they call themselves “backpacker”. Also most people use backpacks but I don’t understand why they use it. Especially in Australia, I travelled there for one year and I’ve seen and met many backpackers over there whom all use backpacks but I never understood why. Because, especially in Australia you don’t need it. That’s why I decided to buy a suitcase, something that both my brother and me have been travelling with and it works fine. In my opinion it is much more convenient, especially when you are travelling for a long time. You can carry more things with you, and another reason is that you can lock your suitcase and nobody can open a suitcase. A backpack is easy to open of course. So that is another important reason why I choose to travel with a suitcase, but I don’t know if I’m a backpacker or a traveller, I don’t know what the difference is. To me they are exactly the same, I’ve been travelling around for a while so how you call it doesn’t matter.

MW – Do you try to seek out local experiences often?

C – I really like foods, so I really like to explore new kinds of foods and cultures. Every culture has its own foods of course. But also the people, I like to talk to locals and they can explain to you things about their country that you would have never found out otherwise, it’s nice. But especially the foods, I’m crazy about food.

MW – Do you have any future travel plans after having experienced the Philippines or after the bigger (1 year) trip? Another region of the world in the future?

C – My future travel plans are still in Asia, because I really want to find a job, I really want to do something in Asia, working with tourists or something like that. But you never know what
happens so you cannot really plan too far ahead in the future. When I get back to Holland I will 
look for a job again, work a year and then travel again to Asia or another part of the world. Who 
knows? I’m 23 years old so I’m still young. I can work my whole life you know, so why should I 
work when I’m still young since I can work my whole life? Bottom line is that I never plan.

MW – You mentioned the Lonely Planet, what made you use the Lonely Planet over other guide 
books, and what do you think about it? Do you think it is accurate?

C – It is really useful (the LP), like I told you, when you arrive in a new place and use the Lonely 
Planet you can always find something. So that’s the main reason why I use the Lonely Planet. I 
know that there are other guides like the Rough Guide and others. The only reason why I use the 
Lonely Planet guide is because it is the most famous one. And I think that is the reason for 
everybody. Maybe the Rough Guide is good as well or maybe it’s better, I don’t even know.

MW – So it’s popularity is a guarantee to you of a certain standard?

C - That’s why when you choose some accommodation from the Lonely Planet you know it’s 
good. They don’t put bad accommodation in their own guides; they just put good cheap 
accommodation. So if you chose something from the guide you can be sure to stay in a good 
accommodation.
Interview transcript #2, 12/06/10, Sam, 25, Australia
(Puerto Princesa, Palawan, Philippines)

MW – What is your main motivation for travelling? In general that is, and then if that motivation differs for this trip in any way.

S – For travelling in general I guess my motivation is ‘adventure’, to put it in one word. I think I would put it down to my curious nature. So I guess curiosity about new places, new experiences and new people and things like that. I think that’s reflective of a few different things in my personality that I have identified now, as I’m getting older. You know, that I’m interested lots of different music and lots of different films and lots of different art and lot’s of different people, so I think it’s just a logical extension that I would be interested in travel because it allows you to experience all of these things really, at once. The motivation for this trip is a little bit different because it’s also to have a bit of an adventure but it’s mainly to spend some time with my girlfriend I guess, and to spend some time away from work.

MW – And you are here also as a part of a volunteer programme to begin with?

S – That’s right.

MW – How often and how far would you say you travel in general? If you could make an estimation.

S – Last year I did a lot of independent travel, it took up a lot of my year last year when I did two trips. I did one trip in Australia, it was in my car and it was nearly 6000 kilometres I think. I went from Adelaide, Tasmania, Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney and then back again. So that was one trip and then in my second trip I went from Russia and then I visited thirteen other countries on my way to London, backpacking and couch surfing like I was telling you about before. So I did a lot of independent travel last year.

MW – So is that usually the main way of travelling for you then or do you also engage in more planned, package travel?

S – I’ve never been involved in a package tour, in a way I think it’s almost like an ‘us and them’ kind of attitude, I felt. I’m very interested in people’s attitudes and things like that and some other Australian volunteers in my programme did a package tour up from El Nido for 3 or 5 days. I was talking to this other girl and she (me) ‘Don’t do that, don’t do a package tour.’, she said ‘You’re not like that, you’ve done all this independent travel before, you don’t need a package tour’ and I said ‘Maybe, I think you’re right’, so we didn’t do that. So, I haven’t done a package tour before, and really last year was the most travel I’ve done in my life I guess. So I would say that the majority of the travel that I’ve done has been independent.

MW – You being here for volunteer work I guess answers this question, but what made you choose the Philippines more specifically?

S – That’s interesting, because within my programme, some of the people choose a location and then try to find an assignment there. For me it was more the assignment that I wanted, I wanted to work with people with disabilities and then it was partly about the location. I looked at the
locations and I thought that I didn’t really want to work in Bangladesh or East Timor because I think that they would be very harsh environments, you know. Other than that I also applied for projects in Cambodia and Vanu Atu (South Pacific).

MW – How long are you travelling for in this specific trip and what is your rough itinerary? And do you have anything pre booked within this trip?

S – This is the end of a two-week trip. The most important thing for us to pre book was the flights, so we did that but even that was done too far in advance, only a couple of days in advance. And aside from that, sometimes we would call ahead and make a booking for hotels and hostels and things like that, and sometimes you wouldn’t. So I would say it was about 40% booked versus 60% not booked for our accommodation. The flights bookings were mainly done due to price considerations.

MW – Are you keeping to a tight daily budget that you stick to or are you quite flexible?

S – I would say we’re quite flexible, what I would call it is the term ‘anchoring’. What that means is that you have a point of reference, so for example, last night in El Nido we paid 1200, so we’ve got that price anchored in our heads and then we came here and it was 1100 so we thought ‘That’s alright, it’s pretty similar so it is within the budget.’ Whilst If we came here and it was 3000 or 4000, compared to that old price it is really different so maybe we’d think twice about staying here. So it’s not really a strict budget but more like a feeling based on previous experiences I guess. So we are more sticking to a range of prices, so the least we have stayed at was 900 a night and the highest we paid was 2500 a night, in pesos, so that’s our kind of range. Of course there are places that are 200 a night and we didn’t stay there because it was too low and then there are places that are up towards 5000, 10000 and we wouldn’t do that either. So we’ve got a rough standard of places we’d like to find like places with fans would be the minimum that we would go for and places with air conditioning and hot water would be bonuses after that.

MW – And what is usually your main mode of transport around the country if you have a choice?

S – We’ve taken a wide variety, we caught two ferries, three flights so far, we’ve taken busses (the smaller vans), we’ve taken tricycles, so there’s a real mix here. For example when I was in Europe last year, 90% of my travel was done on trains, and it’s completely different here, they call it an archipelago so (trains) is not an option. So personally I might prefer trains but here you have got to be flexible with what’s around. So basically the best combination of safety and price I guess.

MW – So what you are saying is that it is very contextual what transport you prefer?

S – Yeah.

MW – You mentioned this before but, what type of accommodation do you usually use?

S – Again, I think we’ve stayed in a bit of a range, like our first night in (inaudible), we stayed in a real business, big city hotel to nipa huts in the jungle so it’s been a real mix.

MW – What type of technology do you usually use when travelling? For example, credit cards, mobile phones, Internet etc…
S – I use all of those, I think a technological resource that I would be keen to pass on the Internet is a website called Trip Advisor. What it is, is travellers rating different accommodation and different activities. And that is really interesting for me because, well we use the Lonely Planet as well as a guide but the Lonely Planet is rating somewhere, like here, based on one person’s review. Whereas on Trip Advisor there would be five or ten people who reviewed it so you would get more so you get a bigger spread of opinions so there is a better chance that it would be accurate I guess. So I think that’s a good resource. And with smaller places (hostels)? Sometimes yes sometimes no, if they don’t cover it then we’ll just go with the Lonely Planet or recommendations from other people, but sometimes the two coincide. Like the Lonely Planet recommended ‘Nuts Huts’, and then some of the other volunteers also recommended ‘Nuts Huts’ so it’s a done deal. In that case, two sources of information is enough for us I think.

MW – We have touched on this earlier. What is your attitude towards conventional mass tourism, and have you engaged in this kind of tourism yourself?

S – It’s interesting, I was just having a discussion with my girlfriend the other night. When I was travelling last year, I was on a train in Europe and I encountered a group of travellers who were doing a package tour in Eastern Europe and I was doing solo travel in Eastern Europe. To me and maybe to them as well, this might have been just in my mind, but I sort of felt like I was having a ‘real’ adventure and they were having a sort of ‘sheltered’ adventure. Because they would have a tour guide with them 24/7 and it would be like: ‘you will go here now.’ and ‘you’re hotel is already booked, then we’re going to do this then we will have breakfast here…’ so they were really kind of spoon fed, you know? Whereas for me it was like ‘well I hope my accommodation works out tonight and if it doesn’t I will have to try to find another one’ and I guess to me, it feels like more of an achievement. If you are able to travel on your own and organize everything for yourself. Whilst I think there is, with the people I associate (with CMT), there is almost a negative connotation with the word ‘tourist’. ‘Tourist’ sort of implies someone with a big heavy camera and everything is planned for them and they are staying at expensive hotels. Whereas I think now the preferred word is maybe ‘traveller’, so it becomes the ‘traveller’ versus the ‘tourist’. So I guess I would like to think of myself as a ‘traveller’ rather than a tourist’ although technically I guess I’m both.

MW – So how do you describe the type of travelling that you do, do you have any word for it? And do you have any do’s and don’ts when you travel?

S – I would like to think of myself as a fairly independent traveller, especially with doing the ‘couch surfing’ thing, I feel like I have earned have earned a little badge there doing the that in Eastern Europe, you know. So I would say that I like to associate myself with that word (independent traveller). I guess now that I am travelling with my girlfriend I don’t feel so independent because you have got someone you can rely on. And with (do’s and don’ts), couch surfing, is like a minefield of ethics. When you are staying at some ones house, there is a whole heap of ethical considerations that you have to take into account. Like when you couch surf for example, it’s not expected but it’s customary that you’ll try to chip in, not to literally give money to your host, but if you go to a bar then maybe you’ll buy them a drink or some food. You will try to do something for them, some sort of token of gratitude for them for allowing you to stay at their house. So that is a little moral code I guess. In terms of just regular travel like this, if I feel like someone has tried to help me out I try to tip them. And by the same token I guess my little don’t is ‘don’t get ripped off’. Unfortunately it’s just a common feeling that people are out to get you and you just have to try to be on your guard a little bit. For example, and unfortunately it is the case, we stayed at this place in El Nido for five
nights and we just checked the bill this morning and they charged us for six. In these instances you want to think the best of people, but having travelled for a long time you get a bit cynical and realize that these little mistakes happen every couple of days, and you realize that when you add them all up, they are very rarely in your favour. Like nobody accidentally charges you for four nights instead of five. So I think you have to be on your guard a little bit, because there is this perception that tourists are walking dollar signs in some places, and that they can take advantage of that. Having said that, I’ve never been robbed or anything like that. So as long as you are safe and sensible you’ll be alright. On that note there is a big don’t, don’t get really drunk in a strange place by yourself. I think the people that I have heard of on my travels that have got robbed or whatever, have usually been really drunk at the time.

MW – Do you seek out local experiences often? I.e. food and drink, other activities…

S – I think I do, I’m a bit of a weird case. And it can be difficult for me because I don’t drink alcohol that much and I’m a vegetarian. So it’s difficult in a place like the Philippines where you get offered food a lot and 90% of the time it has got meat inside, so I can’t accept it. I do make exceptions to the alcohol rule, I will always try something once. You hear a lot of stories about people getting absolutely wasted on the local rum here, I don’t go that far for example. So I’m keen to try everything once, local things, but I will try them within the boundaries of my own ethical personal values. If I’m being critical of myself, then maybe that is something I could do more of. Like my regret from last year would be that in Russia, I didn’t go to the Russian baths. Maybe because it’s a tourist thing, some places may take advantage of that. So the prices were really high and I was at the start of my backpacking trip so I couldn’t really afford it I thought. So If I had some more time there maybe I would have done some more things where I would be engaging with the local traditions and things like that.

MW – On that note, what would you perceive as an ‘authentic’ local experience?

S – I think what I would perceive as really authentic, and I discussed this with some other travellers in Bohol recently, they were talking about doing a home stay. I think staying with locals, in their houses then that is pretty authentic, that’s them and that’s their real life. So that is a pretty genuine experience and in the same way that is why I like couch surfing, it is the real place, rather than seeing locals passing you by on the street or driving your tricycle or whatever. That is what I am finding out now that I am staying in a foreign place rather than travelling through, you can really find out what the local cultural values are.

But what would be an inauthentic experience and quite sad is when you see local cultures where it is really clear that it has been sort of ‘packaged up’ and done specifically for a tourism market. For example back home, where the Aboriginals of Australia do dances and things like that, it’s difficult to say. I guess it’s a gut feeling when you see something and it’s like ‘this is real’ or ‘this is really fake’. Actually I have an interesting example, watched a documentary about these tribes in Papa New Guinea. What was happening was these people from souvenir stores and tourists started coming in and they were buying certain artefacts. From the items that the outsiders choose, the locals started using their business sentiment and realizing that items like that were selling and so they started changing the items they were producing to make them more like the items that they were selling to westerners. In doing so, I guess they were changing their culture from an original, genuine one, to a commercial more tourist friendly one. So they maybe that is not genuine when they make… like in El Nido, we saw a carved wooden ashtray with a big wooden penis on it. I don’t know what that’s about but I presume that smoking cigarettes is not a culturally traditional thing for the Philippines, I don’t know, in any case I really don’t think that the big wooden penis
asherays are if that was the case. When you see that sort of thing you think ‘that’s tacky, that’s really not genuine’.

MW – Any country or area of the world where you would not travel to or within and for what reasons would that be?

S – I wouldn’t travel anywhere that is forbidden by my government where a good example that is being talked about here is the Mindanao region where Australian travellers get a warning to not travel. Well I always like to think that I’m having an adventure and things like that, but I will always do it within boundaries where I can still feel relatively safe. So if the Australian says ‘that’s not safe at all, don’t go there’, I won’t go there. So that rules out your Afghanistans and your Iraqs and things like that. But other than that I think now I would be pretty happy to travel safety wise just about anywhere. I was saying just the other night: ‘your possessions, they’re just possessions and even if all of our backpacks and all of that get stolen, well it’s just clothes and phones and things’. We come from countries where we can go home, work for a pretty short period of time and you can buy all of those things again without a great deal of trouble, it’s not like we are carrying our lives work on our backs, so possessions are pretty trivial. So I think that as long as you are physically safe and do not go into a war zone or something like that then I would be happy to travel pretty much anywhere.

MW – If you have no further comments, then thank you very much!
MW - What is your main motivation to travel in general?

K – It is a difficult question, but I guess it's curiosity. I'm an anthropologist so I'm always interested in people, in food, smells, things people do just interests me. I find that the Philippines very interesting because most Asian countries are either Muslim or Buddhist but this is a Christian country, and very religious. But basically curiosity is the driving force behind my motivation.

MW – If you could estimate, how often and how far do you travel?

K – Less often that I would like to but I try to go at least once a year. And mostly I try to do shorter Euro trips in between, and I also ‘couch surf’ so I do little trips to Berlin or Rome or something. Then once a year I try to go further, like the Philippines or Thailand or India or The Middle East for example. So it’s a mix of distance and length of stay. I am also pretty involved in trying to live as eco friendly as possible so going to a place like this for only a week whilst flying so far wouldn’t be sustainable.

MW – So what made you choose the Philippines?

K – Actually I never thought of going to the Philippines but Sam (her boyfriend) was going to do his voluntary work here, otherwise I probably would have gone to Cambodia and Laos. But then I was like “why not go to the Philippines”, and then I started reading into it and gradually became more enthusiastic. And I don’t know why, because the Philippines isn’t such a big touristy destination but having read into it I realized that it was going to be fun. Part of the attraction was that it didn’t seem like a big tourist attraction. For example, last year I went to Thailand but then I had a bit of a difficult time so I wanted to go to a country where it is easy to travel and there are a lot of backpackers, but mostly I like the challenge or the adventure of going to a place that doesn’t have western people on every street corner.

MW – So this time, how long are you travelling for and what is your itinerary?

K – I’m going to be in the Philippines for one month and we have travelled now for two weeks and we have been to Cebu island (where Sam lives), to Bohol, to Demaguete, Apo Island, Palawan, now were going to where Sam lives to meet his colleagues and then I will be doing some more as well to other islands but I am not sure yet where I am going. I am not a big planner when it comes to trips, I just by my plane ticket. That was strange for me because Sam had to inform his employers exactly where I was going, this is not normal for me because like I did in Thailand, I just showed up at the airport and decided where to go from there, I usually just go where the wind takes me.

MW – Do you try to keep to a tight daily budget when you travel?

K – Let’s say I’m more liberal now, because I have more money than when I was a student. I was always on a very tight budget. Like in the summer when I was going to Egypt when it was around 45 degrees Celsius and out of season, so all the hotels were half price. But now if I can choose between two hotels where one is nice and the other one scrappy and the nicer one costs considerable more, then I wont hesitate to go to the nicer one. But I would never go to the Hilton or something like that, so I have kind of a budget in my head but I don’t have a very fancy taste so
I don’t feel like I can’t afford things. So last year when I went to Thailand I did everything I wanted to do but I spent only around 400 Euros in three and a half weeks because I stayed in hostels that were only one and a half Euros, but that’s because I stayed at hostels where I knew other backpackers were going to be there. So I stayed in places where the beds were crappy but I knew the atmosphere was going to be fun. But if I’m going to a place like this then I don’t want money to be the reason for not seeing for example a place like the Taj Mahal. So when you go to places that you know you’ll only be once or twice in your life then things like money shouldn’t restrain you.

MW – If you can choose, what is your main mode of transport when you travel?

K – It depends on where you are going, if you are going for example from Puerto Princesa to El Nido (7 hrs), then I won’t be taking the crappy bus which is ten pesos cheaper and maybe more challenging, it doesn’t make any sense. But when I am in a city like this (Puerto Princesa), I like to take the local transport, I like to participate, like when we went to a wedding in Cebu. We had taken a jeepney and arrived about half an hour before. It was not like in Europe where you have two seats and two people sitting there. In this case it was two seats and four people sitting there. So it was super crowded and so many people sitting in this van but I thought to myself ‘ah, this is nice!’ Other people (westerners) would probably think it was awful but I looked around and people were smiling and I realized that I really liked it.

MW – What type of accommodation do you usually prefer to use?

K – We stayed at different places and I have to say that this time we have been staying at more expensive places than I am used to staying. Normally I stay at cheaper ones. But I also think there is a difference if you are travelling alone or with a boyfriend or girlfriend. I think now, the most expensive place we have stayed at was 2500 (Pesos) including van pick up. But with that in mind I definitely feel like I have been taking more money out of the wallet than in my previous trips. So depending on who you travel with you can make allowances, like if you are travelling with your boyfriend you don’t want to sleep in a hostel on a wooden plank for one and a half Euros.

MW – When you travel what technology do you usually use and how often?

K – I use the internet pretty often, mostly to email home but also to do some research on the places I am going to. And also, I am a vegetarian so there is a web site that finds vegetarian food all over the world, so I use that as well. I have a credit card but I take it with me just in case because I have a bank card from Europe that does not work everywhere, in which case I take the credit card. In Holland we are not big credit card users so most of the time I will just use it for booking flights on the internet. With phones, like when I was in Jordan and was working there I had a local sim-card, but here where I am only for a month I haven’t and in Thailand last year the same. Like when I ran into a South Korean girl that I travelled with for a while, then I just used my Dutch sim-card to text her with.

MW – What is your general attitude towards conventional mass, package tourism?

K – When I was a bit younger I hated package type deals. But I think that was partly because I am an anthropologist. I could never see myself go to a place like this and do a pre booked holiday for three weeks going with a guide from one place to the other. But I can understand that for other people, it’s different. Like my colleague who is getting married and who is going to Bali on his
honeymoon. He’s never been outside of Europe and he is doing that arranged thing, and for me
that wouldn’t be as much fun, but I can understand that for him it is a nice way of travelling. So I
think it is good that you have all these options. But me, I prefer to do things as locally as possible
because I feel that when you are going to a place, it is good if local people can benefit from it. So
if you travel here, it’s better to pay money to the local people and not the Western tour operators
that you see around back home and here.

MW – How would you describe the type of travelling that you do? Have any word for it? And do
you have any do’s and don’ts when you travel?

K – Like I said before, I like to do the ‘backpacking thing’ and not be on a very tight schedule.
Like if I go some place and I like it, I’ll stay there and if I don’t like it I’ll go away. Mostly I’ll
make some kind of plan, like last year when I had some idea of how I wanted to travel but in the
end I did a totally different thing.
I think do’s include: interacting with locals, trying to learn the local language because people like
it when you can say some words in the language that they are speaking. I think it’s also important
to be open towards other people, which is also something I found out when travelling last year in
Thailand. I was single and not in a long-term relationship so it was a totally different way of
travelling than when you’re with someone, you are totally focused on each other and not on the
outside world. So I would give people the tip to be open towards others, both backpackers and
locals.
And don’ts: don’t be naive (chuckles), and I think also be reasonable. Like you have people who
try to cut everything down and they’ll bargain over everything until the price they are paying is
almost nothing even to the people who live there. And other people think that the local wages they
earn are so little, that they end up giving people a lot of money. Like the local tricycle driver, if
you give him 500 (Pesos) for a little ride around town then that is not good as well. In this case it
is not even a good tip, for them it’s insane, it’s maybe about a weeks wage or something. So it is
not balanced, instead you should be good and tip but not too much and also not try to bargain
everything to an extreme.

MW – Do you seek out local experiences often when you travel?

K – I like to try as many things as possible, I’m a vegetarian which means that I can’t try
everything. But I found out for example that in Jordan that when people invited me over I would
say ‘I would love to come, but I’m a vegetarian so I will have a drink but don’t bother’ and most
of the time they would make a local dish in a vegetarian way. Because I love to try things, like
when I was in Jordan I was interviewing a Sheik for my thesis and we were in the dessert and they
were having (inaudible), a local dish with rice and yoghurt and almonds with lamb or chicken.
Since I was a vegetarian I didn’t eat the meat but I ate the rest. It was on a big plate and everybody
eats with their hands so they asked if I wanted a knife or a spoon or a fork. But I asked how they
ate it and they said with their hands, so I decided also to eat it with my hands. Of course I didn’t
know how to eat it so I just got the food and started eating and everybody started laughing at me.
So the Sheik eventually showed me how to do it, so these kind of (experiences I really like).
Another time I went to India with my parent and my sisters in 2007. We did a hiking trip in a very
non-touristy province, so we did this hiking tour from village to village. So we stayed at local
people’s houses, ate their food, they didn’t have bathrooms so you had to put on a headlamp and
go into the jungle and do your thing. So these types of experiences I really try to seek out, when I
get to participate in local life and immerse myself.

MW – What do you perceive as an authentic local experience versus an inauthentic one?
K – I think it’s very difficult to distinguish between what is authentic and not authentic, I think a lot of things that are happening in destinations are there because of the tourist. But at the same time it’s often people are quick to say, that because people are on a tour ‘that’s not the authentic thing’.

The real authentic experience when you go and spend time with people, like anthropologists who went to see remote tribes on islands that had never seen a visitor, they are hardly not there anymore. Now people are used to Westerners in most places. So with the real authenticity, I don’t think there is a real one anymore. I do think that it is probably more authentic when you don’t do a tour. For example Sam and me were going to Valencia and we were on a bus and there was this old lady that and we asked where we should get off and she said that she was going to tell us where. So at the end stop, she got off and asked if we were coming with her to her house and we said yes. She was really happy because that wasn’t her actual destination, just her house but she wanted to invite us so she got off there. So we went there and she made drinks for us and she told us about her family and her life. I think those are the nicest experiences, when they are not tour guides or people that want to sell you something, but instead local people who are interested in meeting you and showing you something from their own life. Those are the kind of experiences that just happen to you and you cannot plan for. It’s not like you can say ‘today, we will go and interact with some locals’ because you never know when it will happen. Sometimes you’re on holiday and it happens all the time, like when I was Syria and walking down the street and people would invite me to their house and suddenly I was sitting with a family. Or when I was at a wedding just because I was at that town that day. So you cannot plan these things, but if you have a sort of openness to these types of experiences then these things will eventually happen to you. I think that these experiences are even nicer than for example the big temples or the diving trips.

MW – Is there any country or area of the world where you wouldn’t travel to, and for what reasons would that be?

K – I don’t think there is any place in the world where I wouldn’t want to go. But I think every person has their preferences or places they would want to go first. For me it depends on if I am travelling alone or with someone, if I was travelling alone then I wouldn’t go to Latin America. I haven’t been there but I did some courses on it in university and I get the impression that it is a very machismo kind of culture. I have been a lot to the Middle East and I feel like that is also very male-based but it’s a different kind of thing because they will look at you and they will say things but they will never try to attack you. So I heard some things about L. America, that it was a bit more dangerous for women alone with things like rape and unwanted attention. But then again I would like to go to Brazil, Costa Rica and Peru for example. I would also like to go to Africa, but same thing there, travelling alone I wouldn’t go there very soon. A lot of those countries aren’t very touristy and I think that when you are travelling alone it’s harder. Like in Asia, it’s easier to connect with other travellers.

MW – So that’s it, thank you very much!
Interview transcript #4, 08/06/10, Elisabeth, 23, Canada  
(Siquijor Town, Siquijor, Philippines)

MW – What would you say is your main motivation to travel?

E – To put myself out of my comfort zone. To go to new places where I get to experience a new culture, a new language, new surroundings. Challenging myself, seeing new things and reminding myself that that the life that I live is not the life that everyone lives. Being reminded of that I think is really healthy.

MW – In general, how often do you travel and for far when you do?

E – It depends, I went to a period when I travelled a lot. But yeah, maybe on average every two years where sometimes I travel more locally. If I get a chance to go further internationally then that is good too but its harder financially usually. When I was right out of university I travelled quite a bit, I went on exchange to Australia, I had spent a summer in Europe working, when I graduated I went to South America and then I went to South East Asia and then back to Europe… It was this two-year period of my life where as soon as I got home and accumulated enough money then I was out travelling again. Then I sort of stopped because I got a job. But two years ago I had a chance to go away again and this time to the Middle East. So there was a break of five years there when I didn’t go on any big international trips. I think it would be hard to replicate that again because at the time I did not have any big serious commitments at home, now it would be more complicated. Now my husband and I talk about going to live abroad and talk about travelling but it probably wouldn’t be two years of backpacking per say.

MW – What made you choose the Philippines more specifically?

E – So it was a course that was offered at my university as a part of my two year Master’s, and there is a professor who is originally from the Philippines who is holding this field course in her hometown which is good because I don’t know if I would have come to the Philippines otherwise, like I have been to S.E. Asia before but there is so much to see overland there so I don’t know if I would have made the jump here otherwise. So if I would have been travelling on my own accord purely then I might have chosen some other regions since I hadn’t heard much about the Philippines before and I had been to the neighbouring countries anyway.

MW – How long are you travelling for this time, what is your itinerary and do you have anything pre-booked?

E – this trip is a bit weird that way because I usually plan a lot more and I usually travel around more. This trip instead I decided to stay in one place for a while so I don’t really have an itinerary except that I want to go diving and I have friends that are coming here at some point, so I am just going to hang out, then we are going back to Manila on 3rd July. Once there we will be doing the field course so then we will probably just be doing weekend trips out of Manila.

MW – When you are travelling do you try to stick with a tight daily budget?

E – I generally have a vague idea of how much I should be spending on food and everything like that but I don’t really count or calculate it and then there are things that I want to do that I know
are going to cost a little bit more, like diving. So I just put those things aside in my mind. Just a
general budget, not a day-to-day thing.

MW – When you travel what is your main preferred mode of transport?

E – First, it depends on the country. But also when I was younger I was a lot more adventurous
about these types of things, like crazy overcrowded buses with chickens and so on. I do still
appreciate travelling like that when I am in the right headspace because I love travelling the way
locals travel, but if I am feeling tired… Again it depends on the country, in Europe I would take
trains; otherwise I used to take a lot of buses although I have avoided buses completely on this
trip, I am not a huge fan.

MW – What type of accommodation do you usually try to stay in?

E – Usually I look for youth hostels and especially if I am moving from place to place, not the
cheapest ones maybe but ones comfortable enough. However this trip I looked for something nice
enough to stay a longer period since I am not moving around as much this time.

MW – What technologies do you usually use and how often?

E – Generally I always travel with a credit card. This trip is the first where I brought my own
laptop (for the course) but usually I would just use an Internet café. I usually do not have a mobile
phone with me, for example the last few trips I have really discovered Skype which means that I
need a phone card even less. It is a lot easier to communicate now that it was even five years ago.

MW - What is your attitude towards conventional mass tourism? Do you ever engage in trips like
that yourself?

E – I usually avoid the big tour bus type tourism because I don’t particularly enjoy it as an
experience but I also think that it is potentially a lot more damaging (than backpacking) to the
local culture and ecosystem, when you have big hordes of people travelling around on a bus. But I
have definitely been on a few backpacker type tours, some of which were better than others. There
it was a more impromptu type tour with just a little mini van and we would just be having a huge
party driving around there, probably wouldn’t do it now, at my age.

I think it depends also on if the country I am going to has very little tourism infrastructure, then a
tour can be really helpful, especially if you are by yourself. I have a friend who was travelling in
Africa for example, who said that to do what she did on her overland tour she never could have
done on her own, there were too many things that she could not have figured out, like there were
no buses between certain points and some sections of the trip would have been a bit dangerous to
travel by oneself. So I think there is a role for tours in contexts like that. But at the same time I
think that smaller scale is better since it is a bit less intrusive. Also the more tours rely on local
guides, the more it helps to make them a bit less intrusive as well. I think My aversion is foreign
owned companies coming in with huge busses, chartering people around with little signs and
herding the tourists like sheep.

MW – How would you describe the type of travelling that you do? Do you have any do’s and
don’ts when you travel?

E – I guess in an ideal situation I really like travel that is immersive, either because you are doing
something there or you have a friend who is living there where it is just you or just you and a few
other foreigners which then allows you to immerse yourself in the culture as opposed to just observing. A don’t would be to avoid situations where you become part of a mass of people that are really invasive to the surroundings. Also, I try to avoid areas where you get the sense that the tourism dollars are leaving the country directly and not going to the people. Tourism in which you feel really disconnected from the people who are there. Big resorts I also try to avoid, when I was younger our family used to go to Mexico, which was really fun. But then I got to a certain age where I started feeling really weird about going to huge resorts on the beach when I knew there was so much poverty. Well, A, you can travel independently in Mexico and its fine, and I have done that since. And B, there is this huge gap in Mexico between the rich and the poor which feels really wrong that you live in this resort where your every need is met and all the food is American food and everything is catered to you. I can’t say that I am never going to do that again but I definitely try to avoid those because of what they represent. Its crazy because in Canada, to go down to Mexico and stay on an all-inclusive resort is cheaper than if you would go to a local place and stay in not even a resort, just a hotel and pay for your meals; is way more expensive than doing the earlier option. Cruise ships as well, I worked on a cruise ship and it was terrible. Maybe not every cruise ship company is the same, but I decided that I never wanted to be on that kind of cruise ship again. It was all-you-can-eat all the time, it had a huge casino and it went to places that had no cultural value what so ever. Went out of New York, down to Florida to a few towns there. Then it went down to Nassau in the Bahamas, but the tourists only saw a Nassau that was a completely fabricated environment and had nothing to do with the Bahamas. And then it went to a private island with no local people on it, so only other people from the cruise ship. That to me epitomises that kind of travel, where there is no other purpose than getting some sun and paying cheaply for things and you are only surrounded by people from your own culture whilst living in complete excess. So that is a complete don’t in my eyes, no big cruise ships for me!

MW – Do you seek out local experiences often?

E – Yeah definitely food, is a huge part of travelling. I like to figure out what people are eating and doing. Local experiences is a tricky question, I guess the ideal situation is when I am visiting someone local or someone who has been in a place for a while and has connections and knowledge. Because doing that respectfully can sometimes be difficult, like last time I was in S.E Asia, in Northern Vietnam. It was beautiful and the local people there were very welcoming, inviting you into their homes etc. So in one sense it felt like an authentic situation. At the same time it was a little weird since tourism has had such a big impact on their communities and it does feel a bit invasive on their natural way of living. So I had mixed feelings about that because I like to find authentic experiences but at the same time I do not like to feel like I’m invading somebody’s life an culture by being there. So I try to find a balance between local experiences that do not threaten the integrity of the local cultures. The best example I have where I saw that balance being struck really well was between Peru and Bolivia, on lake Titicaca. There was this island that you stop on when you cross the border, it also has a number of different villages. When you arrive there are no hotels or anything like that so instead the local people let you stay in their homes, and this is organized ahead of time. So you stay in their homes and they feed you and then there is this big event where they dance and things. What was special about it was that this big event when the tourists come and invade happens one day a week. So the next day it is in another village, so it moves around the island. So there is no one village on the island that is invaded by tourists, there is no tourism infrastructure besides peoples hospitality and the rest of the week they can have their own normal lives without tourists
walking around everywhere. So I thought that was a neat way of doing things. Slightly fabricated since it wasn’t spontaneously foreigners living among them but it was good in some sense that it was controlled.

MW – What do you perceive as an ‘authentic’ local experience?

E – I think one where local people invite you in to do something with you that they would normally do anyways. I am a little wary of tourist attractions where they try to recreate the culture in a theme park type setting. I used to work in such a place in Canada, it was very cheesy, where we all used to dress up as pioneers. They had cartoony totem poles that did not even belong to the Native Americans from that area. So those types of things are very not inauthentic.
Also places where they mass-produce some tourism item, like in Canada where we have little sculptures of totem poles for example but they are all made in China. Where you also have local artists who are excellent and can make it themselves but they are not. So basically the places where you have commodification of a culture are where inauthenticity is the most obvious. It is a difficult question because anytime anywhere you go, the people are real and authentic people. But it’s more about how you relate with these people because that is where the experiences are created and authenticity formed. So either it is a relationship where you can talk with and learn from these people or is it one where there is too much of a divide between you as the tourist and them as the person and you can’t relate at all because you are stuck in this skewed power relationship. So for me it has a lot to do with how you relate with the people, whether you are watching them like animals in a zoo or whether you are engaged in some way. So you can be physically somewhere but that does not imply any level of authenticity, it is how the two actors relate; the tourist and the local environment.

MW – Is there any region or country in the world where you wouldn’t travel and for what reasons?

E – I think I would avoid travelling to a country where there are serious human rights abuses and your money goes to some dictatorship, that’s always tricky to because you do not want to isolate a country completely from the world although you have to be careful. So basically being conscious about where your money is going. Otherwise, I used to always say that I wouldn’t go to Las Vegas but now I’m kind of curious about its own culture, because it is a cultural experience in a way! So there isn’t anywhere I wouldn’t go, there is always something to discover but every place.

MW – You use Lonely Planet, how did that come about? Why not other guidebooks?

E – Probably because it is the easiest one to find in Canada, the is no competition right now. When I was younger there used to be ‘Let’s Go’ like I used in my first trip. So others are hard to find and I guess it boils down to laziness. But also the format, like ‘now I know how the maps work!’ for example. Also I tend to use the Lonely planet blog or other web sites like Trip Advisor. Usually when I travel to a place I will look up a forum thread on the place for the latest information.

MW – If you have no additional comments, thanks!
Interview transcript #5, 03/07/10, Peter, 21, Sweden
(Manila, North Luzon, Philippines)

MW – What is your main motivation to travel?

P – To have a good time and to see new things. Just tourism.

MW – How often and how far do you travel in general?

P – This is my second trip, and the other one was to S.E Asia as well. That’s the only travelling I have done actually, except of course with my parents to Greece and Turkey and so on. As a part of the last trip I did the Tran Siberian (railway), down to China and then through China to S.E Asia. Then I was out for two and a half months as I am now as well. I try to get out regularly when money and time allows for it and now I am studying it will probably be a while until I get out on a longer journey again.

MW – So what made you choose to come to the Philippines specifically?

P – It’s cheap and simple, it’s very easy to travel here. We were in India earlier on in this trip and it was quite difficult to get around and we only had three weeks. In comparison, S.E. Asia is very simple, cheap and convenient. Actually my initial plan was to go to Africa, but that was to difficult to do in two months and the amount of money I have.

MW – What is your rough itinerary? Do you pre-book anything?

P – We went first to India, then to Malaysia, now were in the Philippines for a short stop and then were heading to Bali and maybe Shanghai then if we have the time and money. We haven’t pre-booked anything except the flight to Delhi. The other flights to Malaysia etc, we booked just a few days before. However the first days in Delhi package for two weeks with all the accommodation and transport included and arranged. That package wasn’t planned however, it just happened.

MW – Are you keeping a tight daily budget? Do you have any caps on spending?

P – No, I should, but I don’t. But again, like last year, I ran out of money and then I didn’t buy anything except for food, accommodation and transport. So no ice creams or extra drinks (chuckles). But this time I have much more money so now I can spend.

MW – What is your main mode of transport if you have a choice?

P – I prefer bus, because you can see a lot more. It is more convenient to take a flight but you have to spend a lot of time at the airport and you end up no seeing as much. Busses are much more cheap and you see a lot more of the country. With trains I have had bad experiences and good experiences so it is very contextual.

MW – What type of accommodation do you usually prefer?

P – Usually our own room but I don’t mind staying in dormitories either. It is nice with a lot of people and so on. However it is always the same price for two people (as for one), to stay in a
double room, that’s why we tend to prefer that. Other than that we don’t have any preferences, as long as there are no cockroaches.

MW – What technologies do you usually use when you are out travelling and how often?

P – I have got my Iphone with me so it has music, phone and basically a computer in it. And credit card and camera. The Iphone I use everyday because it has Internet on it and movies and music so it is very convenient to have. I was thinking about bringing my computer but it was too heavy and complicated. The Iphone has a lot of the same features anyway, I can read the news and so on so I am connected. With the credit card I try to take out a few times, so the bank fees are at a minimum, but of course not too much in one time because I don’t want to carry too much cash, in case of pickpockets etc.

MW – What is your general attitude towards conventional mass tourism? Do you engage in it yourself?

P – It was a long time since I did it myself, it was with my family and we went to Greece, Turkey, Italy and so on. I don’t like it very much because it’s usually just the beach so you don’t get too see much of the country and the culture, just the beach and the restaurants. So it becomes like a warm Sweden. And it is not very exciting to go on a package tour, you always know what to expect and so on.

MW – So the type of travelling that you do, do you have a name for it? How would you describe it?

P – No, five years ago I would call it backpacking. But now I never use my backpack as a backpack because there is always someone carrying it for me and so on. And it is so easy to travel here now, I guess it has been easy for a while, so I would call it just ‘travelling’.

MW – Do you have any do’s and don’ts when you travel?

P – Not really, I just go with the flow.

MW – Do you seek out local experiences often? I.e. food and drink, other activities?

P – I try to but it’s difficult because I always end up in the tourist places. Of course it’s always more fun to do something for real. I have only been to touristy countries so…

MW – What would you call an authentic local experience, and what would u see as fake.

P – To me it’s authentic if nobody else has done it, if somebody else has done it then I will just presume it is just fake and made up for tourists. So if I do something that nobody else and I have never heard of then I guess it is the real thing. Something spontaneous, like doing something with the local people that you didn’t expect to do, something that you can’t read about in the Lonely Planet. If you can’t read about it is real. So the Lonely Planet can be a good indicator of if something is fake, because authentic places wouldn’t be in it. That is what I would like to believe anyway.

MW – Finally, is there any country or region in the world that you wouldn’t travel to? And for what reasons?
P – Most parts of Africa, for safety reasons. Some countries in South America. I would never go back to Russia. Russia it is not for the safety however, it is just the people, I did not like them at all. So basically it is safety concerns and also the price. Like Africa is more expensive than Asia and South America is far away so going there is expensive as well.

MW – If no additional comments then thank you very much!
Interview transcript #6, 04/07/10, John, 26, UK
(Manila, North Luzon, Philippines)

MW – What is your main motivation to travel?

J – Adventure and self-fulfilment. Want to test myself, find out what I’m made of and experience things I wouldn’t be able to experience at home really.

MW – How often in general do you travel and how far do you travel when you do?

J – Very rarely, I have travelled around Europe a little bit but this is the first time I am on a big trip like this.

MW – So what made you choose the Philippines and it’s neighbouring countries to travel in more specifically?

J – I always wanted to see the rainforest since I was a small boy, and this place is off the main tourist trail. I want to have stories for my friends and I want to experience stuff that other people haven’t experienced.

MW – How long are you travelling for in this instance and what is your itinerary?

J – So I will probably spend three months in S.E Asia, then I am going to Australia for 12 months, depending on work, then onto New Zealand for a month and then onto South America for three or four months, then back home.

MW – Do you have anything pre-booked on this trip?

J – On this trip so far I’ve had a mountain climbing trip and a scuba diving certificate course pre booked so far, and both were things I booked while I was out here already.

MW – Do you try to keep on a tight daily budget, do you have spending limit?

J – (chuckles) I literary spend what I feel is right and just deal with the consequences later. And just check my account every now and then when I get a chance really, yeah.

MW – If you have a choice, what is your main mode of transport?

J – Something local, something that get’s me involved and something that gets me a feel for what the area is like as opposed to just flying everywhere, definitely.

MW – And what type of accommodation do you try to stay in?

J – Just anything that gets me the opportunity to meet other people really, like-minded people, people that are doing the same sort of thing as I am.

MW – And when you travel, what type of technology do you usually use?
J – I use my credit card sparingly, I use Internet cafes to keep in touch with people at home and obviously mobile phones where possible. To keep in touch with people close to me on a regular basis. I’ll use my credit card for booking trips and excursions and I’ll use my debit card for day-to-day life.

MW – What is your general attitude towards the conventional mass, package tourism? Have you engaged in it yourself?

J – Definitely in Europe I have engaged in a fair amount of mass, package tourism. However on this trip I’m trying to if possible the mass tourism and instead get a real flavour for the area that I’m in, trying to experience the local culture, the environment and see what it’s all about really. I haven’t come half way across the world to come on a package tour!

MW – Do you have any do’s and don’ts when you are out travelling?

J – Do’s: try to respect the local culture, the natural environment. Don’ts: the opposite of the do’s really (chuckles). Although when I have had a couple of drinks I might make a couple of comments that might insult local people. I’m fairly new to this, so it’s a learning as I go kind of thing.

MW – How would you describe the type of travelling that you do? Do you have a word for it?

J – I’d like to say ‘adventure’, I know I’m fairly early in my travels but I’d like to think that what I’m going to do is going to be an adventure. A real life experience.

MW – Do you try to seek out local experiences often when you travel? I.e. food, drink, other activities?

J – 100% yeah, I haven’t eaten any western food since I have been away on my travels. I like to try foods and eat in restaurants that… for example I won’t go to KFC, instead ill try a local hawker store or restaurant if possible.

MW – On that note, what do you perceive as an authentic local experience vis-à-vis an inauthentic one.

J – Something that lets me get me an insight and experience of the local culture but doesn’t affect them or force them to act differently for my benefit.

MW – Do you use any guidebooks while you are here and for what reason?

J - I’ve got the Lonely Planet purely because it’s a completely alien part of the world and it’s nice to have some form of reference just to make you feel that little bit more comfortable. Because like I said, I haven’t done anything like this before so it’s nice to have something that gives you a little confidence boost. Something you know you can kind of rely on and know you’re not completely out there on your own.

MW – Lastly, would there be any country or region of the world where you wouldn’t travel to and for what reason?
J – Anywhere where I would perceive my life to be in serious risk. Purely because of family and friends back home, I wouldn’t want to put myself in any situation that would endanger my life unnecessarily. Safety concerns basically. Other than that I would be open for any experience.

MW – Thank you very much then!
Interview transcript #7, 21/07/10, Nienke, 25, Holland  
(Sagada, North Luzon, the Philippines)

MW – What is your main motivation to travel?

N – Well I was in Indonesia to do rotation but afterwards I had some time to travel as well so I just grabbed to opportunity to spend some time travelling, that’s really the reason I am travelling here. But other than that I travel to see new parts of the world, Asia is really different from Holland so I really like to see how Asia is. Just experiencing something different from home. Just a new experience, people here are really different from Holland for example. I really like travelling because you are free and every day you can do something different from what you would do at home.

MW – What made you choose this region to travel in particular? I guess it had partly to do with your internship? Did you have a choice?

N – I had a choice, you had to apply for it, but I had a choice. Basically I came here because Asia is very poor and unlike Holland not everybody have an insurance and can afford the medical care they need so people just go to the hospital and see whatever medical care they can afford. So I was really curious to see how a country like Indonesia or any other Asian country would work in that sense. I think when you work as a doctor in Holland you take everything for granted, if you have a patient you can just run any test you want to see what is going on. Here in Asia you have to think much more about what type of tests you want to run because they are relatively speaking much more expensive. So I guess the attraction was to do the same type of thing I do at home but in a different setting.

MW – In general, how often and how far do you travel?

N – I have only travelled properly once before and that was in Australia and New Zealand, after that I spent some time abroad but it was mainly in Europe so I don’t really call that travelling. This is my second time and I really want to spend some more time travelling after this as well. So I can’t really say that I spend time travelling every year but I would definitely like to do so in the future. So far it has mainly been Europe and once Cuba every year, but that was more of a holiday so I can’t really count that as travelling. In my opinion, if you go travelling you spend at least two months abroad, you take your backpack and see where you end up. I haven’t done that so far but I would like to do that.

MW – This time, how long are you out for? What is your rough itinerary? And do you have anything pre-booked?

MW – I am here in Asia for five months total. I did my rotation for ten weeks and then I have two months travelling so it is pretty set because after that I have to be back in Holland for my next rotation. Because of this time limit I booked some things in advance as well, for example Mt. Kinabalu I booked in advance because I knew it was really popular and I was keen to climb it. Actually that was the only activity I pre-booked, other than that I just went to places and saw whatever happened once I came there. So I started with the Indonesian part of Borneo briefly, then I went to the Malaysian part before coming to the Philippines where I have been about a week now, because I think that in the Indonesian part there is not much happening and they don’t have a lot of tourists there. Well it might be good for travelling if you are travelling with another person.
but if you are on your own its not really that good, the Malaysian part is better in that’s sense because you have more tourists that you can meet as a lone traveller.

MW – Do you travel on a tight budget or are you liberal in that sense?

N – I should, but I don’t. Well before travelling I made a budget and I tried to keep up on that but after a short while I gave up on that, so I’m not. I do have an total limit but I don’t check up on that too much, afterwards I will just have a look and see if I met that budget or not. But while here I can’t bother with that, its like ‘I’m here, so I’m just going to spend the money and see what happens afterwards’.

MW – What is your main mode of transport whilst travelling if you have a choice?

N – It depends actually, usually I prefer the rough local way of travelling. But sometimes it is simply too convenient to avoid taking the little bit more expensive option. For example, once in Indonesia I had to go to another place that was 16 hours by bus, but only 45 minutes by airplane. So I couldn’t bother with the bus and simply took the flight. It wasn’t that big a difference money wise between the two anyway which made the decision a whole lot easier, if the difference were major then of course I would have taken the bus. Normally the bus is fine by me and as it usually doesn’t infringe on my schedule so I don’t mind the rougher rides.

MW – What type of accommodation do you usually opt for?

N – I go for the dorms, because it is a really nice way to meet people and usually it is cheaper than the private rooms. And I travel on my own so the single rooms for me are more expensive than the dorms. When I travelled in Indonesia I noticed that they do not have a lot of dorms because they are not used to lone travelling women so it is more single rooms and they were not that expensive. But in Malaysia and the Philippines there were more dormitories than in Indonesia so that’s what I go for.

MW – What type of technologies do you usually use when travelling and how often?

N – I like my mobile phones because if you buy a sim card in the country you are travelling in it is really convenient if you want to book a hostel or a tour or something it become more straightforward. I like to use the internet to keep in touch with people back home, especially my parents who like that I update them every once in a while. And it depends, sometimes I might use it a couple of times a week but if I am really busy then I might use it only once every three weeks or something like that. The credit card I just use to book things like flights or hostels where sometimes you have to give your credit card details. Actually when I was travelling in Australia before and when I was there I used it a lot more than I have been doing this trip in South East Asia. So here just the occasional flight or hostel. I haven’t used it to take out cash either, just have a regular debit bankcard for that.

MW – Do you have any opinion towards the conventional mass tourism? Do you ever engage in that kind of tourism yourself?

N – I think its convenient for people who want to go on an easy holiday and can’t be bothered to do anything at all. I have booked some holidays that way, through a travel agency that fix everything, your flight, your transport, your hotel where I didn’t want to do any of that work. I usually find it better though to do these things on my own because you are more free, when you
book through one corporation then you are really stuck to their plan, and hotel for example. Whilst when you book by yourself you can decide as you go. I did both but I like the ‘do-it-yourself’ option.

MW – So how would you describe your way of travelling? Do you have any do’s and don’ts when you are out travelling?

N – I don’t think I have a name for my type of travelling, I think I just go somewhere and see whatever happens, just ‘travelling’ I guess. I think its good that when you go to a country that you have to look up some things that you have to do, that you have to orientate yourself. But sometimes its nice to go to a place and talk to other travellers to find out what you want to do. So partly I plan my travels a lot based on advice from other travellers, however the guidebooks are really good as well, the Lonely Planet, I really love them because they have some really good tips so that is good as well. I do like feeding of the experience of other travellers better, its more real, its more close, you are talking to a person so you can really get into them whilst if you are reading a guidebook, sure they might be right but it is not the same process.

MW – Do you seek out local experiences often?

N – I really like to try local food. For the local experiences, when I was in Australia and New Zealand I thought I got really into the culture but once I got to Indonesia I noticed that you have to be in one place for a while to really get to know the people and the culture. So I think its difficult when you are travelling and stay in one place a couple of days, to get really into the culture: I am really up for that and want to do that, but I also recognize that it is really difficult.

MW – So what do you perceive as an authentic local experience, as opposed to a fake or inauthentic one?

N – I think the difference is where you have the things that are really made up for the tourists with dances or anything that you obviously see is for the tourists and when they leave those people would not be bothered to do that at all. Another indicator is if they charge a lot of money for you to see what is happening, then you would know it is just for the tourists. But if you get into the people and get to experience them, for example when you are invited to really personal stuff, that’s when you know that you are really into the people.

MW – Is there any country or area in the world that you wouldn’t visit and for what reasons?

N – I have never thought about that actually. I don’t think there is anywhere. Well I don’t think I would fancy going to Afghanistan or Iraq or anywhere like that, due to safety reasons. Like I wouldn’t be cool about going to for example Saudi Arabia, well my brother went there and he was alright but yeah, those countries are not really high on my list. So I would rather go to another country first, there are definitely hundreds of countries I want to visit first before I would go to that region.

MW – Any other comments or questions? If not then thank you very much!
MW – Firstly, could you briefly your main motivations to travel?

D – Adventure… freedom, well I’m a person who in a my future life maybe wants a family and the normal things you get at home but whilst I still have no ties I think it is an amazing experience to see amazing places, amazing animals, meet different people and different cultures, broaden your horizons whilst there is still time. Although currently I feel like I never want travelling to end.

MW – In general how often do you travel? And when you do how far?

D – This is my first time backpacker travelling, I have been away for a year and a half including South East Asia and a year in Australia, which also pertained to working in various spots as well as moving around. Before that the only travel I had done was traditional holiday making with my family whilst younger and friends and girl friends for short trips prior to this point.

MW – And what more specifically made you choose the Philippines as a part of your trip?

D – Partly due to luck and circumstance, but the deciding factor was speaking to other travellers who had been through there and hearing their recommendations.

MW - In this instance, how long are you travelling for? What is your Itinerary and have you pre-booked anything?

D – I pre-booked my flights to Thailand and before departing from England; my flight from Singapore to Australia where I knew that I would be doing a year of working and travelling. So I approximately spent a month each in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, then Australia for one year. I had not pre-booked a flight home from Australia yet, so since Australia I spent six weeks in Malaysia and then two weeks in the Philippines. Currently I have no flight and no specific date for returning home in mind although I think that it will probably be within a few months. But basically all the pre-booking made was flights, everything else was on the go.

MW – Do you have a tight daily budget to stick to?

D – I have a general budget but in practice it is not very hard-set and I do regularly have days where I spend above this hypothetical limit. I try to think more in general terms about how much money I’ll spend in a week or a month than on a day, depending on what can be done, what is more expensive and so on.

MW – If you have a choice, what would be your main mode of transport when you travel, here for example?

D – Everything, I usually prefer public transport and the cheaper options, partly because I like to see how the average person goes about their own business.

MW – What type of accommodation do you usually seek out when you travel?
D – Always cheap. The only important factor or me is cleanliness and potentially, obviously reputation and the chances of meeting other travellers or friendly guesthouse owners. Basically popular spots where I can interact with other travellers, that are cheap, predominantly. Sometimes I will try to get off the beaten track but mostly it is South East Asia, a lot of well trodden paths where reputations precede places.

MW – What types of technologies do you use when travelling and how often?

D – Credit cards, as you would use them at home, a mobile phone at the moment but I haven’t had that the whole time travelling. Then a lot of personal electronics that I use on a daily basis such as camera, iPod and laptop for internet and entertainment. Camera, iPod every day. Whilst laptop and mobile phone a couple of times a week. With the credit card, I try to take out large quantities whenever possible despite the security problems. For budgetary reasons again since there are the transaction fees.

MW – What is your opinion towards conventional mass tourism?

D – Before this ‘travelling’ trip, which was my first, I enjoyed and took part in it. But since ‘travelling’ I don’t feel like I would travel, even if I had 3-4 weeks off a year, I don’t know if I would travel in the same way as before. Having done that kind of travelling I even feel a bit snooty about the old conventional form of travel. Perhaps in a backwards way, because I feel like you can get a truer and more real experience when you’re not suck in a resort with people you’d meet in the pub back home. At least not every day.

MW – How would you describe the type of travelling that you do? Do you have a word for it? Also, do you have any do’s and don’ts when you travel?

D – I’d just summarise it as ‘backpacking’ as many people would. It’s very common now so I wouldn’t say it is ‘off the beaten track’ and not very pioneering but it is certainly a more unusual way of travelling, even now. Perhaps more rough and not always as comfortable but very rewarding.

Do’s: Communicating with other people, whether it is other travellers or people from the country you are visiting, the first year of my trip I was with a friend but recently I’ve been travelling solo, it’s always important to meet new people to find out information obviously but also to be social as well. Especially on my own as well, a must do is put your fears aside and approach people. Also, most of the countries I’ve been to I have really enjoyed but I don’t know if I’ll ever come back so I tried to do as much as possible and get the most out of the experience during the time I am here. Even though it would be more than on the conventional holiday. Another do is: I heard a rumour from my cousin that when you travel anywhere in Asia and you go on a bus trip, then you have to assume that your big bag under the bus will be rummaged through. So whenever I travel I have all my valuables and anything I’d be upset to lose with me on my person at all times. Even though it might have become ritualistic so far and not necessary in all situations.

Don’ts: It’s quite difficult, the obvious safety things but I have to be honest, I’m not really so stringent on that. For example walking out late on my own, and I tend to use lockers and lock doors more than other travellers I feel.

MW – Do you seek out local experiences often?

D – Yeah, as much as possible. Food is a brilliant example, I like to try the food. I try to communicate with local people as much as possible. Sometimes that is not so easy but I certainly
keep trying. But also other everyday things are equally interesting, I like to seek out the little quirks about a country, for example the old women chewing tobacco in Batad; it’s interesting to find out what the sensation is like, where it was collected, and so forth.

MW – And what do you perceive as an authentic local experience? As opposed to an inauthentic or fake one?

D – What you deem to be everyday life, for example earlier, related to this country, when we walked through the rice terraces, these rice terraces have been around for two thousand of years. During this walk we took a photo of a local man in traditional man sitting on one of the terraces and gave him some money for it. An ‘involuntary’ donation of money for the procedure, I have to say in that case it didn’t feel organic, that felt like it was there purely for the tourists. And again other experiences, like just recently, when we travelled on the Jeepneys (local minivans) from place to place in North Luzon, with local people and their products and geese coming straight from the market. That experience sitting on the roof of this four by four and talking about their businesses and their families, felt organic and natural as an authentic travel experience.

MW – Any areas or countries in the world that you wouldn’t visit, and for what reasons in that case?

D – Theoretically no, if I had researched the place and felt safe and able. In practice there are obvious places like Iraq an Afghanistan which for any number of media related reasons and the conflicts going on, take that with the influence that my country, nationality have on those countries may affect how local people will behave towards me.
But being completely honest, those are two examples I can think of off the top of my head, but there are plenty more places where I feel that there are very real dangers. It comes down to safety concerns, political concerns. Perhaps it would be difficult to visit a place like Burma, where you can explore certain areas of the country but the people don’t really have freedom of speech. If you try to enter a certain area where you are not supposed to be, you’ll be fine, kicked out. But the local people who helped you will be facing very serious problems. So you have your own safety concerns that may extend into political concerns, but I have to say that I haven’t encountered the latter yet.

MW – Any additional comments or questions about the study?

D – So you are trying to see trends amongst solo backpacker? Is there anything worth commenting on that you think I have missed?

MW – Well to summarise, I am interested in the institutionalization, mainstreaming of independent travel, so that is where the interview questions are based on; looking at aspects of mass tourism within the independent travel group.

D – Yeah I definitely feel that backpacking is becoming a lot like that, the sheer weight of Europeans and other foreigners I have met travelling makes me think that it simply cannot be the way it was like 20 years ago. Even factors like non-English speaking countries with at least pigeon English or even better English that over the years have obviously realized that tourism is beneficial for them. Even things like, whilst some buses and transport has been difficult during my trip, especially in countries with predominantly non-English speaking, I have been surprised how, whilst there has been some nightmare journeys, most transport is however fairly easy now. Which
suggests to me that local people know the likely places I, a backpacker will go because others like me have been before.

Australia is an obvious choice when discussing the more mass-touristy backpacker tourism. The whole thing where people are doing the East coast, in some cases is not too dissimilar from two weeks in the sun and having a beer up with some mates. But for example groups of French or British people meeting up, hanging out with each other and not mingling with other travellers outside the group. I’ve met a lot of people in Australia who have used ‘backpacking’ as a stepping-stone to immigration, testing it out for a potential permanent life. Not so much as the rough-and-ready, even all the tours they can take are quite ‘packagy’, like you could book a resort for two weeks wherever and hang out by the pool every day, the same way on the East coast of Australia you can get on a bus that goes all the way up and down the East coast, jumping on and off. You probably end up with the same people, same stops, same hotels and probably not branching out as much. So in these cases I mentioned I feel that people use backpacking as a pre-text for partying or working their way into the country.

MW – Ok, thank you very much for your time!