

The Grass is Greener on the Other Side: What Motivates Backpackers to Leave Home and Why They Choose New Zealand as a Destination

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Abstract

This research explores why backpackers decide to leave home and why they choose New Zealand specifically as a destination. While there has been some prior research focusing on backpacker motivations, very little has looked at both the backpacker's decision to leave home and his/her destination choice. Furthermore, almost no previous research has looked at both aspects together within a New Zealand context. New Zealand is a popular backpacker destination and has a well-established backpacker industry. This makes the findings of this research relevant for the academic literature and for New Zealand's backpacker industry and the tourism industry more generally.

In this research backpackers were defined as young, long-term budget travellers who emphasise socialising and interacting with locals and other travellers. They travel independently and have flexible itineraries. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with fourteen backpackers were carried out in Queenstown in the South Island of New Zealand in August 2010. The backpackers were aged between nineteen and thirty-four years of age with five coming from England, three from Ireland, two from Canada and one each from Wales, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

Six main themes emerged from the interviews to explain why backpackers choose to leave home and go backpacking. The first two relate to the desire to explore the wider world and meet new people; backpackers travel in order to have experiences unavailable at home. The third factor that emerged from the interviews relates to self-development and identity formation and this reflects the findings of previous research. While not necessarily a conscious motivating factor, the backpackers interviewed alluded to a desire for cultural capital. Many of the backpackers had been wanting to travel for a long time and often the decision to go backpacking was related to a lack of commitments at home coinciding with the availability of both time and money with which to travel.

Three main themes emerged from the interviews to explain why backpackers specifically choose New Zealand as a destination. Overwhelmingly, the main motivating factor for coming to New Zealand related to the country's scenic landscapes. New Zealand is a highly

recommended destination and all but one of the backpackers had friends and/or family who had previously visited the country. New Zealand is an extremely popular backpacker destination and the idea of a round-the-world “backpacker route” including Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and the United States was mentioned by several interview participants. For some of the backpackers interviewed there was no specific reason to come to New Zealand except that it was perceived as a must-see backpacker destination. Somewhat surprisingly, neither Maori culture nor adventure tourism was found to be a motivating factor for backpackers to come to New Zealand.

This thesis concludes by emphasising the implications of these research findings for both the academic literature and the New Zealand tourism industry. Suggestions are made regarding issues within backpacker tourism that require further research – particularly those relating to how backpacking is changing and developing in the twenty-first century.

Key words: backpacker, backpacking, youth travel, budget travel, motivation, New Zealand

Publications

I had the privilege to attend and present at two conferences whilst completing my Master's thesis:

Godfrey, J. (2010, November). *Backpacking as 'time out'*. Paper presented at New Zealand Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference. Auckland, New Zealand.

Godfrey, J. (2011, February). *Why do backpackers come to New Zealand? A blend of motivating factors*. Paper presented at Council for Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Education Conference. Adelaide, Australia.

As part of my 2010 Tourism Research Scholarship from the Tourism Strategy Group I am required to provide an industry report based on the findings of my Master's research. This industry report will be available later in 2011 on the Tourism Strategy Group research website: http://www.tourismresearch.govt.nz/Start_Page/Data--Analysis/Research-projects-reports-and-studies/Tourism-Research-Scholarships/.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This research explores why backpackers come to New Zealand. Before turning to the literature on backpacker motivations (see chapter 2), the methods used for this research (see chapter 3), the findings of this research project (see chapter 4) and the implications of these findings (see chapter 5), it is first necessary to introduce the research questions and provide some background to this research. Chapter 1 begins by stating the research questions and discussing how this research contributes to both the tourism literature and the backpacker industry. This is followed by a brief explanation of my own backpacking experiences and my interest in the subject. Differing definitions of the term ‘backpacker’ are discussed and a brief history of the precursors to backpacking is provided. This is followed by an overview of the New Zealand tourism industry in order to situate this research within the wider context. The chapter concludes by outlining the chapters to follow.

1.1 Research questions

This research project focuses on the motivations of backpackers to New Zealand. Backpackers are highly visible in New Zealand and there is a well-developed industry that has evolved in order to cater for the backpacker market¹. However, little research has been done to determine backpackers’ specific reasons for coming to New Zealand. This research aims to redress this by posing two main questions: 1) why do backpackers initially choose to leave home? and 2) why do they choose New Zealand specifically as a destination? These two aspects of a travel decision are closely interconnected and according to Jang and Cai (2002, p. 130), “knowledge of people’s motivation and its association with their destination selection is critical to predict their future travel patterns”.

¹ There are many companies in New Zealand that focus specifically on the backpacker market. For example, bus companies such as Kiwi Experience www.kiwiexperience.com, Magic Travellers Network www.magicbus.co.nz and Stray www.straytravel.com; car hire companies such as Backpacker Campervan and Car Rentals www.backpackercampervans.co.nz and Explore More www.exploremore.co.nz; and hostel/backpackers chains or networks such as Base Backpacker Hostels www.stayatbase.com, Nomads Hostels www.nomadshostels.com, the YHA www.yha.co.nz and the BBH World Traveller Accommodation network www.bbh.co.nz.

Backpacker research has become increasingly common since the 1990s. However, these studies have normally focussed on defining the term “backpacker” (see for example Cohen, 2010; Hannam & Diekmann, 2010; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Pearce, 1990; Welk, 2004), looked at methods of backpacker travel (see for example Tucker, 2005; Vance, 2003), looked at the role of hostels (see for example Cave, Thyne & Ryan, 2008; O’Regan, 2010; Thyne, Davies & Nash, 2005; Wilson & Richards, 2008) or studied the economic impact of backpacking (see for example Hampton, 1998). While the existing literature gives an insight into the factors that influence backpacking, there has been little systematic empirical research on backpacker motivations and behaviours (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; see also Niggel & Benson, 2008).

Of the limited research focusing specifically on backpacker motivations (for example Maoz, 2007; Noy & Cohen, 2005; Richards & Wilson, 2004a), very little has looked at both why backpackers leave home and why they choose specific destinations (exceptions however include Goossens, 2000; Jang & Cai, 2002; Niggel & Benson, 2008). Moreover, almost none of this research has focussed specifically on the New Zealand context². According to Richards and Wilson (2004b, p. 253), the New Zealand backpacker market:

has attracted a lot of attention from tourism destinations and individual entrepreneurs. The backpacker ‘industry’ is particularly interested in finding out more about the motivations and behaviour of young travellers while policy makers seem most concerned with the economic contribution that backpacking can make to destinations.

Whilst further research into the behaviour of backpackers during their time in New Zealand would be interesting and useful, this research focuses specifically on backpackers and their motivations and reasons for choosing New Zealand as a destination. Based on Richards and Wilson’s (2004b) quote, the findings of this research project will be useful to both the academic literature as well as to the New Zealand backpacker industry.

² Gnoth (1997) is one exception who has looked at the motivations of backpackers in New Zealand. However, he used a marketing perspective rather than a sociological perspective as I have. Furthermore, Gnoth’s research is now fourteen years old making it potentially dated as the New Zealand backpacker industry – and the backpacker industry more globally – has changed and developed over the past fourteen years.

1.2 Background

I first became interested in this topic while working in the New Zealand backpacker industry in 2009. As part of my job as a reservations consultant at Kiwi Experience³ I dealt with overseas backpackers via phone, email and face-to-face both before they arrived in New Zealand and during their time in the country. I had previously travelled around Europe staying in youth hostels and during my time at Kiwi Experience I also spent two weeks travelling around the South Island on Kiwi Experience buses and staying in backpacker hostels. What surprised me most whilst talking to foreign backpackers was the high number who claimed they had always wanted to come to New Zealand yet arrived knowing almost nothing about the country and having very little idea about what they actually wanted to do and see during their time in New Zealand. While their knowledge of the country was very limited, *something* about New Zealand had obviously appealed to them enough to decide to visit and they had often paid large amounts of money and/or travelled vast distances to do so. I became curious to explore this idea further and this topic therefore became the basis of my Master's research.

1.3 Backpackers

Before discussing backpacking in New Zealand, it is first necessary to define to whom the term 'backpacker' actually refers. This section explores the differing definitions of the term 'backpacker', gives a brief demographic description of backpackers worldwide and finally provides an introduction into the heterogeneity amongst backpackers.

1.3.1 Definition

'Backpacking' and 'backpackers' are often-used terms in New Zealand (Pearce, 1990), yet their use can cause confusion. The term 'backpackers' is particularly problematic as it

³ Kiwi Experience is a hop-on/hop-off backpacker bus company that provides numerous routes around New Zealand. As well as providing bus transport, Kiwi Experience can also book some accommodation and activities for backpackers. For more information on Kiwi Experience see www.kiwiexperience.com.

appears to have three commonly used meanings in everyday conversation in New Zealand⁴: 1) to refer to a backpacker hostel, 2) to refer to people staying at a backpacker hostel, and 3) to refer to those who are not necessarily staying in a backpacker hostel but are generally young and travelling long-term on a low budget. This section discusses this third definition of the term ‘backpacker’ as it relates to academic research and the tourism literature and lists some of the characteristics used to differentiate backpackers from other types of travellers or tourists (the use of the terms ‘traveller’ and ‘tourist’ is also itself problematic and is discussed in more detail in section 1.4.2.).

While the definition of what constitutes a backpacker has been redefined through the academic literature over the past twenty years (see for example Duncan, 2004; Haigh, 1995), Pearce’s original 1990 definition remains the most widely accepted (for example Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004; Cave, Thyne & Ryan, 2008; Haigh, 1995; Jenkins, 2003; Newlands, 2004; Slaughter, 2004; Thyne, Davies & Nash, 2005). Pearce (1990, p. 1) defined backpackers as a group of predominantly young travellers who are more likely to stay in budget accommodation, have an emphasis on meeting other travellers, are independent and have a flexible travel schedule, stay for a longer rather than a brief holiday, and focus on informal and participatory holiday activities (see Figure 1). Loker (1991) extended this definition and added three demographic criteria for backpackers: they must be between eighteen and thirty years of age, they must have a minimum length of stay of four months and they must have holidaying as the main purpose of their trip. However, the use of demographic criteria in defining backpackers has been widely criticised. For example, Mohsin and Ryan (2003) argue that backpackers can be any age (see also Maoz, 2008), they do not always stay in hostels and are sometimes in full-time employment (Mohsin & Ryan, 2003; see also Jenkins, 2003)⁵.

⁴ This is further confused by the fact that in the United States of America ‘backpacking’ is more commonly used to refer to bushwalking or what New Zealanders would call hiking or tramping (Tourism New South Wales, N.D.).

⁵ It is also likely these differing definitions of backpacking are at least partially related to the changes in travel patterns and the changes to the travel industry which have taken place in the past twenty years since Pearce (1990) and Loker (1991) first began using the term ‘backpacker’.

<i>Defining characteristic</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Source</i>
Young	Predominantly young	Pearce (1990)
	18-30 years of age	Loker (1991)
	Young – late twenties to early thirties	Riley (1988)
	Young	Hannonen (2003)
Budget	Stay in budget accommodation	Pearce (1990)
	Budget of less than £10 per day ⁶	Bradt (1995)
	“Very low budget”	O’Reilly (2006, p. 999)
Long-term	Longer rather than brief holiday	Pearce (1990)
	Minimum four months	Loker (1991)
	As long as possible	Bradt (1995)
	Minimum one year	Riley (1988)
	Several months to several years	O’Reilly (2006)
Independent	Organise travel “individually and independently”	Bradt (1995)
	Independent	Pearce (1990)
	“Independent and open-minded”	Bradt (1995)
Flexible	“Flexible timetables and itineraries”	Riley (1988, p. 326)
	Although they may have a timetable or itinerary, this is normally flexible if required	Hottola (2005)
	Low levels of pre-planning and a flexible timetable	O’Reilly (2006)
	Flexible itinerary	Pearce (1990)
Social	Emphasise meeting other travellers	Pearce (1990)
	Emphasise informal/participatory activities	Pearce (1990)

Figure 1: Defining characteristics of backpackers

⁶ Bradt wrote this in 1995 and I would question how feasible this budget is when backpacking in 2011. In a developed country such as New Zealand it is virtually impossible to backpack on a daily budget of only £10.

Bradt (1995) identified four “badges of honour” or “‘pillars’ of backpacker ideology” (see Figure 1) which are described by Welk (2004, p. 80) as the “basic symbols with which backpackers construct traveller identities and a sense of community”. These factors are what backpackers use to identify each other and are reinforced in spaces such as backpacker hostels. These “badges of honour” are closely related to Pearce’s defining characteristics (see Figure 1). It is worth noting that neither Pearce (1990) nor Bradt (1995) mention travelling with a backpack as a defining characteristic of backpackers (although see Walsh & Tucker, 2009 for further discussion of the role backpacks play in the performance of backpacking).

Some of the larger backpacking studies have also identified criteria that can be used to characterise backpackers as distinct from other types of travellers or tourists. Again, they reinforce rather than contradict Pearce (1990), Loker (1991) and Bradt (1995). Riley (1988) referred to “long-term budget travellers”⁷ as those travelling for over a year while O’Reilly (2006, p. 999) found most backpackers travel for several months and many extend this period to several years (see Figure 1). Backpackers travel on a strict budget which in turn affects their choice of transport (O’Reilly, 2006). While Hannonen (2003) states that backpackers tend to be young, Riley (1988) found most were older than expected⁸, generally in their late twenties and early thirties.

Backpackers tend to have more flexible itineraries or travel plans than other types of travellers – although how flexible backpackers really are is debatable. Riley (1988, p. 326) states budget travellers have “flexible timetables and itineraries” (see also Pearce, 1990), while O’Reilly (2006, p. 999) argues backpackers “embrace serendipity [with] low levels of advance planning, no fixed timetable, and an openness to change of plan or itinerary”. However, Hottola (2005, p. 7) disagrees with these statements and argues that the plans of

⁷ This research was carried out in 1988 which was prior to Pearce’s definition of the term ‘backpacker’ in 1990. Riley (1988, p. 317) states the term “budget traveller” was chosen because it was the most commonly used term by the travellers themselves at the time and because it has fewer negative connotations than Cohen’s (1973) term “drifter”.

⁸ Although she does not explain why the backpackers’ ages were not as expected, nor what this expectation was based on.

the majority of the backpackers researched “were found to consist of rather schematic timetables extending a couple of weeks ahead and allowing temporal changes of one to two days”. The backpackers Hottola (2005) researched had somewhat flexible itineraries and timetables but these were nowhere near as flexible as suggested by O’Reilly (2006) and Riley (1988).

Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002) differentiated between backpackers according to both form-related and type-related attributes. Form-related attributes refer to “visible institutional arrangements and practices by which tourists organise their journey” and include “length of trip, flexibility of the itinerary, visited destinations and attractions, means of transportation and accommodation” (Uriely et al., 2002, p. 521). For backpackers, form-related attributes include being young and having a low budget and therefore choosing cheap transport and accommodation options. Type-related attributes refer to “less tangible psychological attributes, such as tourists’ attitudes toward fundamental values of their own society, their motivations for travel, and the meanings they assign to their experiences” (Uriely et al., 2002, p. 521).

Most research tends to agree that backpackers are young, independent, sociable and travelling long-term on a budget with a flexible itinerary (see Bradt, 1995; Loker, 1991; O’Reilly, 2006; Pearce, 1990). However, that is not to say there is consensus regarding who backpackers are and are not. For example, there is strong academic debate as to whether it is possible to work whilst still remaining a tourist or if the two actions are in fact mutually exclusive. Traditionally, tourism has been perceived as a leisure activity and therefore in contrast with work. For example, Urry (2002) defines tourism as being based on the difference between the ordinary/work and the extraordinary/leisure, while Mathieson and Wall (1982, p. 1) define tourism as “the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal places of work and residence”. One of Loker’s (1991) defining characteristics of backpackers is that they be travelling primarily for holiday rather than work or education. However, as Jenkins (2003, p. 310) argues:

this segregation of work and leisure sits uncomfortably with the definition of the backpacker tourist. For backpackers, as for international students and business

travellers, a trip is multi-purpose and may often include working or studying at the destination⁹.

Backpackers and those on working holidays may work during their time travelling (see for example Duncan, 2004) but they do so for a fixed period of time and unlike migrants they do not plan to remain overseas indefinitely¹⁰.

1.3.2 Who are they?

Riley (1988, p. 313) wrote that “the average traveller prefers to travel alone, is educated... middle-class, single, obsessively concerned with budgeting his/her money, and at a juncture in life”. Similarly, a comparison of seven independent studies in Australia concluded that the Australian backpacker market is “currently dominated by backpackers... who are young... well-educated, travelling for extended periods of time and making their own travel arrangements for most of their trip” (Slaughter, 2004, p. 179). Backpackers in Australia tend to use budget transport and stay in backpacker hostels (Slaughter, 2004). These findings reflect the generally accepted definition of backpackers as young, on a budget and travelling independently (see Loker, 1991; O’Reilly, 2006; Pearce, 1990). Backpackers travel for relatively extended periods of time. In Newland’s (2004) study, 32% of respondents had been travelling for less than ninety days, another 30% for between 91 and 180 days, 33% for 181 to 365 days and a final 5% had been travelling for over a year. These statistics show that over two-thirds of backpackers had been travelling for more than three months.

⁹ Another example is that of academics attending conferences. While they are there specifically for the conference, this does not preclude them from also taking part in tourism activities before, during or after the conference.

¹⁰ However, the distinction between temporary migrants and long-term backpackers or working holiday makers is not clear-cut. The World Tourism Organisation (1995, p. 1) defines tourism as “the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes”. However, travelling for more than a year is not uncommon among backpackers and particularly among working holiday makers (see O’Reilly, 2006; Riley, 1988; see section 3.3). Working holiday makers often combine backpacking with short-term work – usually as a means of helping fund their travels. New Zealand now has working holiday agreements with over thirty-four countries (Newlands, 2010) and in 2009 over 40,000 young people came to New Zealand as part of bilateral Working Holiday Schemes (Newlands, 2010; see also section 1.3.3 for more on gap years and OEs).

Studies have repeatedly found backpackers to be predominantly European (O'Reilly, 2005; Riley, 1988; Slaughter, 2004). Like Riley (1988), O'Reilly (2006) states that the majority of backpackers worldwide are middle-class and white with most backpackers coming from the United Kingdom, Ireland and Scandinavia and lesser numbers from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Israel, Canada and the United States. Hannonen (2003) found that almost all backpackers are Westerners with 46% from Europe and 33% from North America. While he acknowledged that significant numbers of backpackers came from other "rich" and "Western" countries – predominantly Australia, Israel and Japan – he justified this by arguing that Israel and Japan can be considered Western when compared to their regional neighbours (Hannonen, 2003, p. 165).

However, backpacker demographics are changing and there are increasing numbers of backpackers from outside the traditional sending regions of Western Europe, North America and Australasia. Teo and Leong (2006) argue that while the number of Asian backpackers is increasing – particularly those from Japan, Korea and China – research on backpackers is still largely Western-oriented and carried out by Anglo-American academics (although exceptions do include Lau, 2003; Muzaini, 2006). Aside from studies on Israeli backpackers (see for example Maoz, 2007; Noy, 2004; Noy & Cohen, 2005; Reichel, Fuchs & Uriely, 2009), there has been little research addressing backpackers' specific nationalities (Maoz, 2007). Notable exceptions include Jang and Cai's work (2002) which focussed on British travellers and Prideaux and Shiga's work (2007) which focussed on Japanese backpackers¹¹. According to Maoz (2007, p. 136) this lack of research is regrettable since:

there appear to be differences among backpackers from different countries in their perception of freedom, escapism, and moratorium, in their travel motivations, as well as in their interactions with other tourists.

¹¹ There has also been an increasing amount of research relating to Asian travellers more generally (see for example Cha, McCleary & Uysal, 1995; Huang, 2008; March, 2000).

While I recognise backpacker motivations may differ across nationalities, this was not found to be the case among the backpackers interviewed for this research project. Therefore nationality as it relates to backpacker motivations has not been discussed further.

There is also debate regarding a possible gender discrepancy amongst backpackers. Riley (1988, p. 319) claimed that around 20% to 25% of long-term travellers she encountered were women and referred to this as “a surprisingly large number”. I find her use of the term “surprisingly” somewhat odd however as during my fieldwork I found a relatively even split between male and female backpackers staying at the hostel (see chapter 3). Likewise, Hannonen (2003) found relatively equal numbers of male and female backpackers. It is however possible female backpackers have become increasingly common in the twenty-three years since Riley carried out her research¹².

1.3.3 Backpacker: An umbrella term

As I have begun to illustrate, defining backpackers in research can be difficult¹³. According to Sørensen (2003, p. 852), backpacking is “both an individual perception and a socially constructed identity” and therefore “more a social construct than a definition” (see also Pearce, 1990; Wilson, 2006). Pearce (1990, p. 1) argues that backpacking is “an approach to travel and holiday rather than a categorisation based on dollars spent or one’s age”. Economic or demographic criteria for defining backpackers are therefore inappropriate and the best definition is based on social factors (Pearce, 1990). Backpacking is a fluid concept and relates to an adopted lifestyle and attitude towards travel. Backpackers vary based on numerous characteristics including gender (for more on gender as related to backpacking

¹² Some may also argue that New Zealand is perceived as a relatively safe backpacker destination and this may lead to a higher proportion of female backpackers than in other backpacker destinations. However, Hannonen (2003) carried out his research in Ecuador and other South American countries which are generally perceived as developing and therefore ‘less safe’. Hannonen (2003) also found a relatively even gender split and this therefore somewhat negates the earlier argument (see also Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995).

¹³ Some research – particularly that carried out by government agencies – circumvents this difficulty by instead choosing a more quantitative definition such as defining backpackers as those staying in backpacker hostels for more than a certain percentage of their stay (see for example Tourism New Zealand, 2010a). For further discussion of the benefits and pitfalls of defining backpackers based on accommodation choice see Haigh (1995).

see Elsrud, 1998; Hannonen, 2003; Jordan & Gibson, 2004; Obenour, 2005; Riley, 1988), age (see Hannonen, 2003) and nationality (see section 1.3.2). Backpackers also vary with regards to motivation (Newlands, 2004) and behaviour whilst travelling. For example, some backpackers are also students in their destination country¹⁴ (see for example Huang, 2008), some volunteer (see for example Simpson, 2005), and some supplement their backpacker budget through short or medium-term work (see for example Newlands, 2010).

I recognise backpackers are not a homogeneous group (see for example Pursall, 2005; Sørensen, 2003) and vary across numerous aspects including travel motivations and behaviour whilst travelling. Newlands (2004, p. 236) notes that:

backpackers in New Zealand generally make extensive use of budget accommodation, are visiting the country for a long period of time, and have flexible travel itineraries. However, it is clear that the New Zealand backpacker market is not homogeneous, as respondents vary considerably in terms of their motivations, activities and travel styles.

Due to the wide variety of backpackers in New Zealand I have chosen not to restrict the focus of this research to a specific backpacker sub-group¹⁵. Sørensen (2003, p. 848) argues that while there is variation among backpackers and it is difficult to group them under one umbrella term, “nevertheless, if questioned, most of these individuals will generally acknowledge that they are backpackers”. While I acknowledge the debate and possible controversy over the use of the term ‘backpacker’ within both academia and among backpackers themselves, I use the term in this research mainly for its convenience as a short-hand for young long-term international budget travellers (see also O’Reilly, 2005) and because it remains the most commonly used term within the New Zealand context.

Distinguishing between backpacking and other forms of youth travel such as working holidays, gap years or OE’s is difficult. Gap years are defined by Cochrane (2005, p. 2) as a

¹⁴ However, while some international students may also spend part of their time backpacking in the country in which they are studying, research has found some behavioural differences between the international students and more mainstream backpackers (see for example Davidson, Wilkins, King et al. 2011; Payne, 2009; Pearce & Son, 2004).

¹⁵ However, as a result of the research method chosen (see chapter 3) all the backpackers interviewed were staying in a backpacker hostel for at least some of their time in New Zealand and this effectively narrowed the focus.

“period of at least several weeks spent in one or more faraway countries, travelling in a relatively unplanned way or working on an environmental or social project”. In many cases this could also be defined as backpacking. The term OE is an abbreviation of ‘overseas experience’ and refers not merely to a short overseas trip but to “an extended journey” (Bell, 2002, p. 143) that normally includes both travel and work. An OE “typically stretches across years of experience... and involves long periods of improvised employment as well as short episodes of holiday fun” (Myers & Inkson, 2003, p. 3; see also Wilson, 2006).

The term OE is commonly used in everyday conversation in New Zealand and typically refers to young New Zealanders living and working in London (for more on the OE see Wilson, 2006). Gap years are traditionally a British concept but the term is now used more widely (see Cairns, 2010). For example, young New Zealanders sometimes refer to a gap year as being a period of travel between school and university while the OE comes after university or a couple of years in the workforce (Duncan, 2010). Obviously there is some overlap between these definitions of gap years and OEs and the previous definition of backpackers. The main difference between backpacking and gap years are that gap years traditionally occur between finishing school and starting university¹⁶ (see Duncan, 2010) whilst backpacking can take place at any point – although generally whilst one is still ‘young’. The main difference between backpacking and OEs is that those on OEs generally emphasise work with shorter periods of holiday (Myers & Inkson, 2003), whilst backpacking is predominantly travel with some possible short-term work.

The definition of backpackers used for this research is based on Pearce’s (1990) definition (see Figure 1). I define backpackers as young, long-term budget travellers who are travelling independently. They have a flexible itinerary and emphasise socialising and interacting with both locals and other travellers. The terms ‘young’, ‘budget’ and ‘long-term’ are all subjective and unlike Loker (1991) and Bradt (1995) I have chosen not to quantify these terms further. In my definition backpackers may or may not be working

¹⁶ Two of the interview participants – Andrea and Katja – were backpacking during their summer holidays between finishing school and starting university (see section 4.1.5). For this reason they could also potentially be defined as being on a gap ‘year’.

whilst backpacking – with the defining feature being that whilst this work may be short or medium-term it is only ever temporary and does not take priority over travel.

1.4 Long-term budget youth travel

Although the term ‘backpacker’ is relatively new (see Pearce, 1990), the concept of long-term budget travel is not. Similarly, the concept of ‘backpacking’ is not static but is changing and examples of this include the development of “anti-backpackers” (Welk, 2004) and the recent emergence of “flashpacking” (Cochrane, 2005; Future Laboratory, 2004; Hannam & Diekmann, 2010; Jarvis & Peel, 2010; Pursall, 2005). This section begins by giving a very brief history of long-term youth travel, before outlining the debate between travellers, tourists and backpackers and giving a brief introduction to the concept of flashpacking.

1.4.1 A brief history of long-term youth travel

According to Loker-Murphy (1997, p. 24), “the use of travel as an educational finishing school is as old as the history and use of the word tourist itself”. There are many historical predecessors to the backpacker – from the ‘Grand Tour’ of the upper classes in the 17th and 18th centuries (Adler, 1985; Brodsky-Porges, 1981; Riley, 1988; Towner, 1985), to the tramping system of pre-twentieth century European craftsmen (Adler, 1985) to the Wandervogel movement of 1920s Germany (Adler, 1985; Cohen, 1973). While some contemporary long-term backpackers may have travelled in previous centuries as colonial administrators or missionaries, the number of young long-term travellers has increased as a result of globalisation (O’Reilly, 2005). According to O’Reilly (2005, p. 152) the majority of contemporary backpackers:

are people who might never have ventured far from home in the past when travel was more difficult and potentially dangerous, but have now taken advantage of the relative ease and affordability of long-haul travel.

Long-haul travel has become both more affordable and more accessible. In contemporary Western society, “travel abroad has become normalised and is no longer perceived as particularly exotic or unusual” (O’Reilly, 2006, p. 1008).

Cheap airfares and overland travel in the 1960s and 1970s (see Qantas, 2010) encouraged the growth of mass tourism¹⁷ and the ‘hippie trail’ overland from Europe through Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan to India and South-East Asia became increasingly popular¹⁸ (see Welk, 2008). Cohen (1973) referred to these young independent budget travellers as “drifters”¹⁹ and categorised them into four sub-groups depending on whether they were full-time or part-time drifters and whether they were inward-oriented, that is, focussed on the subculture of their fellow travellers; or outward-oriented, that is, focussed on experiencing the local culture.

While drifters were originally perceived as alternative or even subversive (Cohen, 1973), the increasing popularisation of ‘drifting’ in the late 1960s and 1970s drove Cohen (1973, p. 90) to write that drifting had been:

transformed in a peculiar way: on the one hand, it became more closely associated with the ‘counter-culture’; on the other hand, however, though originally a reaction against routinized forms of travel, it also became institutionalised on a level completely segregated from, but parallel to that of ordinary mass tourism.

As drifters’ itineraries and routes became more popular, a separate infrastructure emerged to cater for this growing market (Cohen, 1973)²⁰. This dual infrastructure led to a situation

¹⁷ It is impossible to speak of the development of affordable tourism for the masses without mentioning Thomas Cook who organised the first publicly advertised package tour in 1841 (Dickman, 1997). The trip was a great success and Cook expanded his business. As early as 1872 Cook was advertising a world cruise which included “glimpses of our own [British] Colonies of New Zealand and Australia” (Cook, 1872 as cited in Dickman, 1997, p. 8).

¹⁸ This route eventually came to an end with the outbreak of war and violence in several places en route including Afghanistan and Kashmir (Wheeler & Wheeler, 2005).

¹⁹ Vogt (1976) also wrote about these travellers around the same time as Cohen but used the less derogatory term “wanderer”.

²⁰ The growth of backpacking is closely associated with the growing popularity of backpacker hostels. Youth hostels were originally developed in the 1920s and originally provided cheap if rather basic and austere accommodation (Pearce, 1990). According to Pearce (1990, p. 9), “the range of buildings was varied but the rules of their operations were not, and early curfews, limitations on guests and segregation between the sexes were all invariably demanded”. Despite this however, hostels became popular with travellers worldwide (Pearce, 1990).

where “drifters and the other tourists thus frequently flow[ed] along parallel geographical lines, though through segregated institutional channels” (Cohen 1973, p. 95)²¹.

1.4.2 Travellers, tourists and backpackers

There is much controversy and debate about the use of the terms ‘traveller’, ‘tourist’ and ‘backpacker’. Travellers and backpackers reject the term “tourist” for themselves and use it to refer specifically to “short-term, non-exotic travel or package tourism” (Fussell, 1980, p. 40). Travellers and backpackers see themselves as superior to tourists and Fussell (1980, p. 40) argues that “from the outset mass tourism [has] attracted the class-contempt of kill-joys who conceived themselves independent travellers and thus superior by reason of intellect, education, curiosity and spirit”. Backpackers therefore define themselves primarily in contrast to tourists (Gogia, 2006; see also Cohen, 2010).

In her research, O’Reilly (2005, p. 155) found that:

regardless of how outsiders may perceive them, long-term globe-trotters use different labels to describe themselves, with the favourites being either backpacker or traveller. Some admit to being just another tourist, but these are few and far between.

In one study, nearly 70% of those questioned either slightly disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “backpackers are no different to other tourists” (Wilson & Richards, 2008, p. 20). However, backpackers’ widespread rejection of the term ‘tourist’ ignores the fact that backpacking has been unable to avoid “progressive institutionalisation” (Teo & Leong, 2006, p. 110; see also Hannam & Ateljevic, 2008; Hottola, 2005; Noy, 2006) and has itself arguably become “no more than a variant of mass tourism on a low budget level” (Speitzhofer, 1998, p. 982; see also Uriely, Yonay & Simchai, 2002).

While long-term budget youth travellers reject the term ‘tourist’, increasing numbers also resent being referred to as ‘backpackers’ due to the negative connotations the term has

²¹ A similar situation has now developed in New Zealand where backpacking has become increasingly popular and common to the point where there is a well-established backpacker tourism industry in New Zealand which operates parallel to, yet relatively separate from, the mainstream tourism industry.

acquired in some areas (Jarvis & Peel, 2010; O'Reilly, 2005; Welk, 2004). According to O'Reilly (2005, p. 156), the term 'backpacker':

has taken on negative implications, suggesting for many a person who is mean with money, does not mix with locals, stays in grotty hostels because they are cheap, and spends an inordinate amount of time drinking, [and/or] partying²².

A global study by Richards and Wilson (2004a) in the spring of 2002 surveyed 2,300 backpackers from forty-two different countries and found that while all met the criteria for backpackers as defined by Pearce in 1990, less than a third of those surveyed described themselves as backpackers, while over half described themselves as travellers (Richards & Wilson, 2004a, p. 19). According to O'Reilly (2005, p. 156), backpackers prefer the term 'traveller' because it has positive connotations and "embodies ideals of independence, mobility and freedom" compared the negative stereotypes associated with the term 'backpacker'. Welk (2004) terms these travellers "anti-backpackers" who define themselves as being everything mainstream backpackers are not. Anti-backpackers pride themselves on actually getting "off the beaten track" and having more "authentic" experiences than the mainstream backpacker-tourists (Welk, 2004).

While the label 'backpacker' may be losing favour worldwide, it remains a commonly used term in New Zealand both within the industry and among backpackers themselves. Richards and Wilson (2004a, p. 19) found 65% of those travelling to New Zealand described themselves as backpackers while the rest described themselves as travellers. In another New Zealand based study Newlands (2004) found 53% of respondents described themselves as backpackers, 41.6% described themselves as travellers, 4% described themselves as tourists and 1.3% described themselves in some other way. In both studies over half of the respondents self-identified as backpackers which suggests it remains a popular term within the New Zealand context.

²² Although there is at least some basis to this stereotype. The backpackers I met during my research were travelling on very low budgets, they stated they had not met many other New Zealanders during their trip, they chose hostels based predominantly on price – although that is not to say that Nomad's Queenstown is "grotty" – and they spent a large amount of time drinking both at the hostel and at backpacker bars in town.

1.4.3 Flashpackers

One of the key changes in backpacker tourism in recent years has been the emergence of “flashpacking” (Cochrane, 2005; Future Laboratory, 2004; Hannam & Diekmann, 2010; Jarvis & Peel, 2010; Pursall, 2005). Flashpackers are usually older than more mainstream backpackers, although how much older is undecided. Hannam and Diekmann (2010) claim flashpackers are in their twenties and thirties, while Jarvis and Peel (2010) state flashpackers are those aged mid-twenties and older. Flashpackers tend to be on a career break or “an extended holiday from paid employment” (Jarvis & Peel, 2010, p. 36). Like Pearce’s (1990) backpackers, flashpackers show “a preference for small scale, value for money” accommodation, emphasise “meeting other travellers and locals”, follow “an independently organised and flexible travel schedule”, show a “preference for longer rather than brief holidays” and seek out “informal and participatory holiday activities” (Jarvis & Peel, 2010, p. 36).

However, unlike traditional backpackers, the contemporary flashpacker has more expensive travel accessories and a higher budget. Hannam and Diekmann (2010, p. 2) state that the flashpacker:

travels with an expensive backpack or a trolley-type case, stays in a variety of accommodation depending on location, has greater disposable income, visits more ‘off the beaten track’ locations, [and] carries a laptop... and a mobile phone²³.

According to Hannam and Diekmann (2010, p. 1-2), this developing trend is associated with:

the changing demographics in western societies where older age at marriage, older age having children, increased affluence and new technological developments, alongside increased holiday and leisure time have all come together.

People are choosing to travel later in life when they have more financial security. However, this also tends to result in higher expectations (Jarvis & Peel, 2010). Cochrane (2005) refers

²³ Although I would argue that it is now common for mainstream backpackers to also carry mobile phones. Additionally, it is no longer unusual for backpackers to have laptops (see Bell, 2008) and I saw several backpackers in Queenstown travelling with laptops.

to these older, richer backpackers as “backpacker pluses”. Since flashpackers tend to be older than more mainstream backpackers, they are less likely to identify with the label ‘backpacker’ – even though they often use the same infrastructure and are often motivated in similar ways (Jarvis & Peel, 2010).

1.5 The New Zealand context

This research project focuses on why backpackers choose to leave home and why they choose New Zealand specifically as a destination. This section contextualises this research within the New Zealand backpacking arena. A brief introduction to the New Zealand tourism industry and the backpacker tourism industry in particular is provided, followed by an overview of previous research relating to backpackers in New Zealand.

1.5.1 New Zealand’s tourism industry

Cave, Thyne and Ryan (2008, p. 220) describe New Zealand as a “mature and well developed [tourist] destination” and in the year ending January 2011 there were 2.53 million international visitors to New Zealand (Tourism Strategy Group²⁴, 2011) – a substantial number considering the estimated total population of New Zealand is only 4.3 million (Statistics New Zealand, 2010). Moreover, international visitor arrivals in New Zealand are expected to increase at an annual rate of approximately 3.5% each year until 2016 (Tourism Strategy Group, 2011). These numbers are also likely to be boosted by New Zealand’s hosting of the Rugby World Cup in 2011. Backpackers make up a large proportion of the New Zealand tourism industry and in the year to September 2009 New Zealand hosted approximately 183,063 backpackers (Tourism New Zealand, 2010a). Additionally, unlike some other destinations (see Cochrane, 2005; Hampton, 1998; Scheyvens, 2002) the New Zealand government and the tourism industry welcome budget

²⁴ In August 2010 the New Zealand Ministry of Tourism was replaced by the Tourism Strategy Group which is part of the Ministry of Economic Development.

travellers²⁵ and this is reflected in the current “Go All the Way” campaign²⁶ that encourages backpackers to venture all the way to New Zealand.

The tourism industry is currently New Zealand’s largest export earner (New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, 2011). A total of NZ\$5.56 billion was spent in New Zealand by international visitors in the year to December 2010 (Tourism Strategy Group, 2011) and revenue from tourism directly and indirectly contributes NZ\$15.1 billion or 8.7% to New Zealand’s total Gross Domestic Product (Tourism Strategy Group, 2011). Tourism directly provides 92,900 full-time jobs and indirectly provides another 89,500. In total, 9.6% of New Zealand’s workforce is employed in the tourism industry (Tourism Strategy Group, 2011).

The tourism industry plays a large role in New Zealand’s economy and Turner (1976, p. 21) argues that “the more up-market one’s industry can be pushed, the better the returns are likely to be”. However, this is not necessarily the case as backpackers tend to stay longer than other types of tourists and this more than compensates for backpackers’ lower than average daily spend. Backpackers spend an average of NZ\$105 per night (Parker, 2009a) compared to an average of NZ\$155 per night for those staying in motels and NZ\$220 for those staying in hotels (Ministry of Tourism, 2007). However, one study found backpackers in New Zealand stay an average of thirty nights (Parker, 2009a) and spend an average of NZ\$3157 on their trip to New Zealand, excluding airfares (Parker, 2009a). This is substantially more than the average total spend of NZ\$2,771 for other international holiday visitors (Tourism New Zealand, 2010b). Additionally, backpackers are more likely to travel widely throughout New Zealand and therefore spread their spending across different regions (Tourism New Zealand, 2009). These statistics reinforce the significance of the

²⁵ See for example Tourism New Zealand’s newly-launched backpacker hub at <http://www.newzealand.com/travel/about/backpacking>.

²⁶ This campaign was launched in September 2009 and aims to encourage young British and European backpackers to visit New Zealand by promoting the idea that you have not completed your round-the-world trip unless you make it “all the way” to New Zealand (Tourism New Zealand, 2009). For more on this campaign see <http://www.goalltheway.to/newzealand/>.

backpacker market within the New Zealand economy and show how useful the findings of this research project could be for the New Zealand backpacker industry (see section 5.3).

1.5.2 Backpackers in New Zealand

Backpackers in New Zealand are predominantly from the United Kingdom and Ireland (Ministry of Tourism, 2007; Newlands, 2004). One study found that although respondents came from a wide range of countries, most of the backpackers in New Zealand were European and nearly half were from Ireland or the United Kingdom (Newlands, 2004). An additional 6.4% came from Israel, 5.9% from Germany, 4.8% from both Canada and Sweden, 4.5% from Japan and 2.4% from both Australia and the United States (Newlands, 2004). A similar study by the Ministry of Tourism (2007) found over half of all backpackers in New Zealand were from the United Kingdom, Australia or the United States. In the Ministry of Tourism study (2007), 22.5% of international visitors staying in backpacker hostels in New Zealand were from the United Kingdom, 20.1% were from Australia²⁷, 10.5% from the United States of America, 6.8% from Germany and 6.1% from Japan.

Travellers staying at backpacker hostels tend to be younger than those staying in other types of accommodation. In one New Zealand study 73% of international travellers staying in hostels were between the ages of fifteen and thirty-four (Ministry of Tourism, 2007) and in Newlands' study (2004) more than 91% of the backpackers were aged under thirty-five. Another more recent study (Cave, Thyne & Ryan, 2008) found 48% of those staying in backpacker accommodation in New Zealand were aged between eighteen and twenty-four years of age, while 25% were aged between twenty-five and thirty (Cave, Thyne & Ryan, 2008). Taken together, these statistics suggest the vast majority of backpackers in New Zealand – whether defined using social criteria or by accommodation (see for example Cave, Thyne & Ryan, 2008; Ministry of Tourism, 2007) – are aged under thirty-five years

²⁷ This discrepancy between Newlands (2004) statistics and the Ministry of Tourism (2007) statistics is possibly because while they both claimed to be measuring backpackers, they were in fact measuring different things. Newlands (2004) used a social definition of backpackers whereas the Ministry of Tourism (2007) did not measure 'backpackers' per se but rather the number of people staying at backpacker hostels.

old (although see section 1.3.1 for discussion on whether backpackers can by definition be older than this).

Similar to the findings of other studies worldwide, backpackers in New Zealand appear to be single and well-educated (Newlands, 2004) – although I would argue this is potentially less related to motivation and more related to these groups being more likely to have the opportunity and finances to travel long-term. Over three-quarters of respondents in Newlands' New Zealand-based study had some form of post-secondary school qualification with 54% having at least a university degree and another 23% having some sort of tertiary-level qualification (Newlands, 2004). The majority of those surveyed were students, service sector employees or professionals (Newlands, 2004). Cave, Thyne and Ryan (2008, p. 225) found a fairly even gender split within backpackers in New Zealand with 46% of respondents being male and 54% being female.

1.6 Chapter summary

This research explores the motivations of backpackers in New Zealand and poses two main questions: 1) why do backpackers initially choose to leave home? and 2) why do they choose New Zealand specifically as a destination? There has been very little research focusing on both these aspects together and almost no previous research combining both these aspects within a New Zealand context. This makes the findings of this research relevant for the academic literature and also useful for the New Zealand backpacker industry and the New Zealand tourism industry more generally. This chapter has introduced the research questions and contextualised this research within the wider academic and tourism settings. The importance of this research to both the academic literature and the New Zealand backpacker industry has been emphasised. Chapter 2 now provides an overview of the relevant previous academic literature – both theoretical and empirical. Chapter 3 focuses on the methods selected for this research project and the justification for these decisions. I reflect on my own philosophical assumptions that have affected the research and discuss aspects of research design. Chapter 4 discusses the research findings – both why backpackers leave home initially and why they choose New Zealand as a destination – and relates these back to the literature review provided in chapter 2. Chapter 5

further interprets the research findings and suggests some of the implications these findings have for both the New Zealand backpacker market and the tourism market more generally.

Chapter Two: Backpacker motivations

This research focuses on the motivations of backpackers in New Zealand. The previous chapter discussed definitions of the term ‘backpacker’ while chapter 2 introduces the concept of motivations and discusses theories of motivation within the tourism literature. Some of the more significant backpacker motivations are then discussed in more detail – both what drives backpackers to travel in the first place and what motivates them to choose New Zealand specifically as a destination. Taken together, chapters 1 and 2 provide the necessary background and context to this research before moving on to describing the methods in chapter 3 and the findings and conclusions in chapters 4 and 5.

2.1 Theories of motivation

Motivations explain what drives someone to act in a particular way. Murray (1964, p. 7) defines a motivation as:

an internal factor that arouses, directs and integrates a person’s behaviour. It is not observed directly but inferred from his [sic] behaviour or simply assumed to exist in order to explain his [sic] behaviour.

Motivations can relate to both emotional and/or cognitive factors (Gnoth, 1997) and “tourism is a response to felt needs and acquired values within temporal, spatial, social and economic parameters” (Gnoth, 1997, p. 283). Essentially, motivations can be used to explain why someone acts the way in which they do.

The main criticism relating to travel motivation research is that it is generally based on travellers themselves reporting their travel motives (Dann, 1981). This raises concerns since travellers are not always able to reflect on nor express their own motivations for travel (Dann, 1981) and some motivating factors are subconscious rather than conscious (see section 2.2.1). Several theories have been developed to explain tourist motivations and this section introduces some of the more widely used theories. Travel motivation is often split into reasons for leaving home and reasons for choosing a destination. One of the most commonly used theories refers to these as push and pull factors; although there are several

other theories that make a similar distinction (see Figure 2). The Travel Career Ladder attempts to explain tourist motivations by categorising tourist motivations based on a tourist's previous travel experience. These theories are introduced because – as theories of travel motivation – they can potentially be used to explain why backpackers leave home and choose New Zealand as a destination.

2.1.1 Push and pull

While some criticise it for being somewhat simplistic (see for example Espinoza, 2002), the most common approach used to explain tourist motivations is that of a combination of push and pull factors²⁸ (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Crompton, 1979). Push motives can be used to explain the desire to travel while pull motives help to explain the destination choice (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Goossens, 2000) with the idea being that people travel “because they are pushed by their own internal forces and pulled by the external forces of the destination attributes” (Cha, McCleary & Uysal, 1995, p. 34; see Figure 2).

<i>Reasons for leaving home</i>	<i>Reasons for choosing a destination</i>	<i>References</i>
Push	Pull	Baloglu & Uysal (1996) Goossens (2000)
Avoidance / escaping the everyday	Approach / seeking	Iso-Ahola (1982)
Drive	Reach a goal / reward	Murray (1964)

Figure 2: A comparison of three theories of motivation used to explain why tourists choose to leave home and why they choose a specific destination

While marketers are likely to focus on pull factors only, both sets of factors are in fact “two sides of the same motivational coin” (Goossens, 2000, p. 302). Goossens (2000) argues that tourists are pushed away from home by emotional needs and pulled towards a destination

²⁸ For examples of research using push and pull theory see Al-Haj Mohammad & Mat Som, 2010; Dann, 1981; Hartmann, 1988; Jang & Cai, 2002; Yuan & McDonald, 1990.

because of the emotional benefits the destination offers²⁹. For example, backpackers may be pushed to leave home in order to get away from an unhappy relationship break-up and be pulled to New Zealand because they wish to see the country's scenery. In order to market a destination successfully it is "necessary to understand both push and pull factors and the relationship between them" (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996, p. 32). While the findings of this research add to the current backpacker and travel motivation literature, they also have more practical applications for those marketing New Zealand as a destination.

Iso-Ahola (1982) developed a theory similar to that of pull and push (Hall, 1998; see Figure 2). He proposed that the decision to travel is based on two major motivational forces: "approach" or "seeking intrinsic rewards" through travel; and "avoidance" or "escaping the everyday environments" through travel (Iso-Ahola, 1982, p. 260). These forces can be further split into personal and interpersonal factors. According to Iso-Ahola (1982, p. 260), intrinsic personal rewards include rest and relaxation and learning about other cultures while interpersonal rewards include:

varied and increased social interaction, interacting with friendly natives or members of the travel group, interacting with old friends in a new place or with new friends in an old place.

Escaping the personal world involves escaping personal problems and failures while escaping the interpersonal world involves getting away from family, friends and neighbours (Iso-Ahola, 1982).

This theory can be directly applied to backpackers. Pearce's (1990) definition states that backpackers prioritise meeting other travellers and this can be seen as an example of an interpersonal reward. Likewise, there is a strong argument to be made that backpackers travel in order to accumulate cultural capital (see Bourdieu, 1984; Desforges, 1998; Munt,

²⁹ I am however wary of this statement as I would argue tourists and backpackers are not pushed and pulled only by emotional benefits. For example, Katja and Andrea both stated in their interviews (see chapter 4) that part of their reason to come to New Zealand related to their desire to practice their English and improve their language skills. Katja also believed by improving her English language skills she would also improve her job prospects in the long-term; she was therefore pulled to New Zealand by potential economic benefits as well as any possible emotional benefits.

1994) which can be viewed as an example of an intrinsic personal reward. Examples of backpackers escaping the personal world include using travel as a means of getting away from a boring job or family responsibilities. Escaping the interpersonal world can involve getting away from an unhappy relationship break-up or excessive parental control (see section 2.2.1).

Instead of motivations, Murray (1964, p. 8) referred to ‘drives’ which are the internal processes that cause a person to act in a particular manner in order to meet a goal or obtain a reward (see Figure 2). While drives can be influenced by the external environment, the drive itself is internal (Murray, 1964). Backpackers are driven by internal desires such as wanderlust (see Gray, 1970) and move towards goals or rewards such as New Zealand’s scenery or the accrual of cultural capital.

The theories discussed in Figure 2 are all somewhat simplistic as they ignore the overlap that can occur between ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. For example, backpackers travel in order to see and explore the wider world and this is potentially connected with their emphasis on coming to New Zealand to see the country’s natural scenery (see chapter 4). Similarly, one of Pearce’s defining factors is that backpackers emphasise and prioritise meeting new people whilst travelling. New Zealand is a popular destination and has a well-developed backpacker industry – backpackers coming to the country are therefore effectively guaranteed they will meet other like-minded backpackers (see 4.2.3 for more on the “backpacker route”). However, push/pull, avoidance/approach and drive theories (see Figure 2) remain useful for this research project as they provide one way of differentiating between motivations which are predominately related to backpackers choosing to leave home and factors which are predominately related to backpackers’ destination choice.

2.1.2 Travel Career Ladder

Pearce and Caltabiano’s (1983, p. 16) research aimed to “derive individual motives for travel from self-reported travel experiences” and to relate this to Maslow’s theory of

motivation and hierarchy of needs³⁰. Maslow's five-stage hierarchy of needs of increasing motivational importance are physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and self-actualisation needs (Maslow, 1954). Pearce (1993) states that Maslow's hierarchy of needs was chosen as the basis of the Travel Career Ladder because the hierarchy includes both biological and social motives within a single framework. The Travel Career Ladder proposes that travellers' needs or motivations are organised into a ladder or hierarchy with relaxation needs at the bottom, followed by safety/security needs, relationship needs, self-esteem and development needs and ultimately fulfilment needs at the top (Pearce & Lee, 2005). Higher level motives include the motives below and tourists are expected to ascend the ladder over time (Loker-Murphy, 1997) as they accumulate travel experience. By placing motives within a hierarchy of needs it is possible to hold more than one motive at a time as well as change motives over time and/or across situations (Loker-Murphy, 1997; Pearce, 1993).

However, Maslow's hierarchy of needs has been widely criticised (see for example Neher, 1991; Wahba & Bridwell, 1976), as has the Travel Career Ladder (see for example Ryan, 1998). The crux of the theoretical framework of the Travel Career Ladder is that people's motivations change as they gain travel experience. Ryan (1998, p. 938) concedes that:

this formulation has an intrinsic appeal. Those going abroad for the first time may prefer the security of a package tour, but in time will opt for independent ones as they become more experienced.

However, Ryan (1998, p. 952) critiques the Travel Career Ladder and argues that tourist motives do not follow a linear manner but instead "jump from somewhere onto various rungs, and advance up and down the ladder".

While some empirical research supports the Travel Career Ladder (see for example Loker, 1997), there is other empirical research that contradicts the theory. The most obvious example is that by Kim, Pearce, Morrison and O'Leary (1996, p. 112) who initially "expected that tourists might ascend the travel career ladder as they become older and more

³⁰ Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) are not the only researchers to apply Maslow's hierarchy of needs to tourism. For example, Tikkanen (2007) also used Maslow's hierarchy in relation to food tourism in Finland.

experienced” but this expectation was not supported by their findings. However, they do state that “in broad terms the results of the study are supportive of the TCL [Travel Career Ladder] concept” (Kim, Pearce et al., 1996, p. 112). Ryan (1998, p. 952) dismisses the Travel Career Ladder and says “it is not clear whether there are other rungs not considered on this ladder or whether there are indeed other ladders”. For these reasons, the Travel Career Ladder can be used to partially explain travel motivations but as it does not appear to fully explain these motives it is therefore of limited use for this research.

2.2 Reasons for leaving home

While the previous section introduced theories explaining travel motivations more generally, this section explores four main motivating factors that cause backpackers to leave home. First is the desire to escape where backpacking provides the chance to get away from home. Second is the idea of backpacking as a means of self-development and identity formation. Third is the idea of backpacking as a means of acquiring cultural capital while the fourth section focuses on backpacking as a modern-day rite of passage or contemporary secular pilgrimage. Increased mobility and the normalisation of travel in contemporary society are examined followed by a discussion of the necessity of both time and money to travel.

2.2.1 Desire to escape

At its most basic, the desire to travel is often associated with the desire to escape. Leiper (1984, p. 250) argues that while leisure by definition involves some form of temporary escape, “tourism is unique in that it involves a real physical escape”. Tourists travel in order to experience different things and to get away from their ordinary lives (Jenkins, 2003, p. 310). Crompton (1979, p. 414) suggests a “break from routine” is the main motivation for tourist travel. For example, in a study of Israeli backpackers in India the main motivation was found to be the opportunity to relax and “do nothing” (Maoz, 2007, p. 128). This was purposefully “in contrast to their lives at home in which doing nothing is considered a deviation” (Maoz, 2007, p. 128).

Routine is not the only thing backpackers wish to escape. Backpackers also travel in order to escape responsibility and “constraints on personal behaviour” (O’Reilly, 2006, p. 999). By getting away from home, backpackers are able to enter a liminal period (see section 2.2.4) where the rules of home no longer apply and they are therefore able to behave in ways that would be deemed inappropriate at home³¹. This is partially in response to being exposed to other means of doing things and partially in response to a lack of the social norms that control behaviour at home (see O’Reilly, 2006). That is not to say, however, that there are no social norms which control behaviour whilst backpacking – simply that these norms differ from those shaping behaviour at home. Whilst travelling, backpackers are able to enter a space unencumbered by the bounded roles they face when surrounded by friends and family at home.

Iso-Ahola (1980, p. 247) questions whether some often-stated leisure needs such as escape and relaxation are in fact merely “culturally learned stereotypes”. Whilst backpackers may claim they travel in order to escape the pressures from home, there may in fact be deeper, underlying motivating factors (Iso-Ahola, 1980). Lundberg (1974, p. 118) expresses a similar sentiment, saying “what the traveller says are his motivations for travelling may be only reflections of deeper needs, needs which he himself does not understand, nor wish to articulate”. However, this does not invalidate the idea of escape as a motivation since backpackers often believe it is escape which is motivating them.

³¹ However, increased technology is blurring the line between home and away. According to Sørensen (2003, p. 861), the ease of communication permitted by the internet “confirms the connection, rather than the distinction, between ‘here’ and ‘back home’, between the present backpacker situation and the non-backpacking normality”. Instead of brief, expensive phone calls and letters and postcards that took several weeks to arrive it is now possible to find internet cafes and cheap phone cards all over the world. I would argue the recent increase in the popularity of Facebook has also had a large impact – especially amongst younger backpackers. It is not only possible to send messages on Facebook but also to chat in real time and to post photographs. Facebook also allows backpackers to keep up-to-date with things happening at home, thereby further blurring the distinction between the ‘here’ of backpacking and the ‘back home’. While backpackers may be physically far from home, they can still remain closely linked via the internet (for more on technology and backpacking see Ireland, 2005).

2.2.2 Self-development and identity formation

Self-development and personal growth have long been associated with travel (Obenour, 2004) and “the formation of identity through the praxis of travel has been extensively noted by a number of scholars” (Gogia, 2006, p. 367; see also Desforges, 1998 & 2000). Tourism potentially provides new forms of identity based on personal experience (Desforges, 2000) and backpacking in particular is often associated with the need to find oneself or to develop a stronger sense of self and/or self-identity (O’Reilly, 2005; see also Conradson & Latham, 2005). Backpackers aim to construct a more adventurous, independent identity through travel (Elsrud, 2001; Maoz, 2007) and this idea is reinforced within the mass media and in films and novels depicting the backpacker lifestyle (for example Garland, 1997; Michener, 1971; Sutcliffe, 1997; see also Pearce & Maoz, 2008).

Ideas of identity through travel are also related to ethnic and cultural identity (see for example Ghosh & Wang, 2003; Lau, 2003). For some backpackers travel is a way of escaping strict social and cultural expectations. One Israeli backpacker claims backpackers are “people who don’t fit in their own country”, they are “outcasts” or “black sheeps [sic]” (Lau, 2003). In a documentary focusing on backpacking in New Zealand, the narrator Lau and another backpacker are talking. They are both Asian-American and speak of feeling “different” at home in the United States of America. Although they are still different or ‘foreign’ whilst travelling in New Zealand, this difference is on their own terms (Lau, 2003) rather than being categorised as the ‘Other’ as they feel they are at home³² (see section 2.3.4).

In contemporary Western society, travel is closely associated with ideas of self-realisation and self-actualisation (Gnoth, 1997) and this theme is particularly strong in relation to extended youth travel. Empirical research has found a strong connection between personal development and travel. All of the backpackers Cochrane (2005) spoke to said they had changed in a positive way and/or their attitude to both home and the wider world had changed. Noy (2004, p. 88) found 62% of backpackers:

³² See also Muzaini (2006) for more on the experiences of Asian-looking backpackers travelling in South-East Asia.

mentioned of their own accord that they had undergone significant changes, and when questioned directly on this point, all the others acknowledged having gone through such changes to varying degrees.

Among backpackers “acknowledging an explicit personal change is commonplace” and it becomes a “feature of the rhetoric surrounding the trip” (Noy, 2004, p. 88).

O'Reilly (2005, p. 160) reported similar findings, saying “almost every person I have interviewed during the course of my research felt the need to ‘set up’ the trip in a context of personal development”. The context of this personal development however changed depending on the backpacker's life-stage. For those on a gap year, this idea of personal development is often related to education and seeing the world (O'Reilly, 2005; see also Simpson, 2005). For older travellers, the focus may be on a change in direction, and for those who are “experiencing some form of life crisis, it may be about ‘finding myself’” (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 160; see also White & White, 2004).

As previously discussed, Iso-Ahola (1980, p. 247) states that escape and relaxation have become “culturally learned stereotypes” associated with travel. I would argue that in the case of backpackers, personal development has also become a cultural stereotype. While the Grand Tour was associated with education (see Adler, 1985; Loker-Murphy, 1997; O'Reilly, 2006), backpacking has now come to be associated with personal development. This emphasis on personal development and identity-formation helps to legitimise backpacking and differentiate it from the negative stereotypes associated with Cohen's (1973) drifters of the 1970s (see section 1.4.1).

2.2.3 Cultural capital

According to Bourdieu (1984), classes³³ seek to distinguish themselves through education, occupation and commodities such as holidays³⁴ (Munt, 1994). According to O'Reilly

³³ There is a pervasive myth that New Zealand is a classless or egalitarian society (see for example King, 2003, p. 507) but this has been criticised in recent years (see Nolan, 2007). This research focuses on foreigners in New Zealand rather than New Zealand culture and therefore further discussion of class in the New Zealand context is beyond the scope of this thesis.

(2006, p. 1013) “travel is not just about pleasure and adventure, but is part of broader strategies to maintain or enhance social position” (see also May, 1996). Travel is believed to allow young people to learn independence and to rely on themselves to solve their own problems far from home (see Cohen, 2004). Simple tasks such as finding a bed or food can become much more difficult when negotiating a foreign culture and are made even more difficult when in a foreign language. These travel experiences provide status or cultural capital which the former backpacker can then exploit once they return home. While most backpackers would not acknowledge the accumulation of cultural capital as a motivating factor, according to O’Reilly (2006, p. 1011):

many do consider the experience to have a positive effect either more generally in terms of enhanced personal confidence and improved social standing among family and peers, or in specific areas such as employment.

O’Reilly (2006) uses the term “social standing”, while Bourdieu (1984), Munt (1994) and Desforges (1998) refer to “cultural capital” and Elsrud (2001, p. 612) uses the term “hierarchical positioning”. It is also more generally referred to as “status” (Riley, 1988; Sørensen, 2003).

Backpackers view themselves as superior to mainstream tourists and often refer to themselves as “participants” rather than “observers” (Elsrud, 1998, p. 311). According to Fitzgerald (2000):

there is a subtle hierarchy, borne of fierce snobbery headed by those who believe themselves to be hardcore ‘real’ travellers and filtering down to the ‘cut-them-and-they-bleed-tourist-blood’ minions.

As mentioned previously, I believe mainstream backpacking in New Zealand is becoming increasingly similar to and less distinguishable from mass tourism (see chapter 1). However, many backpackers would disagree with this statement. Backpackers may reduce the cultural capital of other backpackers or more mainstream tourists by characterising their

³⁴ See for example Desforges (1998, p. 177), who argues that “through intellectualising travel into the collection of knowledge and experiences... young travellers define themselves as middle class”. While these travellers may have been middle class prior to their travels, their actions reassert and reinforce this position.

experiences as being less “authentic” (Desforges, 1998). More experienced backpackers have more cultural capital than those with less experience. For example, ‘newbie’ backpackers are instantly recognisable by their brand-new backpacks while more experienced backpackers are likely to have well-worn backpacks covered with badges from the different countries they have visited. O’Reilly (2006, p. 1006) states “more experienced [backpackers] tend to deride or poke fun at the newly arrived backpacker” because they have less experience and therefore less status or cultural capital.

As well as teaching more general skills (see Pearce & Foster, 2006), travel offers backpackers valuable cultural capital to add to their curriculum vitae with phrases such as “broad horizons” and “personal development” (Simpson, 2005, p. 57) – although whether or not the accrual of these skills is a motivating factor in the decision to go backpacking is unclear. Travelling has now become “an important informal qualification with the passport acting, so to speak, as a professional certification; a record of achievement and experience” (Munt, 1994, p. 112; see also Pearce & Foster, 2006; Simpson, 2005). Simpson (2005) argues that backpacking gives young travellers the skills required to succeed in the contemporary neo-liberal market. She argues that gap years – and youth travel more generally – have brought young people “into contact with neoliberal understandings of education and citizenship, where emphasis is placed on young people’s acquisition of global knowledge as governable subjects with market potential” (Simpson, 2005, p. 54). Upon return, backpackers are able to use their increased status or cultural capital in order to gain monetary benefits such as a better job (Gogia, 2006; Simpson, 2005). However, whether or not the backpackers’ cultural capital is able to be transformed into economic capital can depend on the industry in which the former backpacker is hoping to find work (see Desforges, 1998).

O’Reilly (2005, p. 159) states that “on the return home, a period of extended travel can be presented as a badge of social status to peer groups and employers”. However, how travellers narrate their travel experiences affects how the experiences will be perceived by those at home. According to O’Reilly (2005, p. 167):

tales of ill health, risky situations and danger are the badges of achievement proudly worn by the veteran traveller, as important as the list of countries visited and the length of time clocked up on the road. The ability to transform cultural and symbolic capital gained while travelling into a form that will be of use at home relies in part on an ability to narrate experiences in an appropriate way. In this sense, travellers' tales are much more than mere stories – they are the process through which travellers re-invent themselves, communicate their new identities and enhance their social positions.

The value of cultural capital lies in its being recognised by others. If the backpackers' friends and/or family are not interested in the backpackers' experiences then the backpackers' cultural capital is diminished (Desforges, 1998). Cultural capital therefore depends on backpackers and their friends and family sharing a “similar set of cultural values” and a “similar framing of the ‘Other’ as understandable through travel” (Desforges, 1998, p. 186). This idea of a shared understanding between a backpacker and his/her friends and family potentially affects the backpacker's choice of destination (see section 4.2).

Travel can increase cultural capital and souvenirs are used as proof of travel experience. Consumption and travel are both ways of shaping identity; therefore acquiring souvenirs is closely associated with identity – both how a person sees themselves and how they wish to be perceived by others (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005). Former backpackers often decorate their homes with photographs³⁵ and/or souvenirs of their travels³⁶ (Binder, 2004) as this allows them to display their travels – which are mostly intangible experiences – in a physical and tangible way (Lasusa, 2007). As Stewart (1993, p. 135) states:

³⁵ For more on the photographic behaviour of tourists see Garrod, 2008; Jenkins, 2003; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003; Redfoot, 1984.

³⁶ In my own travels I have bought a magnet from every country I have been to and these are proudly displayed on my refrigerator door. These magnets remind me every time I open the refrigerator of all the wonderful trips I've been on; they also serve a second purpose in that they display proof of my travel experience – and therefore cultural capital – to everyone who enters my kitchen. Obviously this second factor was not a conscious motivation when I started the collection and is only something I have become aware of since starting this research (for further discussion of collecting magnets as souvenirs see Morgan & Pritchard, 2005). Conversely, photographs of friends and family taken while I was backpacking in Europe are displayed more privately in my bedroom.

the souvenir speaks to a context of origin through a language of longing, for it is not an object arising out of need or use value; it is an object arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia.

Souvenirs are tangible reminders of previous travels, what Morgan and Pritchard (2005, p. 29) refer to as “touchstones of memory”. While souvenirs may have a second, more practical use – for example a drinking glass or a calendar or a t-shirt – their primary function is to act as an aide-memoire and proof of travel experience. By using souvenirs to prove their travel credentials, former backpackers can increase their cultural capital (see Lasusa, 2007).

According to O'Reilly (2006, p. 998), “as backpacking has become more mainstream, its ‘alternative’ standing has diminished, but it continues to be a potentially status-enhancing activity”. However, as backpacking continues to grow in popularity and becomes increasingly mainstream, “its credibility as an alternative or unusual activity” will diminish accordingly (O'Reilly, 2006, p. 1013). Somewhat ironically, this increasing popularity and subsequent normalisation of extended budget travel may ultimately undermine what it was that made backpacking a status-enhancing activity in the first place (O'Reilly, 2006, p. 1014).

2.2.4 Rite of passage

According to O'Reilly (2005, p. 150), long-term travel is now “a rite of passage associated with ideals of youthful freedom, personal development and fulfilment”. However, the form these “self-imposed rites of passage” (Maoz, 2007, p. 124) take differ from country to country, for example: a New Zealander's ‘OE’ (see for example Bell, 2002; Wilson, 2006); a British ‘gap year’ (see for example Simpson, 2005; Söderman & Snead, 2008); or an Israeli's period of overseas travel following the completion of compulsory military service (see for example Noy, 2004). Put simply, a rite of passage involves separation, a liminal period and finally ‘aggregation’ where the subject once more enters a stable state (Turner, 1987; see also Cohen, 2004). In the case of backpacking, the liminal stage is the period of time spent travelling – after the earlier state has been discarded but before the new one has been accepted.

This idea of travel as a period of liminality can also be associated with the idea of travel as a time out or escape (Elsrud 1998; see section 2.2.1). O'Reilly (2006, p. 999) refers to a "sense of freedom gained during travel, from home responsibilities but also from constraints on personal behaviour". As Redfoot (1984, p. 306) states, "tourism is likely to be experienced as a liberation of the private sphere, a time over which they [backpackers] have control to do what they wish, where they wish". According to Cohen (2004, p. 52), the ability of a backpacker to resolve problems and to organise and complete a backpacking trip "can be seen as indicating their competence in managing their own affairs autonomously" which is "a significant marker of adulthood in Western societies". However, not all forms of youth travel are rites of passage (Richards & Wilson, 2004). While backpackers may grow and mature during their period spent backpacking (see Noy & Cohen, 2005), this does not automatically imply that backpacking itself is always a rite of passage.

Cohen (2004) focuses on Turner's (1973, as cited in Cohen, 2004) definition and lists six main reasons backpacking cannot be considered a rite of passage. Firstly, while backpackers interact with other backpackers, they do not fully lose their identity and create a space of "communitas" during the liminal stage as required in a rite of passage (Cohen, 2004, p. 53). Cohen (2004) blames this on backpackers being too egocentric and focussed on their own fun and enjoyment. Secondly, Cohen (2004) argues that backpackers no longer face the same unknown or dangerous situations as travellers in previous generations and thirdly, increased technology has allowed for greater communication during the backpacking period and therefore less separation from home (Cohen, 2004). Fourthly, rites of passage are traditionally found in tribal communities and parent/child relationships are very different in contemporary Western societies (Cohen, 2004).

Fifthly, Cohen (2004) argues that in many cases backpackers are not always as removed from their home culture as is generally thought and while backpackers may experiment with new experiences, these tend to be possibilities the backpackers were aware of at home rather than new ways learned from the locals at a particular destination. Finally, many backpackers do not return fully to their host culture but instead retain some parts of the

visited culture/s to form a hybrid identity (Cohen, 2004; see also Ghosh & Wang, 2003). However, while backpacking may not fit the traditional definition of rites of passage, that is not to say backpackers do not grow and mature as a result of their backpacking experience. The desire to grow and mature is therefore a potential motivation for young people to go backpacking. Backpackers themselves may also perceive their backpacking period as a rite of passage even if it does not necessarily match the more academic definition.

As well as rites of passage, travel has also been compared to a secular pilgrimage (see for example Bell, 2002; Brown, 1996; Graburn, 2004; Urry, 2002). According to Graburn (2004, p. 25), travel is “the modern equivalent for secular societies to the annual and lifelong sequences of festivals and pilgrimages found in more traditional God-fearing societies”. Similarly, Urry (2002, p. 11) compares tourists to modern day pilgrims and talks of tourists “worshipping” at sacred shrines and therefore gaining “some kind of uplifting experience”. Unlike religious pilgrimages however, backpackers have more secular and potentially egotistical motives. While pilgrims worship at sacred sites and gain spiritual enlightenment (see Urry, 2002), backpackers effectively ‘worship’ at commercial sites and gain cultural capital.

2.2.5 Increased mobility and the normalisation of travel

As Gogia (2006, p. 365) states, “from academic research to Hollywood films, backpackers have become the new symbols of über-mobility”³⁷ (see for example Garland, 1997; Krakauer, 2007; Michener, 1971; Sutcliffe, 1997). According to Hottola (2005), international travel is probably the easiest it has ever been (see also O’Reilly, 2005). Not only is travel more affordable, it has become increasingly normalised³⁸ and in some cases even expected. Morris (1985) states:

³⁷ Mobility refers to movement and Hannam, Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 1) state that “the concept of mobilities encompasses both the large-scale movements of people, objects, capital and information across the world, as well as the more local processes of daily transportation, movement through public space and the travel of material things within everyday life”.

³⁸ Developments in technology have led to an increasingly global society where everything – people, food, ideas – are more and more mobile (O’Reilly, 2005; see also Appadurai, 2011). According to O’Reilly (2005, p. 152), irrespective of whether one chooses to travel, this increased globalisation “feeds into an imagining of other countries as potential tourist destinations and objects of desire”.

travel, which was once either a necessity or an adventure, has become very largely a commodity, and from all sides we are persuaded into thinking that it is a social requirement too – not even just a way of having a good time, but something that every self-respecting citizen ought to undertake, like a high-fiber diet, say, or a deodorant.

Nor is this travel necessarily merely short-term. Conradson and Latham (2005, p. 288) state “for an increasingly diverse mix of people, a period spent living abroad... is becoming a normal and almost taken-for-granted part of the life-cycle”. For many backpackers, the question was not whether or not to go backpacking, but simply when to go (see section 2.2.6).

Mobilities are associated with power structures. While travel has become more common overall, it is not equally available to everyone. Not everyone has the right to travel and not everyone is equally mobile (Gogia, 2006). Tesfahuney (1998, p. 501) states that “differential mobility empowerments reflect structures and hierarchies of power and position by race, gender, age and class, ranging from the local to the global”. While some people have become more mobile in recent times, this merely exaggerates and reinforces the immobility of others (Gale, 2008, p. 3). As a result, mobility and “moving between places” is a source of power and status or cultural capital for both backpackers and other travellers more generally (Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 10). According to Skeggs (2004, p. 49), “mobility and control over mobility both reflect and reinforce power. Mobility is a resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship” (see also Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006). Backpacking requires both money and time and not all who have the desire to go backpacking will have the opportunity to do so (see Westerhausen, 2002).

2.2.6 Opportunity and timing

While there may be several reasons to explain why someone leaves on a long-term trip, Westerhausen (2002, p. 27) found that:

a common thread in all individual accounts was the fact that this departure took place because of the conjunction between the desire to travel and the opportunity to do so.

In order to travel for an extended period of time – the sort of travel that most backpackers to New Zealand take part in – the motivation to travel must coincide with the time and finances to do so³⁹. Clearly, the right social and economic circumstances must come together to allow someone to travel and not all who have the motivation or desire will be financially able to embark on a long-term trip. Most new travellers are at a juncture in their lives prior to travel – either between jobs, having just finished university, experienced a relationship break-up or during a mid-life crisis (Cohen, 1973; Riley, 1988)⁴⁰. Rather than getting caught up in a new set of responsibilities, they instead decide to travel. Long-term youth travel can also be perceived as a “transition pathway” most often bridging the gap between study and employment (Wyn & Willis, 2001, p. 5).

Westerhausen (2002) proposed that for some backpackers the chance to travel is the culmination of a long-held dream. These travellers had always wanted to travel and had previously day-dreamed about exploring the world. Their decision to travel long-term was therefore the fulfilment of a life-long dream. This concept is related to the idea of “wanderlust” which is defined by Gray (1970, p. 57) as:

that basic trait in human nature which causes some individuals to want to leave things with which they are familiar and to go and see at first hand different exciting cultures and places.

Some backpackers have always had this wanderlust or sense of curiosity about the world. They have always wanted to travel and were simply waiting for the right circumstances.

Westerhausen (2002, p. 29) referred also to the “final fling”. White and White (2004, p. 201) point out that “for those in early mid-life, the long-term journey has also been found to offer escape from routine”. For these backpackers, travel allows them the opportunity to experience “an unencumbered lifestyle before settling down” (Westerhausen, 2002, p. 29).

³⁹ Westerhausen (2002) researched long-term travellers in Asia but the motives he found are likely to be similar to the motives of backpackers travelling to New Zealand – especially since many long-term backpackers to New Zealand also visit Asia either on the way to or from New Zealand (see Ateljevic & Doorne, 2001).

⁴⁰ See Maoz (2008) for a study of 40-50 year old Israeli women who travelled to India as backpackers in a phase of mid-life transition.

I would argue that this idea of the final fling is also a form of escape – albeit a temporary one – from the assumption of adult responsibilities (see White & White, 2004) such as a career, mortgage and starting a family. In these cases, the chance to go backpacking is perceived by the backpackers as either now or never, with the assumption being if they choose not to go, they may regret this decision later in life.

2.3 New Zealand as a destination

There are several reasons backpackers choose New Zealand specifically as a destination. New Zealand's main attraction is its natural scenery. New Zealand also appeals to backpackers because it is close to other popular backpacker destinations and is known worldwide for being an adventure destination. This section explores each of these three motivating factors in more detail. The roles of authenticity and Maori culture in backpacker tourism are discussed and a brief description is provided of the sources of information for backpackers to New Zealand.

2.3.1 Scenery

New Zealand's major pull factor is its natural beauty. Landscape is at the “very core” of New Zealand's proposition and “fundamentally it is what brings the majority of visitors to the country” (Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2002, p. 348). New Zealand's reputation as a “pristine, pollution-free environment for potential tourists” (Bell, 2008, p. 346) forms an important part of New Zealand's national identity and “New Zealand promotes itself to the world largely as a remote place with an incredible, unique and varied landscape” (Bell, 2008, p. 346). The emphasis on promoting New Zealand as a scenic destination is visible in Tourism New Zealand's 100% PURE New Zealand campaign (Bell, 2008) and is reinforced by its “nuclear free” status (Bell, 2008, p. 346). The Lord of the Rings trilogy has also had an influence on exposing New Zealand's “spectacular mountain views” and “very unspoiled natural beauty” to a wider international audience (Tucker, 2005, p. 271). Other films such as Narnia which also feature New Zealand scenery are likely to have made a similar impact.

However, “New Zealand’s clean, green image [is] in truth, more an accident of geography than the result of government policy” (Harper, Mudd & Whitfield, 2008, p. 6) as New Zealand does not in fact have “any legislation requiring national monitoring of our environment” (Otago Daily Times, 2010). O’Reilly (2009) argues that promoting New Zealand as clean and green “sets us up to fail” as it is increasingly difficult to deliver long-term (see also Parker, 2009b).

Tucker (2007) found that for backpackers, the “clean and green” or “natural wonderland” discourse was in contest with what she termed the backpacker “chuck and fuck” theme. While backpackers may admire the scenery, “the ‘clean and green’ theme was set against and negotiated alongside [typical backpacker] performances of the drink and sex theme” (Tucker, 2007, p. 150; see section 4.1.3). Backpackers are thought to be drawn to New Zealand because of the scenery and associated activities, especially sea kayaking, glacier hiking, whale watching and hiking; as well as adrenaline-inducing activities (TRCNZ, as cited in Bell, 2008, p. 348) such as bungy-jumping and sky-diving. Yet these are often expensive activities that take only a few hours at most and young backpackers therefore also spend large amounts of time socialising.

While New Zealand’s beautiful scenery is cited by some travellers as a reason to visit, others see it simply as “a place people just want to come to” (Tucker, 2005, p. 271) or a “cool” place to go (Tucker, 2007, p. 146). Geographically, New Zealand is about as far from the United Kingdom and Europe as it is possible to travel. British backpackers in particular appear to perceive their backpacking trip as “enhancing their self-identity” (Tucker, 2007, p. 146) or increasing their cultural capital (see section 2.2.3) if they are able to return home and say “they have been all the way to New Zealand” (Tucker, 2007, p. 146). This concept is also reflected in the new “Go All The Way” advertising campaign (Churchouse, 2009; see section 1.5.1).

2.3.2 Geography

Because of the distance required to travel to New Zealand – and the resulting high cost – backpackers from the Northern Hemisphere travelling to New Zealand do not generally visit only New Zealand but instead include it within a longer trip often incorporating

Australia, one or more of the Pacific Islands or traditional backpacker areas in South-East Asia (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2001). One Australian study found 54% of backpacker respondents were also travelling to New Zealand on the same extended trip (Kain & King, 2004), while just over 35% of respondents were including Fiji and/or Thailand (Kain & King, 2004). These data suggest choosing to visit New Zealand is part of a larger decision to visit the wider region⁴¹. It is unclear from these statistics, however, whether the backpackers were drawn to the Asia-Pacific region because they wanted to visit New Zealand or whether they were coming to New Zealand because they were already in the region.

2.3.3 Adventure tourism

New Zealand has a reputation as an adrenaline-junky heaven (Harper, Mudd & Whitfield, 2008) and promotes itself as the adventure tourism capital of the world (iExplore, 2010). The first commercial bungy-jump site in the world was established at Kawarau Bridge near Queenstown in 1988 (A J Hackett Bungy, N.D.a) and the adventure sports industry in New Zealand has grown phenomenally since then to include several bungy sites as well as white-water rafting, jet-boating, skydiving, mountain-biking, scuba diving and more (iExplore, 2010)⁴². While she focussed on young travellers on a package bus tour rather than independent backpackers, Tucker (2007) found most took part in at least one of the extreme adrenaline-inducing activities on offer – most often parachuting or bungy-jumping – during their time in New Zealand.

⁴¹ For this reason, it may be beneficial for countries such as Australia, New Zealand and Fiji to synthesise their marketing campaigns by focusing on the region as a whole. An example of this was the South Pacific Millennium Consortium which was established to encourage tourists to visit the South Pacific region in order to be one of the first in the world to see the dawn of the new millennium on 1st January 2000 (Paquet, 2007).

⁴² The development of the adventure sports industry in New Zealand is partly due to the government's implementation of the Accident Compensation Corporation scheme. According to Richards and Wilson (2004b, p. 259), in Canada and the United States of America "the development of adventure sports has been curtailed by the high propensity for legal action in the case of accidents. In New Zealand this is less of a concern for the operators because individuals cannot sue for injuries. Instead, residents and visitors are covered by the Accident Compensation Corporation, which takes care of medical costs and loss of earnings resulting from tourism-related and other accidents", thereby allowing New Zealand to develop into an adventure destination. Essentially, indirect government support has "helped to underwrite the development of the backpacker industry in New Zealand" (Richards & Wilson 2004b, p. 259).

However, while backpackers may feel they are being adventurous by travelling to the other side of the world and taking part in daring activities such as bungee-jumping, there is in fact very little associated risk involved. Bennett (2004, p. 112-113) made some rather cynical observations during his time spent hitchhiking in New Zealand and stated:

most of the people who are tied onto rubber ropes, strapped into jet-boats, slung beneath hang-gliders or otherwise towed, suspended, rolled, dropped or flung are foreigners. Most come from the rich societies of Europe, North America and Asia. They lead urban lives, dedicated to the avoidance of risk...But swaddled lives are unsatisfactory...So the rich people come to New Zealand to get a fix of danger. It helps that the country is a long way away, set deep in the Southern ocean...Just to come here is to engage in a tame simulacrum of daring... Even more conveniently New Zealand is a distant natural wilderness that hosts a safe white English-speaking civilisation with good coffee and modern hospitals. So even to make the journey here is a sort of bungee-jump. It has the tang of adventure, the salty-blood taste of risk, but is safer than crossing the road.

While most adventure sports activities in New Zealand are relatively safe, New Zealand is starting to come under attack over the lack of legislation to control the adventure sports industry following the accidental injury and/or death of several backpackers in recent years (see for example Bentley, Page & Edwards, 2008; Bentley, Page & Laird, 2001; Bentley, Page, Meyer, Chalmers & Laird, 2001; Savage, 2009; Tiffen, 2010; Wilkes, 2008). Adventure sports and backpacking are closely linked in the New Zealand market – particularly in Queenstown where companies targeting the backpacker market promote adventure sports such as bungee-jumps as one of New Zealand's must-do activities (see for example Kiwi Experience, N.D.; Nomads, 2009a).

2.3.4 Authenticity and the 'Other'

It is generally argued that tourists travel in order to have authentic experiences⁴³ (MacCannell, 1992; see also Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003; Redfoot, 1984) and they seek out authentic destinations in order to find their authentic selves (Selwyn, 1996, as cited in Noy

⁴³ This search for the authentic is also reflected in the emphasis on pureness in Tourism New Zealand's 100% PURE campaign (see Piggott, Morgan & Pritchard, 2004).

2004, p. 85; see also Brown, 1996). Cohen (2004), however, argues that in contemporary global society, it is no longer possible to discover authenticity and so contemporary backpackers travel instead for fun. If there are no longer – as MacCannell (1992) alleges – any genuine “primitives” then a quest for so-called ‘authenticity’ is therefore no longer possible (Cohen, 2004). The traditional desire for authenticity “loses its primacy as a culturally legitimizing principle” of tourism and is instead superseded by the craving for “hedonistic enjoyment and fun” (Cohen, 2004, p. 50; see also May, 1996).

Closely associated with authenticity is the idea of the ‘Other’. If tourists see themselves as the ‘norm’ then the people they encounter on their travels are by definition ‘Other’ (see O’Rourke, 1987; see also Saïd, 1978 for his work on Orientalism). Craik (1997, p. 115) argues that:

tourists continue to indulge in the myth of the Other offered by tourism... There is a good deal of self-delusion involved in the pursuit of tourist pleasure. Although tourists think that they want authenticity, most want some degree of negotiated experiences which provide a tourist ‘bubble’⁴⁴... out of which they can selectively step to ‘sample’ predictable forms of experiences.

While tourists – and backpackers – claim they want authenticity and to experience the culture of the ‘Other’, what they really want is the sanitised version that allows them to claim the cultural capital associated with the experience, without having to inconvenience themselves too much (for more on staged authenticity see MacCannell, 1976; for more on tourism and authenticity more generally see Brown, 1996; Kontogeorgoloulos, 2003; May, 1996).

Backpackers view themselves as having higher levels of cultural capital than other tourists because of their increased authenticity when dealing with locals (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003). Gogia (2006, p. 369) states that:

⁴⁴ Jaakson (2004) also studied the idea of the cruise ship as a tourist bubble where passengers travel from one bubble to another. Backpacker enclaves are similar (for more research on backpacker enclaves see Howard, 2007; Vogt, 1976; Wilson & Richards, 2008; Wilson, Richards & MacDonnell, 2008). Like cruise ship passengers travelling between tourist bubbles, backpackers often travel from one backpacker enclave to another via backpacker buses – thereby still remaining separated and insulated from the wider non-backpacker world.

whereas much of resort tourism is about creating a safe, sterile environment that shelters tourists from much of the indigenous culture around them, getting ‘off-the-beaten-track’ is a prime backpacker goal as they seek out the local, often placing themselves in dangerous situations in order to fully experience their destination country.

However, this is a somewhat idealistic and romantic view of backpacking; it is also a somewhat outdated view considering New Zealand’s highly developed backpacker industry which in many ways isolates backpackers from the local population.

According to Munt (1994, p. 111), newer ‘petit bourgeoisie’ tourists with less economic capital – such as backpackers – seek intellectualisation through claiming “cultural superiority”, for example, through true and real contact with indigenous people. Kontogeorgopoulos (2003, p. 184) makes a similar argument, stating that backpackers “‘rough it’ not only for budgetary reasons, but also out of a deep-seated mental association between material comfort and *inauthenticity*” (italics in original). However, whether or not backpackers really have more ‘authentic’ encounters than mainstream backpackers is debatable. While backpacking is perceived to be a more responsible and sensitive means of travel, this is not necessarily the reality (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003; see also Bradt, 1995), particularly considering New Zealand’s highly commercialised backpacker industry.

2.3.5 New Zealand/Aotearoa⁴⁵

Research by McIntosh (2004, p. 5) found that while tourists were not motivated to travel to New Zealand specifically to see or experience Maori culture, “experiences of Maori culture gained during the visit are an important vehicle for cultural appreciation and understanding”. While tourists showed recognition of Maori culture as the indigenous culture of New Zealand, the tourists’ specific knowledge was limited to traditional and stereotypical views rather than contemporary culture and lifestyles⁴⁶ (McIntosh, 2004, p. 5).

⁴⁵ Aotearoa is the Maori name for New Zealand (Macalister, 2005).

⁴⁶ In Lau’s (2003) documentary on backpacking in New Zealand, he shows an older American man staying at a Maori backpacker hostel in Northland claiming “I value...the so-called primitive”. This statement is juxtaposed with a younger Maori man who is learning carving at the same property. He is discussing backpackers and states “some of them, they have this idea that we’re living back in the eighteenth century,

According to McIntosh (2004, p. 6), tourists' knowledge of Maori culture was limited to aspects such as the haka⁴⁷, "tribal warriors", "tattoos" or moko⁴⁸, "nose rubbing" or hongī⁴⁹, "dark skin colour", "big/strong" and a "distinct language". This knowledge of Maori culture came from concert performances and interactions with Maori while travelling in New Zealand, as well as guidebooks, watching rugby and from films such as *Once Were Warriors*⁵⁰ (McIntosh, 2004).

In general, tourists to New Zealand do not appear to be interested in learning about Maori culture in much depth. One tourist is quoted by McIntosh (2004, p. 11) as saying "my mission when I set out was to see the land itself, not to study Maori culture, and if I happened to come by that along the way, then so be it". McIntosh (2004, p. 6-7) found that while Maori culture was not a major focus for tourists visiting New Zealand, "most respondents interviewed in the arrivals and departure surveys rated experiencing Maori culture as an important part of their visit to New Zealand" and it was seen as being a "point of 'difference' in the total experience of New Zealand" (McIntosh, 2004, p. 7). This supports Craik's (1997, p. 120) statement that:

only a minority of tourists are truly cultural tourists... while a significant number are 'culture-proof'. Of those in the middle, many tourists may be motivated to take advantage of cultural attractions once other primary motivations to travel have been met.

While tourists may not be motivated to come to New Zealand specifically because of Maori culture, that is not to say they are not interested in learning about it once they arrive.

that we should be all sitting around a fire cooking and running around in piupius and chasing each other over the hills". The Maori man adopts an exaggerated American accent while speaking which suggests he is mocking the American tourist. Piupius are traditional Maori flax skirts (Macalister, 2005).

⁴⁷ The haka is "a posture dance accompanied by a chant, often called a war dance" (Macalister, 2005, p.10). Outside New Zealand it is most commonly associated with New Zealand's national rugby team, the All Blacks, who perform the haka prior to the start of international rugby matches.

⁴⁸ Moko is traditional Maori tattooing on the face or body (Macalister, 2005, p. 79).

⁴⁹ Hongi refers to "a greeting made by pressing or touching noses, which is frequently but erroneously described as 'rubbing noses'" (Macalister, 2005, p. 19).

⁵⁰ *Once Were Warriors* was released in 1994. The more recent movie *Whale Rider* – first released in 2002 – is also likely to have had an influence on backpackers' knowledge of Maori culture.

Maori culture is under-represented in the marketing of New Zealand as a destination (McIntosh, 2004)⁵¹. Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2004, p. 14) ask “why do destination marketers so often ignore a place’s unique cultural attributes in the rush to promote sun, surf and sand, or lake, land and mountain?” New Zealand is fortunate that it has sun, surf and so on, but New Zealand also has a “unique selling point” in the form of Maori culture that could be further promoted (see also Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2002). For McIntosh (2004, p. 7), Maori culture “relates as much to the history, culture and heritage of New Zealand as it does specifically to Maori” and is part of the total New Zealand package. Backpackers are attracted to the cultural aspects of a destination and while New Zealand has a lot to offer culturally, that is not what appears to be promoted currently (Parker, 2009b).

2.3.6 Sources of information

According to Um and Crompton (1992, p. 18):

potential tourists frequently have limited knowledge about a destination that they have not previously visited. This knowledge often is confined to symbolic information acquired either from media or from their social group.

With relatively limited personal or first-hand knowledge, potential backpackers are often forced to rely on other sources when making travel decisions. The sources of information backpackers use prior to their trip – and the information provided within – are likely to influence a backpacker’s expectations⁵² prior to arrival. If New Zealand has a positive reputation as a backpacker destination then this is likely to motivate other backpackers to visit. Naturally, this principle also works in reverse: if New Zealand is perceived negatively then this is likely to discourage potential backpackers.

The main sources of information for backpackers appear to be guidebooks and the internet (Bell, 2008; Ministry of Tourism, 2009; Newlands, 2004). Research shows over 80% of international backpackers rely on guide and travel books when researching a destination

⁵¹ There has however been some portrayal of Maori culture in recent 100% PURE advertisements (see Tourism New Zealand, 2010c).

⁵² For more on backpacker expectations and satisfaction levels see Toxward (1999).

(Ministry of Tourism, 2009) and the same study found 47% of backpackers took advice from friends and family while 41% consulted websites (Ministry of Tourism, 2009). A survey of backpackers staying in hostels in New Zealand found that “every backpacker spoken with said they used the internet to help them make choices about destinations, [and] accommodation” (Bell, 2008, p. 349). Newlands (2004, p. 236) found that while the internet was a source of information before travel, nearly 75% had used a guidebook – usually Lonely Planet – when planning their trip and once the journey started 85% of respondents used a guidebook.

Guidebooks are seen by many as “an essential tool for decision making when choosing a destination” and publications such as Lonely Planet are often viewed as the “backpackers’ bible” (Ireland, 2005, p. 4). However, while Lonely Planet is extremely popular, it is not universally accepted or respected. Sørensen (2003, p. 860) claims that while Lonely Planet guidebooks have:

come to symbolize the backpackers, their activities, norms, and values... [and] is incontestably important. Nevertheless, even in certain circles among backpackers, guidebooks are much scorned and seen as a symbol of the lesser traveller.

This scorning of guidebooks is another way that backpackers claim more status over other backpackers. By rejecting Lonely Planet and other well-known guidebooks, the backpacker symbolically rejects the institutionalism of contemporary backpacking and therefore gains more cultural capital or “road status” (Sørensen, 2003, p. 860).

Once backpackers commence travelling, word of mouth information becomes increasingly important as they meet other backpackers who provide recommendations and suggestions on destinations and what to do on arrival (Ireland, 2005). Backpacker enclaves become places for backpackers to meet fellow backpackers and share their experiences. According to Riley (1988, p. 322), budget travellers and backpackers “quickly establish friendships and are continually discussing the ‘best’ places to visit and the ‘best’... places to eat, [and] sleep”. Large amounts of information are passed between backpackers via word-of-mouth and recommendations of the “latest ‘in’ spots are only communicated in this way” (Riley, 1988, p. 323; see also Ireland, 2005). This word-of-mouth information is more current than

that available in guidebooks and these backpacker networks “can inform the travellers in a far richer way than previously available, not only being refereed by someone with similar interests but being context specific” (Ireland, 2005, p. 4). By informing backpackers about destinations – and introducing them to destinations they would not otherwise be aware of – these word-of-mouth networks influence backpackers’ destination choice (see section 4.2.2).

2.4 Chapter summary

This chapter summarises and reviews the backpacker and tourism motivation literatures. Motivation can be defined as an internal factor that drives a person to act or behave in a certain way (Murray, 1964). In this research, motivation refers to what caused a backpacker to leave home and come to New Zealand. Push and pull factors are often used to explain tourism motivations and this theory can also be compared to Iso-Ahola’s (1982) avoidance/approach theory and Murray’s (1964) drive theory since all three theories distinguish between the factors repelling a traveller away from home and those enticing a traveller towards a particular destination. The Travel Career Ladder is also promoted as a theory to explain tourism motivations. However, both push/pull theory and the Travel Career Ladder have been criticised for being somewhat simplistic (see for example Espinoza, 2002; Ryan, 1998) and therefore neither have been directly adopted for this research.

Four reasons appear repeatedly in the literature to explain why backpackers choose to leave home. The first is to escape routine and responsibilities at home while the second reason relates to self-development and identity formation. Travel has often been associated with self-identity (Gogia, 2006) and several studies have shown that backpackers claim to undergo personal change and development during their time travelling. The third motivating factor relates to the accrual of cultural capital or status as a result of backpacking, while the fourth factor refers to backpacking as a contemporary rite of passage or secular pilgrimage. However, it must be noted that not all young people who have the desire or motivation to travel have the opportunity to do so and long-term travel requires the availability of both time and money.

According to the literature, tourists are drawn to New Zealand predominantly because of the natural scenery and its reputation as clean, green and beautiful. New Zealand's geographic proximity to other popular backpacker destinations such as Australia and South-East Asia also helps bring backpackers to the country. The availability of adventure tourism and Maori cultural tourism also has an influence. The main sources of information for potential and current backpackers appear to be guidebooks – predominantly Lonely Planet – as well as the internet and word-of-mouth recommendations from fellow backpackers.

Chapter 1 defined backpackers and provided background and context for this research project. Chapter 2 has built on that and introduced the concept of motivation and reviewed the relevant literature to date – both theoretical and empirical. Together, the two chapters provide the necessary background for this research project and so chapter 3 now turns to a description and explanation of how the data was collected.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

This chapter focuses on the methods used for this research project and the methodology underpinning the choice of method. Methodology is discussed with particular emphasis given to the epistemological and ontological assumptions on which the research methods are based. The methods chosen for data collection are then discussed in more detail and information on the research participants is provided. There is an explanation of how the data were analysed and a discussion of factors considered during the research design. The chapter concludes with a personal reflection on my own role in the data collection and analysis process.

3.1 Methodology

Researchers need to be aware of their own philosophical assumptions (Przeclawski, 1993) and the influence these assumptions have on both the choice of research method and the way research findings are interpreted. As Carter and Little (2007, p. 1319) note, “it is impossible to engage in knowledge creation without at least tacit assumptions about what knowledge is and how it is constructed”. Tribe (1997) argues that tourism is not a discipline but rather an area of study. According to Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert and Wanhill (1993, p. 1), “while tourism rightly constitutes a domain of study, at the moment it lacks the level of theoretical underpinning which would allow it to become a discipline”. Tourism researchers come from a wide range of theoretical backgrounds including psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, marketing, law, geography, history, philosophy and political science (Przeclawski, 1993) and “each of these disciplines provides a partial rather than a holistic point of view” (Przeclawski, 1993, p. 13). I come from a sociological background and this section explores my own epistemological and ontological assumptions.

3.1.1 Epistemology

All research “involves ontological, epistemological, theoretical and methodological assumptions” (Payne, 2000, p. 307). Epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge or what it is we are able to know (King & Horrocks, 2010). I reject the positivist viewpoint

that there is an “objective truth waiting to be discovered” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 22) and instead take a constructionist view that “meaning is not discovered but constructed” (Crotty, 1998, p. 9) within society. Within constructionism there is therefore no objective truth simply waiting to be discovered (Crotty, 1998) but instead multiple possible truths. Objects have no inherent meaning; meaning is instead constructed through people’s interpretations and representations of the world (Crotty, 1998; King & Horrocks, 2010). For example, a wooden chair is only a chair because that is how people view or interpret it. It is just as useful to hang clothes on or to burn for heat. Similarly, ‘backpackers’ and ‘backpacking’ only have meaning as concepts because they are constructed and interpreted as such.

Knowledge is “the outcome of people having to make sense of their encounters with the physical world and with other people” (Blaikie, 2007, p. 22). In this case, there is no objective truth to explain why backpackers travel and instead truth/s are constructed through myself and the interview participants trying to understand my/our/their world. Knowledge is both “historically and culturally located” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 22) and social exchange is culturally based and social reality differs across cultures (Blaikie, 2007). While the findings of this research cannot be assumed to be representative of all backpacker experiences across time and place, that is not to say that the findings of this research cannot be used to better understand the motivations of backpackers more generally.

Language is productive (King & Horrocks, 2010) and meaning comes about through “the process of social exchange” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 22), for example, interviews and other conversation. Traditionally, interviews have been seen as “a pipeline for transmitting knowledge” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 3) where the interviewer attempts to access the information from the interview participant in an uncontaminated form (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). However, within constructionism, interviews are viewed as more than the mere transmission of knowledge or information. Instead, they are an active process and “the site of social interaction from which meaningful accounts of social life are assembled and conveyed” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2008, p. 388). Rather than backpackers ‘transmitting’ information to me during the interviews, I believe knowledge is constructed through both

my and their attempts to understand the world around us. While the backpackers being interviewed were providing the data, I cannot ignore my own role in the process – from shaping the interview via questioning to the transcribing and analysing stages (see section 3.6).

3.1.2 Ontology

Ontology is closely associated with epistemology and “is concerned with the nature of what exists”, that is, the nature of reality (Blaikie, 2007, p. 13). In this research I have adopted an interpretivist ontological viewpoint. Interpretivism “*looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world*” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67, italics in original) and stipulates that the social world can only be understood by those who live and operate within it. This makes interviews a logical choice of method when wanting to understand backpacker motivations. Interpretivism evolved as “a natural science of the social” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 125) and argues that while the natural sciences have to be studied from the outside, social phenomena require studying from within (Blaikie, 2007).

The origins of interpretivism can be traced back to hermeneutics and phenomenology (Blaikie, 2007). Phenomenology aims to allow the phenomenon to speak for itself without being influenced by the researcher’s pre-conceived prejudices (Gray, 2009; see also Lester, 1999). According to Gray (2009, p. 22-23):

value is ascribed not only to the interpretations of researchers, but also to the subjects of the research themselves. Far from using a theoretical model that imposes an external logic on a phenomenon, this inductive approach seeks to find the internal logic of the subject.

Phenomenological research tends to focus on depth rather than breadth of information and because of the large amounts of data gathered in phenomenological research, factors that were not part of the initial research focus are likely to become apparent (Gray, 2009).

Phenomenological research is similar to ethnography, with the main difference being that while ethnographic research looks at the study of culture in specific sites, phenomenological research studies the ‘life-world’ of human experience by studying

individuals (Tesch, 1994). Ethnographical research is also more likely to use participant observation (Gray, 2009) while interviews like those used in this study are more commonly used in phenomenological research (Tesch, 1994; see also Cresswell, 2007; Gray, 2009). Tesch (1994) recommends five to fifteen research participants for phenomenological research, while Cresswell (2007) recommends five to twenty-five participants. This research project involved interviews with fourteen backpackers and this is therefore within the recommended sample size for phenomenological research.

There is a slight philosophical contradiction between interpretivist and phenomenological paradigms that needs to be addressed. Phenomenological approaches propose researchers ‘bracket’ their own personal experiences and thereby attempt to separate themselves from the text. However, interpretivists claim this is impossible (Cresswell, 2007) since knowledge is collaborative between the researcher and the researched (see Schwandt, 1998). Van Manen (1990, p. 47) argues that rather than bracketing our own experiences and prior knowledge:

it is better to make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories. We try to come to terms with our assumptions, not in order to forget them again, but rather to hold them deliberately at bay.

Le Vasseur (2003, p. 417) addresses these philosophical discrepancies and argues:

a distinction focused on bracketing the natural attitude, that is, bracketing the everyday assumption that things are only as they appear to our unreflective consciousness, would be possible within the interpretive paradigm.

Rather than bracketing all theory and previous knowledge, she goes back to Husserl’s original works and instead promotes a temporary bracketing or suspension rather than “a permanent denial” of previous knowledge and theory (Le Vasseur, 2003, p. 417).

Cresswell (2007, p. 60) states that phenomenological research is best suited when “it is important to understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences of a phenomenon”. However, the small number of interviews used in phenomenological research means the results are usually unable to be generalised (Gray, 2009). Phenomenological research can also be difficult to replicate because it is normally

unstructured (Gray, 2009). However, as Gray (2009, p. 28) points out, phenomenological research “is not so much concerned with generalisations to larger populations, but with contextual description and analysis”. That is, the research focuses on deeper understanding rather than generalisability. For these reasons, phenomenological research is more aligned with qualitative rather than quantitative methods.

Phenomenological research attempts to understand and interpret the world from the participant’s point of view (Gray, 2009) by focusing on “lived experiences” combined with “objective reality” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 61). For this research backpackers were interviewed in order to explore their own lived experiences. According to Cresswell (2007, p. 58), “the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence”. In this case the aim is to combine individual backpacker experiences in order to gain a better overall understanding of the ‘universal essence’ of the travel motivations of backpackers to New Zealand.

3.2 Data collection

This section covers the data collection stage in further detail. The research location of Queenstown is discussed, as is the participant recruitment process. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used and the ethical considerations for this research project are also discussed.

3.2.1 Research location

Queenstown is a town of just over 10,000 permanent inhabitants⁵³ (Statistics New Zealand, 2006) but received 557,636 overnight international visitors in the year ending March 2010 (Ministry of Tourism, 2010) making it an extremely popular destination within New Zealand for backpackers as well as domestic and international tourists. Queenstown is located in the southern part of the South Island of New Zealand (see Figure 3). It is a very picturesque and scenic town situated on the edge of Lake Wakatipu and surrounded by The Remarkables mountain range (New Zealand Tourism Guide, 2008). This location allows

⁵³ This number is the sum of the populations of Sunshine Bay, Queenstown Bay, Queenstown Hill, Frankton and Kelvin Heights provided on the Statistics New Zealand (2006) website.

for outdoor activities during both summer and winter and Queenstown is described by Lonely Planet (2010) as one of New Zealand's few year-round tourist destinations. This was an important consideration for this research as the data collection took place in August 2010 during the New Zealand winter. It was therefore important to choose a location that was popular with backpackers in the winter months.



Figure 3: Map of New Zealand showing Queenstown (Immigration New Zealand, 2008)

There are four main types of backpacker hostel in New Zealand: Base Hostels, Nomads Hostels, YHA⁵⁴ hostels and other privately owned hostels. During the fieldwork period I was based at Nomads Queenstown and all the interview participants were also staying at

⁵⁴ YHA New Zealand is a not-for-profit charitable organisation and a member of the International Youth Hostels Federation (for more information see <http://www.yha.co.nz/AboutUs/>).

this hostel. Nomads Queenstown is a large, modern backpacker hostel in central Queenstown and was chosen because it claims to have been “designed with all budget travellers in mind” with a wide range of room-types, from NZ\$25 per night in a twelve-bed dorms to NZ\$130 per night for double rooms with ensuite (Nomads, 2009b). This variation in price suggested there would be a wide variety of backpackers staying at the hostel. It is worth noting however that while Nomads does cater for a variety of backpackers, it is particularly popular with flashpackers (see Nomads, 2009c).

Nomads Queenstown management were aware of my research and were very supportive. They provided me with free accommodation, allowed me to place a sign in reception and also introduced me to some of the backpackers staying at the hostel. It is important to note however that although Nomads Queenstown were extremely helpful, they do not stand to benefit from any of the findings of this research project in any way. All the interview participants were made aware that while the hostel supported my research, they were neither the instigators nor the beneficiaries of the findings and were in no way connected with the research project. Like other companies operating in the New Zealand backpacker market, Nomads Queenstown will have access to the industry report based on this research that will be publicly available on the Tourism Strategy Group’s website.

3.2.2 Participant recruitment

The target population for this research was overseas backpackers travelling to New Zealand. However, the sampling population from which the interview participants were chosen was limited to backpackers who were in Queenstown at the time I was carrying out my fieldwork (for more on the distinctions between target populations and sampling populations see Smith, 1995). Fourteen backpackers were interviewed at which point saturation of data began occurring (for more on data saturation in qualitative data see Mason, 2010).

The definition of backpackers used for this research was based on Pearce’s 1990 definition (see chapter 1). Those interviewed were required to be young and travelling long-term. They were travelling independently and on a budget. All of the backpackers interviewed were organising their own itinerary and travelling either in a private vehicle or travelling on

a hop-on/hop-off backpacker bus service such as Kiwi Experience or Stray bus⁵⁵. While these buses cater specifically to the backpacker market in New Zealand they are not tour buses as such but instead follow specific routes that backpackers can then get on and off as they please. Participants were required to be visiting from overseas and neither New Zealand residents nor international students were included in the research as they are likely to have different motivations than backpackers for travelling to New Zealand (for more on the motivations of international and exchange students see Brewer, 1983; Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao & Lynch, 2007; Huang, 2008). All participants were required to speak sufficient English to enable them to give informed consent, understand the questions and give detailed answers.

Convenience sampling and snowball sampling were used to recruit the fourteen interview participants. As the name implies, convenience sampling focuses more on convenience and ease of use rather than statistical probability. For these reasons convenience sampling is easier to implement due to its “relatively easy sample selection and data collection” (Anderson, Sweeney & Williams, 2009, p. 290). In this case the backpackers I approached were those who were in the communal areas and both available and willing to spend up to an hour being interviewed. I approached potential participants and if they were interested in the research I then confirmed if they met the participant criteria. Those who did were invited to be interviewed straight away or to arrange a suitable time for later that day.

The only people willing to be interviewed who I turned down were a group of Australians who were staying at the hostel for a week on a ski-package tour. As they were on a one-week package tour and only visiting Queenstown, I decided they were not ‘backpackers’ as defined by my research and therefore did not include them in my sample. Most of the backpackers I approached who met the criteria did agree to be interviewed, although some declined as they claimed they were leaving Queenstown soon and did not have time.

⁵⁵ The only exception was Andrea who was in New Zealand for a combination of reasons including language school, travel and volunteer work. During her time in Auckland she attended an English language school and went on organised trips with the language school to both the Bay of Islands and Rotorua. However, at the time of her interview she was travelling around the South Island by herself and had arranged her own itinerary. Therefore, I believe she can be defined as a backpacker at the time of her interview.

Conducting the interviews in English also appeared to be an issue in some cases. I approached two Danish backpackers and although they met the criteria they declined to be interviewed. They told me this was because they did not have time although I suspect they were not confident in their English language skills and did not want to be interviewed and recorded speaking English. Similarly, I met two South Korean men in their early-twenties at Nomads Queenstown and while they could be defined as backpackers, I decided their English language skills were insufficient to allow for an in-depth interview.

Snowball sampling is another non-probability sampling technique which is often used when a complete sampling frame is unavailable or difficult to access (Gray, Williamson & Karp, 2007, p. 117). In this case a former interview participant is asked if they know of any other possible interview participants to whom they could introduce the interviewer. Hostels are social areas and ‘snowballing’ is also a very organic way of meeting people. After I had interviewed someone, that person would often strike up conversations with me in the communal kitchen or lounge and would then introduce me to other people they knew⁵⁶.

One of the main criticisms of snowball sampling is that it does not provide a broadly representational sample and instead tends to “follow the patterns of established networks, friendships, and acquaintanceships with like-minded individuals who may not reflect the true diversity needed by the researcher” (Gray, Williamson & Karp, 2007, p. 117). However, in this research the only thing my interview participants had in common with the potential interview participants they introduced me to was that they were staying in the same dorm-room. In many cases I got to know both backpackers better than they knew each other.

⁵⁶ I am forever indebted to Thomas who went out of his way to introduce me to as many people as possible staying at the hostel. I started talking to Kate in the kitchen on my first afternoon at the hostel. She then introduced me to Thomas who introduced me to Sarah and James. Over the next few days James introduced me to Ryan and Emma and then Harry. Jack was in the dorm-room when I was interviewing Ryan and volunteered for an interview. The other interview participants were recruited through me approaching them in either the communal kitchen or lounge area.

3.2.3 Interviews

A qualitative paradigm was chosen for this research project because, as Cresswell argues (2007, p. 40, italics in original), qualitative research is useful when we want:

a *complex*, detailed understanding of the issue. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people...and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we expect to find.

A qualitative paradigm also fits with the constructionist and interpretivist assumptions on which this research is based.

Interviews were used because, as Kvale (1996, p. 1) asks, “if you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk with them?” This fits with the constructionist idea of interviews as an active process rather than merely the passive transfer of information (Holstein & Gubrium, 2008). Individual interviews were chosen because backpackers are a transient population and group interviews or focus groups would have been impractical to organise. All interviews were carried out at Nomads Queenstown hostel, except for one which was took place at a nearby outside table as this was the quietest area available at the time.

According to Veal (2006, p. 197), in-depth interviews normally take at least half an hour and sometimes as long as several hours. The thirteen⁵⁷ interviews for this research project each took between half an hour and an hour. All interview participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 1) and all signed a Participant Consent form (see Appendix 2) which allowed the interviews to be recorded using a digital audio recorder. Travellers generally enjoy talking about their own travel experiences (Jordan & Gibson, 2004) and Seidman (1998, p. 59-60) argues that remunerating interview participants by giving them “anything more than a token payment” would seriously threaten to bias the potential participants’ motivation for taking part in the study. For these reasons, no payment was given to any of the interview participants. Several of the interview

⁵⁷ Although travelling independently, Emily and Jessica requested to be interviewed together. For this reason there were a total of fourteen interview participants but only thirteen interviews.

participants however asked me for recommendations of where they should visit during their time in New Zealand and I was happy to make suggestions.

Rather than a structured interview, a semi-structured format was used in order to allow for flexibility within the interview. Gray (2009) argues semi-structured interviews lend themselves to phenomenological research as they allow for probing of participants' views and opinions and also allow for interview questions to be adapted when a new topic or path shows itself. A checklist of interview topics was used (see Appendix 3) and while these topics were sometimes covered in a different order and with slightly different phrasing, each interview included all of these topics. Semi-structured interviews were also chosen because they are recommended for researchers such as myself who have little previous interviewing experience (Jordan & Gibson, 2004). As researchers become more experienced the interview can become less structured and more conversational (Jordan & Gibson, 2004).

While interviews may have different aims and structure from a normal conversation, it is still important to build rapport and trust with interview participants and to ensure the situation feels comfortable rather than forced or stilted (see Jordan & Gibson, 2004). The majority of the interviews took place either sitting outside on the hostel balcony or sitting on the floor in a dorm-room and I believe this helped create a relaxed atmosphere that felt more like a conversation between two backpackers than a formal research interview. At one point during the interview with Ryan another backpacker came into the dorm-room and attempted to join the conversation as he did not realise it was in fact an interview. Similarly, the interview between Jessica and Emily was for the main part a conversation between the two of them with me asking a few guiding questions.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2002, p. 89) emphasise the importance of "social interaction" between the researcher and the interview participants. They suggest one way for researchers to build trust is to share their own experiences rather than simply ask questions (see also Seidman, 1998). As Jordan and Gibson (2004, p. 225) argue, if we as researchers:

want other people to tell us about their experiences, then surely we should be prepared to share our own. The researcher sharing their own experiences with research participants in this way can help to establish a slightly more equal rapport, as each knows more about the other.

I was open with the interview participants about my life and my own travel experiences both in New Zealand and overseas. Often they wanted to ask me about aspects of New Zealand culture or landscape and about my university study and I was happy to discuss these topics further (see also Cotterill & Letherby, 1993; Jordan & Gibson, 2004).

Like all research methods, in-depth interviews have advantages and limitations (see Figure 4). Interviews are useful when highly personalised data are required (Gray, 2009) and allowing people to share their stories gives rich data containing a lot of description and examples (Jordan & Gibson, 2004). According to Gray (2009, p. 370), “the interview is a powerful tool for eliciting rich data on people’s views, attitudes and the meanings that underpin their lives and behaviours”. Interviews are useful for exploring participants’ stories as well as allowing for nuances to be captured. Questions and answers can also be clarified and expanded or adapted (Gray, 2009).

However, there are things to be wary of when carrying out semi-structured interviews. For example, it is important not to ask leading questions where the researcher may inadvertently guide the participant’s response (King & Horrocks, 2010; Veal, 2006). While Gray (2009) argues that interviews are the best approach when research participants are not fluent in the language of the research, it is important not to ask over-complex questions or to ask multiple questions in one sentence (King & Horrocks, 2010). One of the main limitations of interviews is the necessarily small sample size. Interviews can be expensive and time consuming to organise, transcribe and analyse (Gray, 2009) and this often makes larger sample sizes impractical.

<i>Advantages</i>	<i>Limitations</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Semi-structured interviews are a flexible technique that allows questioning to be adapted to suit each participant's particular experience. ▪ The personal nature of the interview allows me to develop empathy and rapport with the participants which creates a more comfortable environment. ▪ Meeting the interview participant face-to-face allows me to read body language and other forms of non-verbal communication. ▪ Little equipment is required so the location of the interview is flexible. ▪ Interviews provide rich, descriptive data with many examples and personal stories. ▪ As the same questions are asked of each participant it is possible to compare responses across interviews. ▪ Being a relatively inexperienced interviewer, semi-structured interviews provide some structure while also allowing me the freedom to develop my own approach. ▪ Interviews have high validity as I can ensure participants understand questions by adapting the wording and asking follow-up questions if required. ▪ Recording allows things such as laughter, pauses and tone of voice to be captured. ▪ The process of transcription and analysis allows me to become very familiar with the data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is possible that as the researcher I will inadvertently steer or guide the interview. ▪ Interviewing people can be an awkward or uncomfortable experience, especially for inexperienced researchers such as myself. ▪ I may react to responses from the interview participant rather than control the interview. ▪ There is lower reliability as semi-structured interviews can be difficult to replicate. ▪ Interviews can generate large amounts of data which can make comparing by theme difficult. ▪ It is possible the interview participant will misinterpret one of my questions or I will misinterpret their answer. ▪ Recording the interview can potentially be problematic if the participant does not want to be recorded or is self-conscious about being recorded. ▪ I am relying on backpackers to volunteer to participate in an interview that takes up their holiday/travel time. ▪ It can be difficult to find a suitable location. ▪ Interviewing, transcribing and analysing can be very time intensive. ▪ The value of the data depends on how honest the interview participant chooses to be.

Figure 4: Advantages and limitations of semi-structured in-depth interviewing
(based on Jordan & Gibson, 2004, p. 222-223)

There is some debate regarding how useful interviews are in research. Hartmann (1988, p. 89-90) for example, argues that:

serious doubts must be raised if randomly selected and essentially superficial contacts between a researcher and an interviewee are considered the opportune way of exploring phenomena in depth.

I object to his use of the word “superficial” and argue that while the interviews themselves were only thirty to sixty minutes in length, I spent prolonged periods of time with several of the interview participants— particularly James, Ryan, Emma and Harry – outside the interview context and am still in contact with five of the interview participants via Facebook. Nothing I have observed or heard during these times contradicts anything they told me during their interviews. Hartmann (1988) promotes the use of interviews but only if they are combined with other methods. However, this is not always feasible or practical.

Researching tourist motivations can be difficult because backpackers may be unwilling to reflect on their real travel motives. Even if they are aware of what these real motives are, they may be unwilling – or even unable – to articulate these motives in an interview (Dann, 1981), although they may be more forthcoming when given time to think and reflect on their motives. Observation is often a more useful method if those being researched are unable to articulate their motives. However, it is impossible to observe what motivated a backpacker to travel to New Zealand once he or she has already arrived in the country. Observation of the backpackers prior to their decision to come to New Zealand was therefore not a feasible research method, although it was still possible to observe the interview participants both during their interview and also at other times during their stay in Queenstown. Surveys are also problematic as they collect somewhat limited and superficial data and risk structuring the participants’ responses in the order – and words – prescribed by the researcher. While interviews do have some disadvantages as previously discussed, I believe that in this case the advantages outweighed the disadvantages and therefore interviews were still the most appropriate and useful method.

3.2.4 Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the Department of Tourism Human Ethics Committee at the University of Otago prior to starting data collection. Three main ethical considerations must be addressed in any research project: confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent. In this study the data are anonymous as the interview participants' names are kept confidential. I carried out all the interviews personally and met all research participants face-to-face. It is therefore impossible to make the interview results anonymous, however, in line with the ethical policies at the University of Otago, the participants' identities will be kept confidential⁵⁸ (see Smith, 1995; Veal, 2006) through the use of pseudonyms. While the participants' nationality and age are referred to in both this thesis and published conference papers – and possibly other future published works – the transient nature of backpackers and the high numbers of backpackers of all ages and nationalities that travel through Queenstown every year make it highly unlikely for anyone to identify the interview participants from the published material. While I will do my best to protect the confidentiality of my interview participants, confidentiality can of course never be 100% guaranteed⁵⁹.

All interviews were audio-taped and I personally transcribed each interview. At the time of the interview all participants were given a pseudonym that was attached to the interview recording. The consent forms and the pseudonym key showing the participants' real names are securely stored in my office so that only I have access to them. As required by the University of Otago's research policy, the data from this research will be destroyed at the

⁵⁸ King and Horrocks (2010, p. 117) use the terms in the reverse and state that “to assure someone confidentiality appears to suggest that what is said in the qualitative interview will remain private and not be repeated”. Obviously this is not the case. However, “rather than assuring confidentiality... we can seek to offer *anonymity*” that is, “concealing the identity of the participants in all documents resulting from the research, therefore actively protecting the identity of research participants” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 117, *italics in original*). In other texts (for example Smith, 1995; Veal, 2006) this is referred to as confidentiality, that is, keeping the participants *identity* confidential while the *data* is kept anonymous.

⁵⁹ None of the backpackers interviewed had any concerns about confidentiality and several told me I was welcome to use their real names in the research project – although I have used pseudonyms for all interview participants.

end of this project, except for the raw data on which the results of the project are based which will be retained in secure storage for five years and then destroyed.

Informed consent means ensuring interview participants have sufficient information about a research project to make an informed decision about whether or not to be involved (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 711). If they do choose to be involved, they do so voluntarily (Christians, 2008). As previously mentioned, all interview participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 1) and were able to ask me any other questions they may have had. All interview participants were required to sign a Participant Consent Form (see Appendix 2) before the interview commenced and this form confirmed they had been informed about the research prior to the interview and gave consent to be recorded and for the research findings to be used for this thesis and for any further publications. Participants were able to stop the interview and withdraw their data at any time.

3.3 Research participants

As already stated, all interview participants were recruited through Nomads Queenstown and all were staying at the hostel. Fourteen backpackers were interviewed with a relatively even gender split of eight females and six males (see Table 1). A relatively high proportion of interview participants were from the United Kingdom and Ireland, including five from England, one from Wales and three from Ireland. Two other interview participants were also native English-speakers from Canada. The final three interview participants were from continental Europe – one each from France, Germany and the Netherlands. Those interviewed were between nineteen and thirty-four years of age with the majority in their early to mid-twenties. Ryan and Emma were travelling together as a couple and Jack was travelling with a friend – although these three were all interviewed individually. The rest were travelling alone.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age (years)</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Time spent in NZ so far</i>	<i>Intended total time in NZ</i>	<i>RTW⁶⁰ trip?</i>	<i>Total travel time so far</i>
Sarah	22	English	Female	6 weeks	2 months	Yes	2 months
Kate	23	English	Female	5 weeks	6 weeks	Yes	5 months
Thomas	26	English	Male	5 weeks	1 year	Yes	5 weeks
Harry	29	English	Male	3.5 weeks	2 months	Yes	7 weeks
Sophia	29	English/ Irish ⁶¹	Female	10 months	Undecided as yet	No	-
Ryan	25	Irish	Male	1 year	1 year	Yes	3 years
Emma	24	Irish	Female				
James	26	Irish	Male	5 weeks	3 months	Yes	8 months
Jack	22	Welsh	Male	1 month	1 month	Yes	3 months
Martin	34	French	Male	1 month	1 month	Yes	11 months
Andrea	19	German	Female	5 weeks	7 weeks	No	-
Katja	19	Dutch	Female	5 weeks	7 weeks	No	-
Emily	21	Canadian	Female	1 week	2 weeks	Yes	2 weeks
Jessica	25	Canadian	Female	8 months	8.5 months	Yes	3.5 years

Table 1: Demographic data of the backpackers interviewed

⁶⁰ RTW is a commonly-used abbreviation among backpackers and travellers for a ‘round-the-world’ trip. I use the term here not necessarily to denote a trip that literally circumnavigates the globe but to refer to an extended trip that includes multiple continents.

⁶¹ Although Sophia describes herself as Irish she was born and educated in England and has only lived in Ireland since finishing university. She has an English accent and is perceived by the other backpackers – particularly the Irish – to be English. For these reasons I have generally referred to her here as English.

None of those interviewed were travelling on an all-inclusive tour. However, nine were travelling at least part of the way with a backpacker bus company – one with Magic Traveller Network, two with Stray and the remainder with Kiwi Experience. Six of the backpackers interviewed had working holiday visas for New Zealand and were planning to spend between three months and a year working and travelling the country. Those without working holiday visas were staying between two and seven weeks. Eleven of those interviewed were on round-the-world trips and their total intended travel time varied between six months and three and a half years. Only Thomas had previously travelled to New Zealand.

Apart from Emily, all the interview participants were staying in New Zealand for a minimum of one month and had travelled to more than one region of the country. Emily was on a working holiday in Australia and visited only Queenstown and Wanaka during a two-week skiing holiday. During her time in New Zealand Emily did not necessarily meet Pearce's (1990) criteria of having a flexible travel schedule or staying for a longer rather than brief holiday. However, she had a working holiday visa for Australia and was planning to stay away from home for several years. In this case, her total time away from Canada can be defined as backpacking and she was included in the interviews. Some of those interviewed referred to themselves as 'travellers' rather than backpackers but for simplicity's sake all of those interviewed are referred to here as 'backpackers' (see chapter 1).

3.4 Data analysis

It is important to use interview participants' own words rather than the researcher's summary (Seidman, 1998). Because of this all interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed. All parts of the interview relating either directly or indirectly to the participants' motivations and travel experiences were transcribed verbatim, including pauses, repetition and laughter. Other parts of the interview – for example, when establishing age and nationality and answering any questions about my own travel experiences – were instead summarised in note form (for further discussion on full versus partial transcription see King & Horrocks, 2010). Once transcribed, the interview

transcripts were read interpretively, coded and analysed. Interpretive reading refers to “reading through or beyond the data in some way” (Mason, 2002, p. 149) by looking at what the interview transcripts say about norms or discourses relating to the participants’ social world and experiences. An interpretive reading looks not only at what was said but also what was implied.

Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (Blaikie, 2007) and has been associated with both constructionism (Charmaz, 2005) and interpretivism (Gray, 2009). It is inductive in that theory is generated from data (Blaikie, 2007). Gray (2009, p. 502) states that rather than making assumptions about hypotheses, research questions and/or literature before analysing the data:

the research should commence with a defined purpose, but also with the realisation that this purpose may become modified or even radically altered during the research process itself.

Traditional grounded theory aims to approach the data without being influenced by previous literature and theory of the subject. While I was aware of the previous literature and theory before carrying out my research, I analysed the data without any specific aims of supporting or discrediting the findings of previous studies.

Grounded theory approaches argue data should be studied as they emerge rather than waiting until they are all collected (Charmaz, 2005; Gray, 2009). Unlike content analysis, the categories used in grounded theory are not assumed prior to data analysis but instead emerge through “the process of data collection and analysis” (Gray, 2009, p. 500). Grounded theory is a comparative method (Charmaz, 2005) and by beginning analysis while still continuing data collection, both analysis and collection are able to refer back to each other (Bryman, 2008). While I started the data analysis with an understanding of previous theories and empirical findings relating to backpacker motivations, the categories or codings used in the analysis were not decided prior to data analysis but were developed as the data collection and data analysis progressed.

The data collection took place over six days so it was not possible to transcribe the interviews and begin formal data analysis during this time. However, during each interview

I was informally analysing what was being said and became aware of several themes that repeatedly appeared and these became the basis of the coding system when I began more formal analysis. This informal analysis also began to shape my interview questions. For example, several of the early interview participants referred to their backpacking experience as a popular activity among their peers at home. Because of this I began asking interview participants if their friends at home were also travelling. The preliminary analysis thereby influenced both the data collection and later stages of data analysis.

Gray (2009, p. 573) defines coding as “the process of transforming raw data into a standardised format for data analysis... [I]n qualitative research it means identifying recurrent words, concepts or themes”. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest a three step process for coding in grounded theory approaches: open coding followed by axial coding followed by selective coding. Open coding involves breaking down the data while looking for similarities and differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Items which are conceptually similar or related are then categorised together (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this case the transcripts were read closely and categories of motivating factors identified and recorded, for example, statements relating to going backpacking in order to get away from home or as a way of seeing the world. Axial coding involves identifying connections between these categories; it is “the act of relating categories to subcategories along the lines of their properties and dimensions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 124). In this research open codes such as going backpacking in order to get away from a relationship break-up or to get away from familial responsibilities were grouped together under the axial code ‘escape’. Finally, selective coding was used to find the “core category”, that is, the “central phenomenon around which all the other categories are integrated” (Gray, 2009, p. 509) and to systematically relate this core category “to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development” (Bryman, 2008, p. 543). This coding process therefore attempts to expose new understandings of backpacker motivations through data analysis (see Gray, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

3.5 Issues of research design

There are several issues that must be considered when designing a research project. While epistemological and ontological considerations are important, it is also important to consider the reliability and validity of the research findings and this is directly related to the justification of the chosen research method. Triangulation is one common method of increasing reliability and validity and is discussed below in more detail. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed that the emphasis on assessing research on the basis of reliability and validity is better suited to quantitative research and proposed that qualitative research should instead be assessed on its credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. How these four criteria relate to this research project is also discussed.

3.5.1 Reliability and validity

There are several techniques for increasing reliability and validity in qualitative research. Hammersley (1992, p. 67) defines reliability as referring “to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions”. A number of methods are employed to ensure reliability in qualitative research including: pre-testing the interview schedules, training the interviewers, using fixed-choice answers as much as possible and using inter-rater reliability checks when coding the answers of open-ended questions (Silverman, 2001). Fixed-choice answers were not used as they are obviously incompatible with in-depth interviews. Checks of inter-rater coding were also not practical as I was the only researcher/coder working on the project.

Low-inference descriptors in qualitative research can also help to ensure high levels of reliability. Seale (1999, p. 148) defines these as:

recording observations in terms that are as concrete as possible, including verbatim accounts of what people say, for example, rather than researchers’ reconstructions of the general sense of what a person said, which would allow researchers’ personal perspectives to influence the reporting.

In this research all interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed so as to allow verbatim accounts of what the backpackers said about their own motivations and experiences. During the data analysis these interview transcripts allowed me to check the interview participants' exact wording and the context of any given comment.

Validity refers to how well research measures what it claims to be measuring (Mason, 2002). There are many different ways of assessing validity in qualitative research. These include considering the impact of the researcher (Silverman, 2001) and the "truth status of a respondent's account" (Silverman, 2001, p. 233), that is, how truthful a respondent is actually being (see also Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe, 2002). Arksey and Knight (1999, p. 52) suggest several ways of strengthening the validity of interview-based research. One is the use of interviewing techniques that help build rapport, trust and openness and thereby allow interview participants to express themselves. I was twenty-five years old when I carried out these interviews and the majority of the backpackers interviewed were also in their twenties (see section 3.3). I was also able to build rapport and trust by sharing my own backpacking experiences both within New Zealand and overseas. Another method used to strengthen validity is to ensure the interview itself is sufficiently long to allow for in-depth discussion of the pertinent topics (Arksey & Knight, 1999). The thirteen interviews all took between half an hour and an hour which allowed for the participants' motivations and experiences to be explored in depth.

Using interview questions based on the literature and ensuring that all key topics are covered – without wasting time on irrelevant topics – is also recommended as a means of strengthening validity (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Questions asked in the interviews were based on the literature review and my own previous interactions with backpackers. Questions were then revised and adapted during the interview process as further knowledge was discovered (see section 3.4). During interviews it is also useful to use "prompts that encourage informants to illustrate, expand and clarify their initial responses" (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 52) which I did by asking follow-up questions. Another technique I found useful was to simply say nothing and give the backpacker time to collect his/her thoughts in

order to fully answer a question⁶². One of the benefits of phenomenological research is that it is capable of producing thick descriptions as a result of this in-depth interviewing (Geertz, 1973; Gray, 2009). Thick description involves providing detailed descriptions which “should help a reader to judge whether the interpretation emerging from the analysis seems consistent with the description presented” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 164). Using thick description (Geertz, 1973; Ryle, 1949) or contextualising what the backpackers said can also help validate a piece of research by ensuring quotes are not taken out of context.

3.5.2 Triangulation

Another technique useful for increasing validity is triangulation. This occurs when “information coming from different angles or perspectives is used to corroborate, elaborate or illuminate the research problem”, thereby limiting bias (Decrop, 2004, p. 162). According to Decrop (1999, p. 160), triangulation involves “confirming qualitative findings by showing that independent sources converge on them, or at least, do not oppose them”. Flick (2009, p. 445) argues that triangulation is not a tool of validation per se, but an alternative to it. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 5) point out, triangulation “is best understood, then, as a strategy that adds rigour, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to any inquiry”⁶³.

Denzin (1989, p. 237) identified four types of triangulation: data triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation and investigator triangulation (see also Flick, 2009; King & Horrocks, 2010). Data triangulation refers to the use of multiple data sources. While I carried out my own empirical research, I also compared this data with previously

⁶² Some of the backpackers interviewed had been travelling for several months on their own and James in particular mentioned to me later that he had enjoyed the interview experience and talking about his family and home. I believe he was somewhat homesick and asking him about his reasons for going backpacking had reminded him why he had initially made the decision to leave home and travel. Although the ‘formal’ audio-taped interview itself lasted an hour, James and I sat and talked for at least another hour after that.

⁶³ Richardson and St Pierre (2005) argue that the crystal should be used as a metaphor instead of the triangle and proposed the idea of crystallisation rather than triangulation. They argue that while triangles are “rigid, fixed, [and] two dimensional”, crystals “grow, change, and are altered...Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose” (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005, p. 963).

published research from both New Zealand and overseas. According to Decrop (1999), writing field notes as soon as possible following an interview can also be considered a form of data triangulation. He argues that “these notes are especially useful as they shed additional light on the textual content or indicate specific questions that do not directly appear in the interview transcripts” (Decrop, 1999, p. 159). I made general field notes during the fieldwork period and also specific notes following each interview. Theoretical triangulation utilises several perspectives or theories to analyse one set of data (Decrop, 1999). This was achieved by using different disciplines such as social psychology, sociology and marketing to analyse the backpacker interview transcripts. Method triangulation involves using multiple methods to study a specific problem⁶⁴ (Decrop, 1999) and this research project used both interviews and some informal participant observation⁶⁵. Investigator triangulation refers to using more than one researcher in order to account for researcher bias (Decrop, 1999). Due to the restrictions associated with a Master’s thesis, investigator triangulation was not feasible for this research project.

Respondent validation is also a form of triangulation and involves taking the findings back to the subjects of the research. Some argue that “where these people verify one’s findings...one can be more confident of their validity” (Silverman, 2001, p. 233). However, others are critical of both respondent validation and triangulation more generally (see for example Silverman, 2001). Fielding and Fielding (1986, p. 43) argue that while interview participants may have useful additional knowledge:

there is no reason to assume that members have privileged status as commentators on their actions...such feedback cannot be taken as direct validation or refutation of the observer’s inferences.

⁶⁴ See Mason (2002) for further discussion and critique of method triangulation.

⁶⁵ Participant observation was not a specific method chosen for this research project but I use it here merely to refer to discussions I had with backpackers in Queenstown outside of the thirteen interviews. While I did not purposefully observe other backpackers whilst at Nomads Queenstown it was impossible not to socialise and interact with them during the fieldwork period. However, the findings discussed in chapters 4 and 5 are all based on the interviews – although I saw and heard nothing in my ‘informal participant observation’ that contradicted these findings.

Instead, Fielding and Fielding (1986) propose respondent validation be viewed as an additional source of data rather than validation of the original data. Abrams (1984, p. 8) also notes that “overt respondent validation is only possible if the results of the analysis are compatible with the self-image of the respondents”. In this research it is possible some interview participants would disagree with my interpretations of their motivations. For example, the idea of backpackers being motivated by the desire for cultural capital is unlikely to match the backpacker’s own self-image and their personal understanding of their own travel motivations⁶⁶.

3.5.3 Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability

Quantitative research is traditionally assessed depending on its internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity (Decrop, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The validity and reliability of qualitative research is often questioned or critiqued because unlike quantitative research, qualitative results cannot be measured in numbers and statistically analysed (Decrop, 2004). As discussed previously, there are still techniques or approaches that can be used at different stages of the research process in order to increase the validity and reliability of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985), however, argue that qualitative research is inherently different from quantitative research and therefore should not be judged by the same criteria. Instead, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose qualitative research should be judged according to its credibility, its transferability, its dependability and its conformability (see Figure 5). While these criteria have been widely criticised, they remain highly cited (King & Horrocks, 2010). Each of these four criteria is now discussed in more detail.

Like validity, credibility refers to how accurate or truthful the research findings are. This is often questioned in qualitative research because of high levels of subjectivity (Decrop,

⁶⁶ During my own working holiday and backpacking experiences in Europe I visited very few countries more than once and justified this to myself by claiming that it is because there are so many places in the world I wish to see that I would rather visit somewhere new than return to a country I have already visited. However, as a result of this research I have been forced to admit to myself that this emphasis on seeing somewhere new is also influenced by the desire for cultural capital in that I would like to be able to say “Oh, I’ve been to twenty countries” rather than having visited fewer countries numerous times.

2004). However, as when increasing validity, using longer interviews which allow time to explore a topic in-depth and create rapport between the interviewer and the interview participant can increase the ‘truthfulness’ or credibility of research findings (see Arksey & Knight, 1999). Transferability relates to how applicable the findings are to populations other than the sample group (Decrop, 2004). Generalisability is often not possible in qualitative research because of the lack of random sampling and the often small sample size. However, if findings are related to other research and current theories they can be thought to be applicable to a wider range than merely the sample (Decrop, 2004). While the findings may not be generalisable, they can be extrapolated to the broader population (Alasuutari, 1995). It is impossible to generalise from interviews with a non-representative sample of fourteen backpackers but it is intended that the findings of this research project will be transferable and applicable to a wider range of backpackers.

<i>Quantitative</i>	<i>Qualitative</i>
Internal validity	Credibility: how truthful the results are
External validity	Transferability: how applicable the findings are to groups other than the sample
Reliability	Dependability: how accurate the researcher is in representing what actually happened
Objectivity	Confirmability: how neutral the results/findings/data are

Figure 5: Criteria for assessing qualitative research (based on Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

According to Marshall and Rossman (1995, p. 146), “qualitative research does not pretend to be replicable”. Reality is not single and distinct within the interpretive paradigm but is instead relative and contextual, influenced by time, context, culture and values (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Instead of reliability or replicability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose

dependability which focuses on how consistent and reproducible the results are (Decrop, 2004). While I do not argue that this research is directly replicable and a repeated study would produce identical results, I do believe that a similar study would produce similar results. Likewise, the results of this research project reflect – although do not directly reproduce – findings of earlier, similar studies. The results of this research project may not be statistically replicable, but they are dependable.

Lincoln and Guba's (1985) fourth criteria for assessing qualitative research is confirmability. While quantitative research claims to be objective, qualitative research accepts that this is not possible, nor necessarily desirable. Instead, steps are taken in order to mitigate the researcher's influence, for example, by providing access to the empirical data so others can see how it was interpreted (Decrop, 2004). In this research project I attempted to temporarily 'bracket' (see Le Vasseur, 2003) or suspend my prior knowledge during the data collection and data analysis processes (see section 3.1). In the analysis and interpretation of the data (see chapters 4 and 5) I have also attempted to provide as much context as possible in order to clarify why I have interpreted the data the ways I have (see also section 3.6 where I acknowledge my own role in the research process). This is one way of improving the confirmability of a study.

3.6 My own role as researcher

There are multiple interpretations of research, depending on the personal biographies of both the researcher and the research subjects. This can partly explain why the findings of one researcher will not necessarily match the findings of another researcher who repeats the study (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). Willig (2001) argues that two types of reflexivity are required by researchers: epistemological reflexivity and personal reflexivity. Epistemological reflexivity involves a researcher reflecting on his/her own personal assumptions about the world that may affect aspects of the research such as how the research questions are defined or how the interviews are structured (Willig, 2001). Personal reflexivity involves the researcher looking at how his/her own beliefs, interests, experiences and identity may have influenced the research stages (Willig, 2001). I have discussed my

own epistemological understandings earlier in this chapter (see section 3.1) and so I now turn to my own personal reflexivity as defined by Willig (2001).

Wittgenstein (1953, as cited in Silverman, 2001, p. 129) notes that “the aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity”. While he refers specifically to philosophy, I would argue this is equally applicable to other forms of human behaviour such as travel motivations. Cotterill and Letherby (1993, p. 77) point out that:

the research process may make the participants of the research think about things they have never thought about before or indeed think about things in a different way⁶⁷.

However, it is not only the participants who are reflexive and through this research I too have been forced to reflect on my own motivations for travel. I have always wanted to travel and while I have often explained this as a desire to see the world and to learn about other cultures, I am beginning to acknowledge to myself that my desire to travel is also partly related to my own beliefs regarding cultural capital and self-development.

Social research is highly subjective by nature (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004) and researchers must therefore “take account of subjectivity, of their ethics, values and politics, and use a range of appropriate interconnected interpretive methods to maximize understanding of the research problem” (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004, p. 34). Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 4) compare researchers to ‘bricoleurs’, quilt-makers or the person who assembles a film-montage⁶⁸. In this sense, the researcher pieces together different strategies, methods and empirical methods as required (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Within qualitative research there are a multitude of methods and combinations of methods available and because of this sense of creativity and exploration, there is no one specific method that can “bring total insight... consequently there is no perfect outcome” (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004, p. 34).

⁶⁷ For example, I spoke to James several days after his interview and mentioned he had found the interview interesting as he had started to think about why he had decided to go backpacking and my questions also provoked him into thinking of all the things he had learned whilst travelling.

⁶⁸ For further discussion on bricolage and the researcher-as-bricoleur see Kincheloe and McLaren (2005).

Reflexivity of the researcher is particularly important in constructionist research “as it requires researchers to consider their contribution to the construction of meaning” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 22). It is therefore particularly important for researchers to show “critical language awareness” and reflect on the categories and terms used and consider whether the language chosen could have impacted or influenced the research findings in some way (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 23). Being a New Zealander and having worked in the New Zealand backpacking industry I was aware of the need to use the terms used by the interview participants themselves rather than terms I might be more familiar with. Three of those interviewed were not native speakers of English and this also had an effect. For example, Andrea understood the term ‘backpacker’ only as it related to backpacker hostels but not as it relates to a person. However, this differing use of terms is likely to be related to culture as much as language since Jessica – a native English speaker from Canada – also had very different ideas of what a backpacker was compared to both myself and other backpackers interviewed.

Cotterill and Letherby (1993) promote the relevance of the researcher’s own biography within the research process. I believe the outcome of these interviews would have been different had I been much older or less able to relate to the backpackers I spoke to⁶⁹. I say this not to discredit the validity and reliability of my findings but to strengthen them. I believe I gained rapport relatively easily with the backpackers interviewed. I have experience backpacking both in Europe and around New Zealand and am used to staying in backpacker hostels. During the data collection period I was staying in the same hostel as the interview participants and was effectively ‘living like a backpacker’⁷⁰. All of the backpackers interviewed were recruited in the communal areas of the hostel such as the kitchen or lounge – either through me approaching them directly or through being

⁶⁹ However, while I was around the same age as the backpackers interviewed and had no particular power relationship over them, Jordan and Gibson (2004, p. 220) argue that the very fact I was researching them and interpreting their stories “implies a power relationship that can make the researcher [me] the more powerful through their [my] control over the data”.

⁷⁰ See Hampton (2010) for further discussion on the distinction between being a backpacker and being a *researcher* of backpackers.

introduced by other backpackers I had come to know during my stay⁷¹. I also socialised with several of the backpackers outside of the interview context.

However, while I may share several characteristics with the backpackers being interviewed, I am also a New Zealander with an obvious New Zealand accent and was aware of the need to reassure the interview participants I would not be offended by any negative things they may have to say about New Zealand and/or New Zealanders. It is possible the interview participants were falsely positive in their feelings about New Zealand in order not to offend me as a New Zealander. However, I do not believe this was the case. During my fieldwork in Queenstown I interacted with not only the backpackers I formally interviewed but also numerous other backpackers I had only informal conversations with at the hostel. While some complained about New Zealand's weather or the price of accommodation, they were all unanimously positive about New Zealand overall. In many cases, when I first met someone and told them what I was researching, their first response was to tell me how much they loved New Zealand and how much they were enjoying their time in the country. I also overheard conversations along these same lines between backpackers when they were not even aware there was anyone else – let alone a New Zealander – listening. For these reasons I have no doubt that what the backpackers told me in their interviews were true reflections of how they feel.

3.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the methods used for this research project and explained the methodology and justification for this choice of methods. This research takes a qualitative approach and is based on constructionist and phenomenologist beliefs. In-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with fourteen backpackers in Queenstown in August 2010. Participants were all staying at Nomads Queenstown and were recruited using snowball and convenience sampling. The backpackers were all aged between nineteen and

⁷¹ In some cases I approached a backpacker I did not know and asked if I could interview them and ended up socialising with them as a result of that. In other cases I was introduced to other backpackers socially and when they learned I was there conducting research they volunteered for an interview. In all cases I was very upfront and honest about my reasons for being at the hostel.

thirty-four years of age and were predominantly from England and Ireland with two from Canada and one each from Wales, France, the Netherlands and Germany. The interviews all lasted half an hour to an hour, were all partially transcribed and coded and analysed based on grounded theory. The findings of a single interview cannot be expected to be representative of all backpackers – or even generalised to those who share the same gender, age and/or nationality (see Mason, 2002). However, the findings from a selection of interviews may be extrapolated to a wider group (see Alasuutari, 1995). Chapter 4 therefore discusses the findings of the interviews conducted with the fourteen backpackers as introduced in this chapter.

Chapter Four: Backpackers in New Zealand

This chapter discusses the findings of the research project. The chapter is divided into two main sections reflecting the two-part research question: 1) why backpackers leave home and 2) why they choose New Zealand as a destination. Taken together, these two sections explain the motivations of backpackers in New Zealand. Chapter 4 concludes by summarising the research findings and emphasising the links between the themes.

4.1 Why backpackers leave home

Six main themes emerged from the interviews to explain why backpackers initially leave home and each of these themes is discussed and illustrated using quotes from the interviews. The backpackers interviewed stated they chose to go backpacking primarily because of a desire to explore the wider world and to get away from home. A second major motivating factor was the idea of meeting new people whilst travelling (see also Pearce, 1990). Backpacking is often referred to in the literature as a time of self-development (see for example Desforges, 1998; Gogia, 2006) and is also related to the accrual of cultural capital (see Bourdieu, 1984; Desforges, 1998; Munt, 1994). While an improved sense of self and the accrual of cultural capital were not motivating factors per se, the backpackers did perceive these as benefits of backpacking. Many of the backpackers interviewed referred to their time spent backpacking as a break or time out from the routine of life at home or even a “final fling” (Westerhausen, 2002) before returning home to settle down. Finally, many of those interviewed had been wanting to travel for a long time and were simply waiting for the opportunity to do so. This section addresses the research question asking why backpackers decide to leave home and travel.

4.1.1 Explore the wider world

One of the defining characteristics of backpackers is their interest in seeing the world (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Murphy, 2001; Pearce, 1990). Sophia summed this up in her comment “I’ll always travel. There’s so much to see! So much to do!” Thirteen of the fourteen backpackers interviewed referred to seeing or exploring the world as one of their

main initial motivations to travel. For example, Emily wanted “to see the world and learn more”, Harry wanted to “see this side of the world” and Tom went travelling to “experience new cultures, see different things”⁷². Martin said “travelling is like opening a window and you see many things you [have] never seen before”. In these cases, backpacking was a means of seeing more of the world. This desire to see the world can also be associated with Gray’s (1970) idea of wanderlust (see section 2.2.6). This wanderlust is reflected in comments such as Emma saying she had always had a desire to travel and a curiosity about the world. She claimed she had “always kind of had it in me, the itchy feet, the grass is greener on the other side”⁷³.

A strong theme that emerged from the interviews was the desire to get away from home. The destination itself was not always so important as long as it was anywhere other than home. Jack stated that although he loved Wales, he wanted to see more of the world and said “getting out of Wales I always say yes to”. He also wanted “to take the life experience like I didn’t have back in Swansea” and to experience things he believed were unavailable to him at home. Tom said he went backpacking because “so many places are better than England so I just want to see what else is out there” and Emma felt “there was nothing for me at home [in Ireland] really”. Although somewhat tongue-in-cheek, Harry said at the very least backpacking “makes a change to [being in] England”. James stated he “just wanted to see some of the world. I mean, we live in a small little country” and later elaborated on this idea saying that prior to leaving Ireland he “was starting to really resent home and like I was getting really sick of it”. While the majority of the backpackers interviewed intended to eventually return home to live, many of them were curious to see the wider world before doing so.

⁷² While some of the backpackers, such as Tom, used the active verb ‘experience’ when referring to things not available at home, the most commonly used term was the more passive verb ‘see’. A rather literal interpretation of this emphasis on ‘seeing’ can be viewed as a reflection of Urry’s (2002) concept of the “tourist gaze”. This relates more to backpackers’ behaviour once they reach a destination rather than their initial motivation to go there and further discussion is therefore outside the scope of this thesis.

⁷³ This quote was chosen as the title of this thesis because not only does it refer to the wanderlust expressed by many of the backpackers interviewed, but also references the idea of New Zealand as a green and scenic destination on the other side of the world.

For some of the interview participants this desire to get away from home was also partially related to the weather. James and Jack commented negatively on the Irish and Welsh weather respectively. Kate said one of her motivations for backpacking was that she had started to travel to southern Europe and had “started to realise I enjoyed the sunshine a lot more, didn’t like England so much, started to get a bit of an anti-England thing going on”. While some of the backpackers interviewed stated that bad weather was a reason to leave home in the first place, New Zealand’s weather did not appear to be a factor in the backpackers’ decisions to visit the country. As Emily from Canada pointed out, if sunshine were her main motivation she would have gone to the Caribbean rather than travelling all the way to New Zealand.

Some of the backpackers interviewed suggested their desire to travel was not a personality trait specific to them but rather a national characteristic. James stated:

a lot of Irish people just travel everywhere anyway. Go everywhere and you meet an Irish person... We do travel a lot... I don’t know if it’s bred into us but everybody just wants to travel. Maybe it’s ‘cause it’s just a small country and you get sick of being in the same place.

Similarly, Katja stated “I really think that for Dutch people exploring the world or just seeing more than just Holland is so important for us”. She also referred to Abel Tasman⁷⁴ and other Dutch explorers of the seventeenth century. This suggests connections remain between contemporary Dutch travel and the Netherlands’ history as a colonial power. However, the idea of travel as a national preoccupation is not applicable to all nationalities. Neither of the Canadian interview participants mentioned travel as being important to the wider Canadian population and Martin believed long-term travel such as he was doing was in fact unusual in his home country of France (for more on the influence of nationality on backpacker motivations see Maoz, 2007; Prideaux & Shiga, 2007).

Long-term budget youth travel such as backpacking, gap years and OEs (for a definition of gap years and OEs see chapter 1) have become increasingly common and normalised in

⁷⁴ Abel Janszoon Tasman was a Dutch explorer who on 13 December 1642 became the first European to see New Zealand (Simpson, 2011).

recent years. Kate felt that for English people backpacking around Australia and New Zealand “has become quite a cultural thing. Either after school people do it, before going to university, or after university before starting their careers. It’s become very normal”. She later said that had backpacking not been so “normal” she would not necessarily have considered it as something she could do, particularly as a woman travelling alone. However, having known other women who had previously backpacked in New Zealand gave her the confidence to do it herself. This suggests that as backpacking becomes more popular and widespread, it also becomes more accessible. Similarly, increasing numbers of people taking part in an activity leads to increasing levels of infrastructure designed to cater for the activity and the activity therefore becomes even more easily accessible. This is what I believe has happened to backpacking in New Zealand (see section 1.5.2 for discussion of the scope of the backpacker industry in New Zealand).

4.1.2 Meet new people

According to the literature, one of backpackers’ main motivations is to meet new people (Pearce, 1990), both locals and fellow backpackers (Jenkins, 2000, as cited in Jenkins, 2003, p. 309; see also Godfrey, 2011). This is supported by the findings of this research project. For example, James stated he went backpacking in order to “experience new things and new cultures and meet new people”. Many interview participants emphasised meeting new people as one of the main benefits of backpacking. Harry said “you get stuck into a clique at home quite easily, you get in your comfort zone”. However, he believed this could be overcome through travelling and meeting other people whom one would not necessarily have contact with if one stayed at home. Backpacking is therefore a chance to get away from home, to both see and experience things not available at home and to meet new people one would not meet otherwise.

Eleven of the backpackers interviewed were travelling alone and they believed this forced them to interact with other travellers and meet new people. Tom stated that travelling by yourself is best because it “forces you to speak to more people because you’ve got no-one [else] to talk to”. However, Sarah did say that she found travelling by herself difficult at times and would not necessarily choose to do it again. She felt:

everyone says it's best to go on your own but I'm still not entirely sure about that. I've met loads of people and everything but I think it would be nice [to be travelling with a friend]... especially when you're just landing in places, to have someone there with you to chat to and stuff.

Several of the backpackers interviewed said they were initially intending to travel with either a partner or friend/s but became tired of waiting for the other person and instead decided to go by themselves.

While the backpackers interviewed were overwhelmingly positive about the sociality of backpacking, their social interactions seemed to be restricted to contact within the backpacking peer group rather than with the local population. All the backpackers interviewed appeared to be fairly outgoing and claimed to have made numerous new friends during their time backpacking. However, while they had interacted with and befriended other backpackers, they appeared to have had little real interaction with New Zealand locals. Several of those interviewed – particularly those without working holiday visas – mentioned that I was one of the few New Zealanders they had really spoken to during their time in the country. While she may be somewhat exaggerating, Sarah stated “I've met maybe five Kiwi people [New Zealanders] since I've been in New Zealand and everyone else is English”. Apart from some of the staff members and one Stray bus driver who stayed at the hostel for one night, I was the only New Zealander at Nomads Queenstown during the fieldwork period.

This lack of interaction between overseas backpackers and New Zealand locals is partially a result of the commercialisation of the New Zealand backpacker industry. What interaction that does occur between the two groups appears to be predominantly superficial and restricted to a commercial setting, for example, interactions with shop assistants or those working in the tourism industry such as bus drivers or bungy-jump operators. As a result of the development of the backpacker industry in New Zealand, mainstream backpackers have become relatively isolated from New Zealand locals and their daily lives⁷⁵. Backpacker

⁷⁵ In Queenstown particularly there is a distinct separation between locals and backpackers, for example, there are separate bars to cater for backpackers and it is rare to find a local in a bar that specifically targets backpackers. Friends of mine who live in Queenstown were very specific as to which bars they would

hostels have become separated from the host community and effectively become enclaves (Wilson & Richards, 2008; for more on backpacker enclaves see section 2.3.4). This situation is exacerbated by the fact that hostels and backpacker bars such as The Altitude Bar (see Base Backpackers, N.D.) are predominantly staffed by other young travellers on working holidays⁷⁶.

For some of the backpackers interviewed, the decision to backpack was not the automatic result of a decision to travel but the result of a decision relating to style of travel. Some of the backpackers were not motivated by budget constraints but instead by the perceived sociality of backpacking over other methods of travel (see also Cochrane, 2005). Harry commented “I could probably travel round and stay in hotels if I wanted to but there’s not much point. You don’t meet people and it’s a waste of money”. Instead, he chose to stay in shared dorm-rooms in backpacker hostels which he felt were more sociable and therefore made it easier for him to meet like-minded people. Later on in the interview he stated:

I imagine at some point I will check in to a hotel somewhere along the line, just for some creature comforts, just for a night or something like that. Catch up on some sleep, have a bath... Just sort of spoil myself a little bit. But mostly I plan to hostel it pretty much all the way. They’re cheap, they’re comfortable, you meet cool people.

It is debatable in this case as to whether Harry was really backpacking, flashpacking or something else altogether. However, he did still meet Pearce’s (1990) definition of a backpacker – even if he was travelling on a budget not so much out of necessity but out of a desire for a certain type of travel experience. Katja also mentioned she had not checked her German bank account at home since she started backpacking five weeks previously. She said “maybe I’ve been spending a little too much but I really just don’t care about that right

patronise and which bars were only for backpackers and therefore viewed as somewhat inferior. Sarah was the only interview participant who appeared to be aware of this disdain some locals showed towards backpackers. She knew an Englishman working in a Queenstown bar and had observed his attitude towards backpackers. She commented, “it’s just like two different worlds in one place, it’s really strange. Like, they [people who work in the local bars] all hate backpackers”. This suggests it is not only the backpackers’ actions that prevent them meeting more New Zealanders but also partially because of locals’ attitudes towards backpackers.

⁷⁶ One interview participant mentioned she was surprised to see a former workmate from home who was now working in the Queenstown backpacker industry.

now... right now is just like enjoying [sic] and having fun”. This suggests that while she was travelling on a budget, she was not travelling as frugally as the backpacker stereotype might suggest (see chapter 1).

4.1.3 Self-development and identity formation

Long-term budget travel is often promoted as a means of self-improvement and numerous scholars have drawn a relationship between travel and self-development and/or identity formation (see for example Desforges, 1998; Gogia, 2006). While few of those interviewed overtly stated they felt travel had affected their self-identity – or that the development of self-identity was a motivating factor in their decision to go backpacking – some did refer to a greater confidence in themselves as one of the benefits of backpacking.

Jessica said she had “learned a lot” about herself, while Sophia claimed “I’ve become more me, I don’t feel confined like I used to. I’ve become more free-thinking. I’ve always been free-thinking but just, I’m more relaxed”. Likewise, nineteen year old Katja felt more confident in herself and stated “I think I’ve learned that how I am back at home is really how I am and that really is special”. Emma also referred to increased self-confidence as a result of backpacking and spoke about the freedom she felt whilst backpacking compared to how she felt pressured to behave and act at home. She said:

back home it’s more of a trend, like, what’s in fashion. Whereas [while backpacking] it’s kind of... just whatever I want to wear... Like, back home you wouldn’t go out ‘cause it would be ‘oh, you’re not wearing *that* are you?’... So it’ll be interesting when I do go back... I don’t really care but it’s not like that at home, they all wear the same clothes with the same sort of style and small-town [ideas].

These quotes suggest one of the main benefits of backpacking is increased self-awareness and increased confidence in one’s own identity.

For most of the backpackers interviewed it was unclear whether they were expecting increased self-awareness or a better sense of self-identity prior to their decision to go backpacking – and therefore motivated by the desire for these things – or whether it was something they discovered whilst travelling. Exceptions included Jessica who decided to go

backpacking as a “challenge” for herself and Jack who believed travel allows you to grow “into the person you wanted to be”. Jack stated he went travelling in order to “go home different to what I was before. Like, um, with a better head on my shoulders and a better view of the world”. Sarah did not feel she had changed or learned anything whilst backpacking but did feel “it’s probably made me a bit more confident in talking to people, which I was hoping it would do”.

It is also possible that for some of the younger backpackers their increased self-awareness was not only due to their backpacking experiences but also partly as a result of moving away from their parents’ home for the first time. Twenty-two year old Jack for example said “I never got, had the chance to leave home. So this is like, my type of learning experience. My, uh, independence”. Twenty-nine year old Sophia however also felt that she had “become more me” which is particularly significant since she had not lived in the same country as her parents in nearly ten years. This suggests it was the backpacking itself that had this effect rather than simply getting away from her parents’ influence.

Tom was not impressed with the idea of some backpackers travelling in order to increase their self-identity and self-awareness. He ridiculed them and during the interview asked me:

have you spoken to anyone who said ‘oh, I came travelling because I wanted to find myself?... Ugh, there’s so many people around like that... I already know who I am, I just want to see what’s around the world.

Statements such as this suggest some backpackers are dismissive of the idea of travel as a means of increasing self-awareness and confidence in one’s own identity. The idea of going travelling in order to ‘find oneself’ has become associated with a negative stereotype relating to mainstream backpackers. Like those travellers who reject the information found in the Lonely Planet guidebooks and scorn backpackers who rely on it (see Sørensen, 2003), the idea of travelling to ‘find oneself’ has become part of a backpacking discourse from which some travellers/backpackers attempt to actively distance themselves (see also Welk, 2004 for more on ‘anti-backpackers’).

Several backpackers interviewed mentioned they felt they had become more open-minded whilst backpacking. It was unclear whether becoming more open-minded was a specific

motivation or a benefit they found once travelling. Harry felt travel “just teaches you to be a bit more open-minded about life generally”. Kate however believed she had always been “quite open-minded to people” and travelling had “more just broadened my horizons and opened my eyes up”. James elaborated on the idea of becoming more open-minded whilst travelling and said that during his time backpacking he had:

met some crazy people. It’s kind of like, maybe before, if people had done stuff or said stuff, maybe [it] might have shocked me but I don’t think it’d shock me anymore. You see some mad stuff and you end up doing some mad stuff as well yourself! It’s kind of like when you’re at home, it’s kind of like ‘oh, can’t do that’ because people might think I’m crazy or they know me or something, but when you’re away it’s like nobody really knows!

Having fewer social restrictions also allows backpackers to ‘try on’ other identities without peer and parental pressure to conform⁷⁷ (see Turner, 1987; see also section 2.2.4 for more on backpacking as a liminal space).

Backpacking helped some of the younger backpackers learn practical life skills such as budgeting and cooking for oneself. Katja said “this trip was really about exploring not only myself but also how to, what the best way is to backpack and stuff like that”, whilst Jessica felt she had learned “a lot about how to budget your money”. Similarly, Andrea felt that living away from her parents when she starts university upon her return to Germany will be easier after her experience backpacking than if she had moved there directly from her parents’ house. She said:

perhaps because I will study very far away from my home so perhaps to buy things and cooking and so on, to organize this is perhaps more easier now because I have experience now.

⁷⁷ However, that is not to say peer pressure and social expectations do not exist among backpackers. For example, there is a high expectation to drink alcohol most evenings (for more research regarding alcohol/drug use and sexual behaviour of backpackers see Bellis, Hughes, Dillon, Copeland & Gates, 2007; Hughes, Downing, Bellis, Dillon & Copeland, 2009).

Ryan felt that during his three years backpacking he had “learned how to look after myself. You just mature a lot more, you know?” However, it is unlikely the accrual of these skills were conscious motivating factors for the backpackers to leave home.

Some of the backpackers interviewed had specific aspects of themselves they hoped to improve through backpacking. Katja and Andrea wanted to improve their English whilst travelling and Emily and Harry were both unhappy with the career they had chosen and were using their time backpacking to reflect on what career they wanted to move into. Effectively, their time spent backpacking was a ‘time out’ before making a decision regarding their future career. As Harry said, he was “kind of hoping for a moment of inspiration to hit me whilst I’m away!”

4.1.4 Cultural capital

Travel has historically been perceived as a means of accruing status or cultural capital and this is reflected in the literature (see Desforges, 1998; Munt, 1994). Many of the backpackers interviewed – particularly those who had always wanted to travel – could not understand why someone would not want to travel. James had four older sisters who had backpacked when they were his age. However, his older brother had not travelled. James said:

I was always kind of taught... [travel] kind of broadens your mind a lot and you experience new things and you’re more open-minded to stuff. He [older brother] kind of seems like a closed book in a person... I kind of couldn’t understand why somebody wouldn’t want to travel.

Kate said “I definitely think everyone should get out there and see the world”. While the backpackers interviewed may not have used the term ‘cultural capital’, many of them suggested they felt superior to peers at home who had not travelled. Jessica believed travel “opens up your eyes ‘cause people who don’t travel, they just stay in their own little world” while Kate said “I think it’s a shame, people who don’t travel and see what’s outside their front door”.

Ryan referred to people who have not travelled as being stuck in a “bubble”⁷⁸. Harry expanded on this idea, saying:

I’ve met a lot of people [at home] who have had very sheltered lives. People who haven’t been anywhere, haven’t seen anything and they just have a completely different outlook on life and everything that’s not what they’re used to is alien. Things are alien and different but you accept them and try them and experience them. If you don’t like them, you don’t like them, but try them first.

People who had not travelled were scorned by some of the backpackers interviewed and were dismissed as being somewhat ignorant and unadventurous.

It is not travel itself which provides cultural capital but the method or type of travel chosen (see Desforges, 1998; O’Reilly, 2006). As well as being dismissive of those who have not travelled, Harry was dismissive of certain types of tourists or travellers. He said:

people who just – from England for example – go to Mallorca and go to all the English pubs. They just want to be English but on the beach. Whereas I think when you’re travelling you’ve got to experience other things.

By belittling these tourists and their experiences Harry was able to identify himself as being different to them, in the same way anti-backpackers identify themselves as different to mainstream backpackers (see Welk, 2004). Similarly, Sophia was adamant to point out during her interview that she was not a “flashpacker” (see section 1.4.3). She said “most people in here [Nomads Queenstown] are ‘flashpackers’ we call them. I would not normally stay in a hostel like this”. Like anti-backpackers, Sophia identifies herself in contrast to what she is not.

A reoccurring theme in the interviews was the idea that backpacking by oneself was somehow ‘better’ than backpacking with a friend or partner. Jessica said “it’s more of a challenge when you’re by yourself” while Kate thought that:

⁷⁸ Ryan’s use of the term “bubble” is reminiscent of the “tourist bubble” (see for example Craik, 1997; Jaakson, 2004) or the “backpacker enclave” (see for example Howard, 2007; Wilson & Richards, 2008). Ryan refers to people who do not travel and are in some ways insulated or isolated from the wider world. Similarly, the tourist bubble refers to tourists who do not truly engage with the local community whilst travelling but instead remain somewhat insulated or isolated from it (see also section 2.3.4).

travelling solo like I am, you obviously encounter quite a lot, a lot more challenges than perhaps you encounter when you're travelling with someone 'cause you've got someone to lean upon a lot.

Backpacking by oneself therefore results in more cultural capital than backpacking with a partner or friend/s. Part of the cultural capital one acquires as a backpacker is because of the requirement to handle unknown situations on one's own. By travelling with a partner or friend, this requirement to negotiate and overcome situations alone is partially diminished or at least diluted.

Some of the backpackers interviewed stated they were aiming to see as much as possible in the time available. Sarah "wanted to get to as many countries as possible in the time I had" while Jack came to New Zealand because:

basically it's just another place I can say I've been. Instead of just saying 'Oh, I went to Australia' I can say 'Oh, I went to Australia and New Zealand'.

He also said that:

maybe instead of going back to Australia and New Zealand again – 'cause I've already done that, I've ticked it off now – I'd maybe go to like South America or somewhere else.

His use of the phrase "I've ticked it off" is reminiscent of the commonly used backpacker term 'doing' a destination. For example, Emily said at one point during her interview "I thought I'd do Europe before I'd do Australia" and Harry said "everyone I've met who's been to Australia has done New Zealand as well". These quotes suggest visiting a greater number of countries provides more cultural capital. There is therefore less focus on really getting to know a country and more emphasis on 'doing' or 'ticking off' as many countries as possible. This idea of 'collecting' countries also has colonial overtones in that each country is treated as being fairly interchangeable rather than a unique country with special characteristics that deserve to be appreciated in their own right.

Jack stated that because New Zealand is "out of the way it's just really cool to say that you've been there". This implies that visiting New Zealand gives backpackers from the Northern Hemisphere a higher amount of cultural capital because of the larger geographical

distance that must be covered. Jack claimed “everyone’s been to Australia but then New Zealand is like an extra bonus if you’ve been”. This suggests New Zealand provides backpackers with more cultural capital because it is not such a common destination. However, this is not necessarily true for all backpackers. The other backpackers interviewed all had friends and/or family who had previously visited New Zealand. Jack, however, did not know anyone else from home who had previously visited the country. He said “I’ll be the first to say back home [in Wales] ‘you’ve got to go to New Zealand’”. However, he was unsure what people at home would think. Jack stated:

I’ll try and show off [about having been to New Zealand] but I don’t think people will take it in ‘cause in Swansea I don’t think many people are partial to travelling.

This comment reflects the fact that cultural capital is only valid in so far as it is recognised and respected by others (Desforges, 1998; O’Reilly, 2005).

As well as cultural capital and other soft skills – for example, increased confidence and increased awareness of self-identity – backpacking can also provide more practical skill sets that can be stated in a curriculum vitae (see Munt, 1994; Pearce & Foster, 2006; Simpson, 2005). For example, Katja and Andrea believed their increased English skills would help them at university in the Netherlands and Germany respectively and also when looking for a job afterwards. Katja said:

I’m going to study journalism and I think as a journalist English is a very, very important language to actually control [sic] very well and I’ve been learning so much more English once I was here than what I would be back at home.

Some of these benefits – such as Katja improving her English – were specific motivations for coming to New Zealand. For others, the accrual of cultural capital was less a motivation than an added bonus – although it is possible the acquisition of cultural capital was in fact an unrecognised or subconscious motivating factor.

4.1.5 Break or escape

One of the main motivating factors for backpackers is the desire for “an extended break from life at home” (Jarvis & Peel, 2010, p. 33) and many of the backpackers interviewed

referred to their time backpacking as a break or time out (see also Godfrey, 2010). Harry stated he “just wanted a break... [and] it’s a nice lifestyle travelling”. Backpacking provides the opportunity to get away from home and associated responsibilities. According to Riley (1988) and Cohen (1973), most new travellers are at a juncture in their lives prior to travel, either having just finished university, experienced a relationship break-up or being between jobs. The experiences of the interview participants in this research appear to support the previous literature. For example, Katja and Andrea were on their summer holidays between finishing high school and starting university, while James was travelling before returning to Ireland to start post-graduate studies. Emily and Emma were part-way through degrees at home in Canada and Ireland respectively but had left university because they were not enjoying the course they were enrolled in and were unsure whether to continue. Sarah had finished university and worked for eight months with the specific intention of saving money before going travelling. Harry, Jessica and Kate left jobs they were unhappy in and decided to backpack before finding new jobs. Jessica and Kate had also had bad relationship break-ups and backpacking allowed them to – literally – distance themselves from the situation (see also Pearce, 1990).

The desire to travel is often associated with the desire to escape and tourists often travel in order to escape or take a break from the routine of their ordinary lives (Jenkins, 2003; White & White, 2004). Several of those interviewed alluded to a sense of escape when giving their reasons for going backpacking. Martin mentioned “freedom” and Jack referred to “independence”. Nineteen-year old Andrea was travelling on her summer holidays between finishing high school and starting university and she commented that her time spent backpacking was also because “perhaps I also want to come far away from my parents... to get more independent”.

White and White (2004, p. 201) point out that “travel provides a way of postponing the assumption of adult responsibilities” and some of the backpackers interviewed referred to their decision to travel as a last adventure before ‘settling down’. For example, James was backpacking for a year before returning home to become a teacher and take over the family farm in Ireland. He stated that:

I was like, I could be stuck in a job for a couple of years and then end up settling down and whatever people settling down do. So I said yeah, just a good time to go.

Jack was twenty-two years old at the time of the interview and claimed he intended to:

keep travelling until I'm thirty and then I think it's time to settle down, then it's time to look for your partner... From twenty to thirty just travel, spend all your money and get in loads of trouble and then when you're older, then sort your life out.

Their motivation to go backpacking was therefore partly an opportunity to enjoy the lack of responsibility before returning home to what they perceived as a life lacking freedom. These statements are examples of Westerhausen's (2002) idea of the "final fling" where travel is used as an opportunity to experience "an unencumbered lifestyle before settling down", finding a partner and starting a family (see also section 2.2.6).

4.1.6 "Long-held dream"

Westerhausen (2002, p. 29) referred to "the long-held dream" as a motivation for first-time long-term travellers whose decision to travel was not spontaneous but instead the fulfilment of a long-held desire. This concept was also alluded to by several of the backpackers interviewed (see Godfrey, 2010). Kate had "been wanting to travel since the age of dot" and Ryan had "always wanted to go travelling... I just never had the balls to just do it". Three of those interviewed expressed a specific long-held desire to visit New Zealand. Katja said she had wanted to go to New Zealand:

since I was fifteen. I saw Lord of the Rings and I was like, if that's all in one country then I really must see the country! And so I was like, one day I really, really want to go there.

Sarah said she had "always wanted to go and have a look around" while Sophia had "always wanted to come here" and New Zealand had "just kept popping up my entire life".

For many of the backpackers interviewed, backpacking was a long-held dream and they were simply waiting for the right opportunity. Kate said that "as I got older I knew that travelling was never going to go away until I decided to get it out of my system... it was

just sort of waiting for the right time really”. Many thought this might be the only time they could take such an extended period of time away from home. For example, Katja stated:

probably there’s never going to be any chance that I will have some holiday for eight weeks and I was like ‘if I don’t go now then I probably will never go again’... it is just the best time.

James believed this would his last chance to go backpacking before inheriting the family farm. He said “I don’t think I’ll be able to get away for as long as I have this year ‘cause I have to go back and look after the farm and teach and all that”.

Thirty-four year old Martin felt he would soon be too old to backpack. He said:

my life made me wait... and after I get rid of everything and do it this time now [sic], otherwise I will do it at forty years old and that’s too old, I have other things to do.

While backpacking and extended budget travel have generally been perceived as the preserve of the young (see for example Hannonen, 2003; Loker, 1991; Pearce, 1990), this is changing (see for example Maoz, 2008). ‘Young’ is a subjective term and it is possible for travellers in their forties and over to meet Pearce’s (1990) other defining criteria (see section 1.3) and therefore – potentially – be defined as backpackers. While Pearce (1990) and Hannonen (2003) define backpackers as young, these older backpackers are instead ‘young-at-heart’.

A strong theme that emerged from the interviews was the idea of backpackers deciding to go travelling at this point in their lives because of a lack of ties or commitments to home. As Jessica said “I was also twenty-three so just the timeframe for me to take off was right then before I actually got heavily involved”. Harry said he went travelling now because:

the situation, circumstances at home were right for it. I don’t have a mortgage right now. I don’t have a missus at the moment either so I don’t have anything really tying me down at home.

Things the backpackers suggested could hold them back included a long-term partner⁷⁹, children, a mortgage, sick parents or a good job⁸⁰ at home.

Kate said that prior to leaving London she had:

got to a point where I think a lot of people get to in life and in jobs where it just has run its course. So, I was ready to move on with my job, I wasn't happy in the second house I'd moved to in London, I wasn't happy with the area, me and my partner split up, and I was just 'now I think might be the time'... I was like 'no, you're ready to go. Everything's pretty rubbish right now, if there's a time to leave then now is it'. And I thought, you're only young once, and the longer you leave it... the harder it'll be to leave 'cause you'll get more commitments and things like that. I just thought, 'now's your chance!'

Kate had always wanted to travel and the coming together of several aspects of her life provided the opportunity to go backpacking so she decided to make the most of it.

Another idea that emerged from the interviews was that of backpacking as something the backpackers felt they had to do or they would later regret not doing. As James said, "I've always wanted to do this and I don't want to regret [not going]". This appeared mainly to be in relation to overcoming the fear associated with leaving home and stepping into the unknown. Ryan said he had "always wanted to go travelling... I just never had the balls to just *do* it, you know?" However, not all those who have the motivation or desire to go backpacking will have the time and/or money to depart on an extended trip. As James commented, "I suppose it was always the money thing and time. I could never afford to go before now". Katja made a similar comment saying "there are loads of people who are

⁷⁹ Romantic relationships and partners – or lack thereof – often played a role in the backpackers' decision regarding when to travel. While both Emma and Jessica left home partially in response to a relationship break-up, Sophia initially thought about coming to New Zealand because her "boyfriend last year was coming out here and he kept asking me to come out here with him". They broke up before either of them left Ireland but it was her boyfriend who initially pushed Sophia to travel. Similarly, Emma went backpacking to Australia partly because her boyfriend Ryan – another of the interview participants – had already gone. In comparison to the women, James broke up with his girlfriend in Ireland specifically so he could go backpacking. He said "I pretty much broke up with my girlfriend and everything, just decided to be selfish for once and head off". Tom also broke up with his girlfriend shortly before leaving for New Zealand.

⁸⁰ Of the backpackers interviewed, only thirty-four year old Martin had a guaranteed job to return to after his travels.

willing to do it [go backpacking] but just don't have the time" while Jack said "it all comes down to, like, money sometimes, so you've got to budget".

One aspect that emerged from these interviews that has not previously arisen in the backpacker motivation literature is the effect of the recent global financial crisis (see Kollewe, 2009; Lynch, 2010). Jessica and Harry both left their jobs in finance because the recession was making work difficult and they saw it as a good time to get out. Harry and James had always wanted to travel and the recession meant now was a good time to go. The impact of the recession was particularly emphasised by the Irish backpackers which reflects how hard the Irish economy has been affected in recent years (Elliott, 2010; McDonald, 2009). For Emma and Ryan, the recession and lack of jobs at home in Ireland had pushed them to extend their working holiday for longer than they might have had there been jobs available at home. Ryan stated that "Ireland's not really looking too good, like the last few years, the recession and that" and said his had parents discouraged him from returning to Ireland because there was no work. Instead they told him to "just stay out there and enjoy yourself". Similarly, James mentioned that he had numerous university friends from Ireland doing engineering work in Australia because "Ireland's taken a crash the last two years, like major crash. It's pretty bad now for work and people are in so much debt".

4.2 Why backpackers choose New Zealand as a destination

Four main reasons for choosing New Zealand as a destination emerged from the interviews and each of these is discussed in more detail. Overwhelmingly, the main reason the backpackers gave for coming to New Zealand related to the country's natural scenery. New Zealand is a highly recommended destination and thirteen of the fourteen backpackers interviewed had friends and/or family who had previously visited the country. The idea of the "backpacker route" (see section 4.2.3) and the impact of New Zealand's geographic location are also discussed. Maori culture was not found to be a major motivating factor in the backpackers' decision to travel to New Zealand and the backpackers' comments regarding Maori culture are examined. This section addresses the research question asking why backpackers specifically decide to travel to New Zealand.

4.2.1 Scenery

Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott (2002, p. 348) state that New Zealand's scenery and natural landscape is "fundamentally... what brings the majority of visitors to the country". Almost all of those interviewed mentioned New Zealand as a scenic place with beautiful landscapes and many stated it was the main reason they came to New Zealand (see also Godfrey, 2011). For example, Andrea said "I decided to come to New Zealand because the nature is really different...I'm mostly interesting [sic] in the nature and countryside⁸¹". Other comments included Kate saying "everyone knows how beautiful New Zealand, Australia or things that are out there", while Harry had "been told it's amazingly relaxed, beautiful scenery, mountains" and Martin said "I knew that one of the best landscapes in the world are [sic] here". Tom said:

before I'd even set off from England I was saying we've got to go to New Zealand because you hear great things... It's scenic, the South Island is, very nice to go round, got your walks, so many adventure things to do.

The fact that the backpackers interviewed were predominantly attracted to New Zealand because of its natural beauty reflects the findings of previous research (see for example Bell, 2008; Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2002; Tucker, 2005) and supports Tourism New Zealand's use of the country's natural landscape and unspoilt scenery in their marketing campaign 100% PURE New Zealand (see Bell, 2008).

The Lord of the Rings film trilogy has also had an influence on exposing New Zealand's "spectacular mountain views" and "very unspoiled natural beauty" to a wider international audience (Tucker, 2005, p. 271). In this research, six of those interviewed mentioned Lord of the Rings as a source of knowledge about New Zealand scenery. For example, Sophia said she came to New Zealand because she:

⁸¹ Andrea initially wanted to go to language school in South Africa but her parents said no "because a blond and white girl and so on, it can be dangerous sometimes there". She wanted to go to South Africa because of the scenery and New Zealand appealed for similar reasons.

wanted to see the scenery. I'd seen it in all these films and I was just like 'it looks amazing!' and it [was] just like 'no, you can't have the beach and then snow and mountains' and I've come over and I'm in awe.

As well as the Lord of the Rings trilogy, Sophia also mentioned other New Zealand films including The World's Fastest Indian, Heavenly Creatures and Black Sheep.

While the scenery portrayed in the Lord of the Rings trilogy or the Narnia films and the images used in the 100% PURE campaign further reinforce the image of New Zealand as a scenic destination, this emphasis on unspoiled scenery can have unintended consequences in how New Zealand is imagined by potential backpackers overseas (see also Godfrey, 2011). For example, Sarah, a twenty-two year old backpacker from England was talking about toilets and showers and stated:

I imagine Thailand to be quite third world, I don't know if I'd like it for a long period of time... I sort of expected here [New Zealand] to be like that a bit but it's nothing like that at all, it's just quite normal.

This misperception is likely to be due to the fact that "New Zealand promotes itself to the world largely as a remote place with an incredible, unique and varied landscape" (Bell, 2008, p. 346). There is little room in this image for Wellington sky-scrapers, Auckland suburbs or Christchurch factories.

Somewhat surprisingly, adventure tourism did not appear to be a motivating factor in the backpackers' decisions to come to New Zealand (see Godfrey, 2011). While almost all of the backpackers interviewed had taken part in some sort of adventure tourism during their time backpacking, only Tom specifically mentioned coming to New Zealand in order to experience "the adventure stuff". Most of the backpackers instead appeared to perceive adventure tourism and adrenaline activities as a welcome additional bonus rather than a motivating factor. A typical comment was that of Harry who said he had "contemplated a bungy but I'm not overly fussed about it" (see also section 5.3).

4.2.2 Recommended by friends and/or family

New Zealand is a popular, well-developed tourism destination (Cave, Thyne & Ryan, 2008). All but one of the backpackers interviewed had friends and/or family who had previously visited New Zealand and nine of the backpackers stated in their interviews that their decision to come to New Zealand was influenced by friends and/or family who recommended it as a destination. James said “I had friends and family who have all travelled and all said, like, ‘get to New Zealand because it’s just totally different to everywhere else’”. Similar comments were made by Kate who said:

I wasn’t even going to come to New Zealand. I was inspired and encouraged and told I had to come to New Zealand by so many people that it became a bit of a ‘I need to go suss it out then and figure out what it’s all about’.

This reliance on recommendations from family and/or friends reflects the literature which emphasises word-of-mouth as a strong source of information about tourist destinations (for more on backpackers and word of mouth see Ireland, 2005; Noy, 2004).

The majority of the backpackers interviewed said they too would actively recommend New Zealand as a destination to friends at home. None of the backpackers interviewed mentioned anyone at home who had discouraged them or told them of a bad experience in New Zealand⁸². None mentioned being disappointed by their trip and none suggested they would discourage other acquaintances from coming to New Zealand. Emma said “we’d heard it was a nice country and we wanted to come here. We’ll recommend it as well, get other people over”.

Several of the backpackers interviewed mentioned returning to New Zealand at a later date. Emily said “I want to come back to New Zealand. I love it!” Sarah, Tom and James were all seriously considering coming back to New Zealand in the future – James was talking of bringing his parents and Sarah suggested she might apply for a working holiday visa for the following year. Sophia was considering applying for residency and Harry said he would

⁸² Although New Zealand is not necessarily the idyllic destination tourists often perceive it to be (see for example Morales, 2010; for more on accidents in New Zealand’s adventure tourism industry see section 2.3.3).

consider retiring to New Zealand in the future. The main reason the other backpackers gave for not coming back to New Zealand was the desire to see somewhere new instead. As Ryan said “it’s a great country New Zealand, it’s really nice... [but] it wouldn’t be top of my list like, you know? There’s [sic] so many [other] countries in the world” (see section 4.1.4).

The backpackers I met in Queenstown – both those I interviewed formally and those I met informally at the hostel – were all overwhelmingly positive about their time in New Zealand. Although it is possible that they were merely telling me this in order to be polite given that I am a New Zealander⁸³, I believe this is unlikely since the opinions were freely volunteered rather than in response to any particular questioning from me on the topic (see also section 3.6). Several of the backpackers were also quite specific regarding their future plans to re-visit New Zealand which suggests they were not merely throwaway comments but were instead something the backpackers had been seriously considering.

4.2.3 The “backpacker route”

Ateljevic and Doorne (2001, p. 133) argue that because of the distance required to travel to New Zealand – and the resulting high cost – backpackers from the Northern Hemisphere travelling to New Zealand normally do not visit only New Zealand but instead include it within a longer trip often incorporating Australia, one or more of the Pacific Islands and/or parts of South-East Asia. The findings of this research support Ateljevic and Doorne’s (2001) statement as only three of those interviewed were not going to Australia either before or after their time in New Zealand⁸⁴ (see also Godfrey, 2011). Many of those interviewed also mentioned this directly, for example, Harry said “everyone I’ve met who’s been to Australia has done New Zealand as well” and James said “it’s like another thing to do down here. Can’t come this far [to Australia] and not come to New Zealand”. Sarah

⁸³ All the backpackers interviewed were well aware I was from New Zealand and some of them used the pronoun “you” in their interviews to refer to New Zealanders. For example, Martin said “skin cancer I think is a big concern for you, well, you, New Zealanders”. They also asked me numerous questions about New Zealanders and New Zealand culture and for recommendations on where they should visit during their time in the country.

⁸⁴ One of these, Tom, had previously been to Australia which was also when he first visited New Zealand.

said, “Australia and New Zealand are the two main places that people talk about going”. These comments suggest New Zealand and Australia are very much linked in backpackers’ minds.

For over half of those interviewed, New Zealand was simply an add-on to a longer trip (see also Ateljevic & Doorne, 2001; Kain & King, 2004). As Martin pointed out, New Zealand “was on the way between Australia and South America... So it was on the way, too close to escape”. Kate said:

it actually didn’t cost any more to add in New Zealand [to her round-the-world trip] and also, I kind of realised I needed to kill a month ‘cause I didn’t want to get to Australia in the bad weather... so yes, I thought ‘why not?’

Similar sentiments were expressed by Emma who said “we went to Australia for two years before that and then instead of going home, New Zealand was closer so we got a year’s visa for New Zealand”. Some backpackers who included New Zealand simply because it was en route expressed surprise at how much they enjoyed their time in the country. Kate was not originally planning to come to New Zealand but said she was impressed by how much she loved New Zealand and that “definitely this country has wowed and impressed me”.

For some backpackers interviewed there was no specific reason to come to New Zealand so much as it was simply where one goes. Sarah from England said “I didn’t really research into what I was doing at all, just picked all the most popular places and got a round-the-world” ticket. These findings reflect those by Tucker (2005 & 2007) who found that some backpackers saw New Zealand simply as “a place people just want to come to” (Tucker, 2005, p. 271) or a “cool” place to go (Tucker, 2007, p. 146). New Zealand is perceived as being an almost compulsory stop on the backpacker round-the-world route. According to James, “people from Ireland usually just do like the round-the-world trip for a year. Like, they do Oz [Australia], New Zealand, Asia and then they fit in some of America”.

Kate from England referred to the “backpacker route” and stated:

I think I’m just on the backpacker trail now... There’s a company... called STA Travel that send everyone from England on the same route. I went anti it by going the other direction around the world but it’s still the same route. And everyone does like a few

weeks in Asia usually, a month or three months in Australia, a month or so here doing Kiwi Experience, then a week in Fiji and then one or two days in L.A. and then home. And I just kind of extended it and did it slightly different... So I did my own trip a bit more but that, that's the backpacking route.

Of the fourteen backpackers interviewed, Sarah, Kate and Martin were following this “backpacker route” and including the United States, Fiji, New Zealand, Australia and South-East Asia on their round-the-world trip – although not necessarily in that order. Jack went to Fiji, Australia and South-East Asia while Ryan, Emma and James were also visiting Australia and Asia during their trip to New Zealand. While I have not differentiated between backpackers based on what order they visited each country, Sarah said she had “done it backwards to everyone else ‘cause I’m going to Australia and back via Thailand rather than Thailand, Oz and here”. This suggests that even when including the same destinations, there is still considered to be a ‘right’ way to backpack around-the-world.

4.2.4 Maori culture

Five of the fourteen backpackers interviewed did not mention Maori culture at all during their interview. Of those who did mention it, none knew more than a few basic facts before arriving and what they did know was mostly related to the haka at rugby matches. Six of the backpackers interviewed, however, did mention learning more about Maori culture during their time in New Zealand. For example, Katja said she learned “about the Maori because I’ve been doing the Tamaki⁸⁵ dinner in Rotorua so there you really just *see* how it works instead of just hearing it” and Sophia from England who said “I knew there were, like, white people and Maoris [sic] but I didn’t know much about it. I’ve learned a lot more since I’ve come over here”.

Tom had been to New Zealand once before and was very keen to learn more about Maori culture during his second visit. He said:

⁸⁵ The Tamaki Maori Village Tours are a popular tourist attraction based in Rotorua and claim to be “a 3 hour journey into the heart of Maori Culture [sic]” (see Tamaki Maori Cultural Village, N.D.).

I wanted to experience it, see the culture, experience the adventure stuff to do. Before when I came I didn't get to see any maraes⁸⁶ or anything like that, even see how the Maoris live and things. While I was in the North Island I got to experience that... Also, I've had quite a few of their meals [hangi⁸⁷] now... fantastic they are.

None of the backpackers interviewed were specifically motivated to come to New Zealand because of the opportunity to learn more about New Zealand history and/or Maori culture. While the backpackers interviewed appeared to perceive learning about Maori culture as an added bonus, it did not appear to be a motivating factor in their decision to come to New Zealand.

There was a certain shallowness to the cultural experiences the backpackers took part in. While Tom and some of the other backpackers claimed to be interested in Maori culture, most of their comments revolved around visiting a marae, seeing a show or trying a hangi and none of them mentioned anything about New Zealand history or colonisation. Sophia was the exception in that she spoke briefly about Pakeha⁸⁸/Maori relations. None of the backpackers mentioned having visited Waitangi⁸⁹ or any other important historical or cultural sites in New Zealand. Some of the backpackers such as James were sceptical about the authenticity of their cultural experience. He said:

we went on a Maori night up in Rotorua. That was brilliant, really enjoyed that. It was good to see it. Don't know how real it was but [sic], probably not, but it was good to see it.

⁸⁶ A marae is "the area in front of the meeting house, the centre of tribal life and sometimes equated to a village square..., but often now used for the complex of buildings and grounds around the marae" (Macalister, 2005, p. 71).

⁸⁷ A hangi is a traditional Maori cooking method and is defined as "an earth oven consisting of a hole dug in the ground... with the bottom lined with heated stones, or the food cooked in it" (Macalister, 2005, p. 12).

⁸⁸The term 'Pakeha' refers to "a New Zealander of European descent" and while it is a generally accepted term, it is controversial among some groups (Macalister, 2005, p. 90).

⁸⁹ Waitangi is a historically significant and well-known site in New Zealand. It is the site where Maori and the British Crown signed the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 and is often referred to as "the birthplace of New Zealand as a nation" (Waitangi National Trust, 2008).

Although James was aware of the lack of authenticity in the cultural display, he still enjoyed the experience (for more on staged authenticity see MacCannell, 1976).

A strong feeling that emerged from the interviews was the idea that one learned about Maori culture in the North Island specifically, rather than New Zealand more generally. For example, Harry said “I don’t know anything about Maori culture, [because] I haven’t been up to the North Island”. Four of the backpackers interviewed had not visited the North Island at the time of the interview and the majority of the backpackers interviewed were spending significantly longer in the South Island as they believed there was better scenery and more to see and do. This also supports the idea that backpackers are more interested in the native scenery than in New Zealand history and Maori culture (see also McIntosh, 2004).

4.3 Chapter summary

This chapter discusses the findings of this research. The first section examines why backpackers initially decide to leave home, while the second section explores why backpackers choose New Zealand specifically as a destination. Although this chapter has described the two sections separately, the two parts of the research question are connected. The decision to go backpacking and the choice of destination are often part of the same decision-making process. Similarly, the themes identified within each section are also related.

All but one of the backpackers interviewed referred to seeing or exploring the world as one of their main motivations for going backpacking. The backpackers interviewed stated they chose to go backpacking in order to meet new people and several stated backpacking had forced them to become more confident when speaking to new people. However, as much as the backpackers emphasised meeting new people whilst travelling, the people they met and befriended in New Zealand tended to be almost exclusively other backpackers rather than New Zealand locals.

Backpacking is often promoted in the literature as a time of self-development and identity formation (see chapter 2) and the findings of this research project support this idea. Several

of the backpackers interviewed stated they had gained confidence and become more open-minded and confident whilst backpacking. Backpacking and travel in general are also often associated with increased cultural capital and several of the backpackers interviewed suggested they saw themselves as somewhat superior to people who have not travelled.

Backpacking was often referred to as a means of escape or a break or time out from the responsibilities and routine of home. This desire to get away from home is also connected with the aforementioned desire to see new places and meet new people. In these cases the backpackers were looking for something different to what was available at home. Many of the backpackers interviewed had been wanting to travel for a long time – several years in some cases – and were simply waiting for the right time. For most, the decision to go now was related to a lack of commitments at home, for example, a good job, a long-term partner, children or a mortgage. Several of the backpackers also articulated a strong belief that if they did not go backpacking now, they would regret it later in life. This idea of backpacking being something they believed they needed to do also relates to the idea of backpacking as a means of self-development and identity formation (see section 4.1.3).

The literature repeatedly states tourists come to New Zealand because of the country's scenery and natural landscapes (see for example Bell, 2008; Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2002; Tucker, 2005) and this idea was reflected and reinforced by the findings of this research project. Almost all of the backpackers interviewed mentioned New Zealand's natural scenery as one of their main reasons for coming to the country and this also relates to the backpackers' desire to see new things and explore the wider world. New Zealand was perceived as a popular, highly recommended destination. For some backpackers interviewed there was no specific reason to come to New Zealand so much as it was simply on the "backpacker route". While the backpackers interviewed did not mention this as a specific reason for choosing New Zealand as a destination, I would argue that travelling to a destination popular with other backpackers also ensured the backpackers would be more

likely to meet other like-minded people⁹⁰. Maori culture did not appear to be a major factor in the backpackers' decision to come to New Zealand.

Backpackers travel for a myriad of reasons. Interviews with fourteen backpackers cannot be said to be representative of all backpackers. However, in fitting with a phenomenological study such as this (see chapter 3), the findings of this research project can be extrapolated and thought to be suggestive of the motivations of a wider group of backpackers. This chapter has described and discussed the findings of this research. Chapter 5 interprets these findings with the intention of uncovering what conclusions can be drawn from this research and the wider implications of these findings.

⁹⁰ Meeting other people is not only one of Pearce's (1990) defining criteria of backpackers but was also one of the backpackers' motivating factors that emerged from this research (see section 4.1.2).

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Implications

This research project has questioned what initially motivates backpackers to leave home and explores why they choose New Zealand as a destination. This chapter elaborates on chapter 4, drawing conclusions from the findings and suggesting what these imply for both the current academic literature and the tourism industry. This research project has highlighted six main reasons backpackers leave home: to explore the wider world, to meet new people, as a means of self-development or identity formation, as a means of accruing cultural capital, as a break or time out and/or as the culmination of a long-held dream. Each of these factors were introduced in chapter 4 and are explored further in this chapter.

Three main reasons emerged from the research project to explain why backpackers choose New Zealand as a destination: New Zealand's natural scenery, the fact New Zealand is a highly recommended destination and the idea of the backpacker route which reflects New Zealand's popularity as a backpacker destination⁹¹. These factors are discussed below in more detail along with suggestions of what this means for the New Zealand backpacker industry. Finally, I have suggested some issues that arose during this research project that require further research. This chapter concludes by summarising the findings of this research project and emphasising the importance and implications of these findings.

5.1 Why backpackers leave home

The majority of backpackers interviewed for this research project stated they left home predominantly because of the desire to see and experience the wider world and to meet new people. This suggests backpackers perceive backpacking as a means of experiencing things unavailable – or at the very least, things they believe are unavailable to them – at home. The backpackers interviewed expressed a strong sense of wanderlust (Gray, 1970) or curiosity about the world. Compared to other modes of travel, backpacking is traditionally

⁹¹ While Maori culture is discussed in section 4.2.4, it was not found to be a motivating factor and therefore is not discussed here (however, the implications of Maori culture not being a motivating factor are touched on in section 5.3).

more closely associated with ideas of authenticity, getting off the beaten track⁹² and really getting to know a country (Gogia, 2006; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003; Welk, 2004). Backpacking appeals as a style of travel because it is thought to be more authentic and therefore more likely to expose the backpackers to things other than what they are used to finding at home (see section 2.3.4).

Twenty-first century society is increasingly mobile and travel is becoming more and more common (see Gogia, 2006; Hannam, Sheller & Urry, 2006; Tesfahuney, 1998). Advances in technology have made travel faster and more affordable and have also led to improved knowledge about the wider world and increased communication between countries. For many travellers, I would argue this increased exposure to foreign places has not satisfied their desire for knowledge about the wider world but merely fed their desire for travel and exposed them to more potential destinations (for more on wanderlust see Gray, 1970). As Tom said, there are “so many beautiful things out there, you know? [I] just want to see them all. You see it on a photo but photos never do anything justice”. While Tom had seen photos of New Zealand landscapes, this had merely piqued rather than satisfied his interest and he wanted to travel the world and see these things for himself.

Travel in general and youth travel in particular are often associated with increased self-development and an increased sense of self-identity (Gogia, 2006; Desforges 1998 & 2000; Obenour, 2004). Backpacking allows young people to become independent by physically removing themselves from home and exploring other ways of life – whether it be the culture of the local people of the place they are visiting or the culture and viewpoints of other backpackers they meet during their journey. Several of the backpackers interviewed for this research project stated they had become more confident and independent as a result

⁹² While I would argue the backpacker industry in New Zealand has become so commercialised it is almost impossible for backpackers to get off this ‘beaten track’, that does not detract from the fact that the quest for authenticity and a ‘real’ experience still plays a significant role in the backpacker imagination (see section 2.3.4). This emphasis on getting off the beaten track contradicts backpackers’ statements that they want to see as many countries as possible during their time spent travelling (see section 4.1.4). While traditionally backpacking focussed on depth and really getting to know a country, I would argue for contemporary backpackers the focus is often on breadth and seeing as many places as possible.

of their backpacking although whether this was a positive side-effect to their backpacking experience or a specific motivating factor was unclear.

However, not all the backpackers interviewed agreed with the idea of travel as a means of self-development. Tom, for example, argued he already knew who he was and backpacking was simply a means of seeing the world and having some fun. Like those who reject guidebooks such as Lonely Planet which they associate with mainstream backpackers (Sørensen, 2003), Tom's stance is – perhaps purposefully – in contrast to more mainstream backpackers who often subscribe to the idea of backpacking as a means of 'finding oneself'⁹³. I would also argue this backlash exhibited by Tom could also be partially in response to the increased 'spiritualisation' of travel. For example, the recent film 'Eat Pray Love' based on the 2006 book of the same name by Elizabeth Gilbert⁹⁴ emphasises the 'spirituality' of travel and the association between travel and self-reflection⁹⁵.

Travel is often associated with the accumulation of cultural capital and the backpackers interviewed exhibited a strong sense of superiority compared to people who have not travelled. Those who had not travelled were referred to as "closed book[s]" and living in a "bubble". Unlike some previous research (see for example Simpson, 2005) the backpackers interviewed for this research project did not generally perceive their travel experience as being particularly beneficial career-wise but were instead focused on travel making them more open-minded and more knowledgeable human beings – although it is fair to assume they believed this would make them more employable. Martin was the only exception and stated:

I'm so proud of it [backpacking] so I even want to put it on the first line of my curriculum vitae. 'Fifteen months on the road!' and then after what I've done at school.

⁹³ See for example the i-to-i website (N.D.) which states "it may sound like a cliché, but many travellers talk about 'finding themselves'. Discovering new places is a great way to let your inhibitions go and open your mind".

⁹⁴ For more on both the book and the film 'Eat Pray Love' see <http://www.elizabethgilbert.com/>.

⁹⁵ Other research has also focused on the spirituality associated with travel, particularly in India (see for example Kraft, 2007; Maoz, 2007). The 'pray' section of 'Eat Pray Love' is also based at an ashram in India. It is possible backpackers for whom spiritualism and 'finding oneself' are significant motives may be more likely to visit India than New Zealand.

Andrea and Katja also mentioned that improving their English would be beneficial to them in their personal lives and for their studies and when looking for a job in the future.

Comments from the backpackers interviewed suggest they perceive their time travelling as distinct and relatively separate from their lives at home. Harry referred to backpacking as a “break” and comments from other backpackers suggested they perceive their time spent travelling as a ‘time out’ from their ‘normal’ or ‘real’ life at home. For example, Martin said:

I have to face my new life after. Because I will come back to – I live in Spain – and I will go back to Spain to take my life again, my job. It’s a normal life, it’s a boring life.

Backpacking allows for an escape and a chance to get away from responsibilities at home (O’Reilly, 2006). Backpacking is also a chance to forget about long-term consequences and instead be somewhat selfish and enjoy oneself (see Redfoot, 1984).

A strong theme that emerged from the interviews was the idea of travel as something one could only do whilst young. The backpackers interviewed suggested they would be prevented from travelling once they had a partner and started a family. They referred to the idea of needing to go backpacking now while they still have the chance, before settling down with a partner, children and a mortgage (see also Westerhausen, 2002 for more on the idea of backpacking as a “final fling”). While research focusing on older backpackers (see for example Maoz, 2008) has shown it is still possible to backpack at all ages, this did not appear to be accepted by the backpackers interviewed. While several of them intended to continue travelling, they did not feel they would be able to go backpacking once they started a family.

5.2 New Zealand as a backpacker destination

Almost all the backpackers interviewed for this research project stated their main reason for coming to New Zealand was New Zealand’s scenery and naturally beautiful landscape. This emphasis on natural scenery being New Zealand’s main draw-card also reflects the findings of previous studies (see for example Bell, 2008; Morgan, Pritchard & Piggott, 2002; Tucker, 2005). Several of the backpackers interviewed mentioned the Lord of the

Rings film trilogy as one source of information about New Zealand's scenery. All of the backpackers interviewed had pre-conceived images of New Zealand based on photographs and films they had seen prior to their arrival in the country (see also Urry, 2002 and his work on the tourist gaze).

One of the main reasons the backpackers interviewed came to New Zealand was the country's geographical location close to both Australia and the South Pacific and en-route between South-East Asia and the Americas. For many backpackers from Europe and Britain, this makes New Zealand ideally located when travelling 'round-the-world'. Kate referred to the "backpacker route" which she stated included Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Los Angeles (see section 4.2.3). For more than half the backpackers interviewed New Zealand was merely an add-on to a longer trip. This suggests a significant proportion of tourists to New Zealand do not travel to the country because of any specific attraction to New Zealand but for more pragmatic reasons such as it being conveniently close to other popular destinations and relatively cheap to add on to a longer trip around the world.

New Zealand is an extremely popular tourist destination and all but one of the backpackers interviewed had friends and/or family members who had previously visited the country. Nine of the backpackers had friends and/or family members who had specifically recommended New Zealand as a destination and the majority of the backpackers interviewed volunteered that they too would recommend New Zealand as a destination; when questioned directly none of the backpackers interviewed said they would discourage anyone from visiting New Zealand.

The idea of New Zealand as a recommended destination is closely connected to the idea of the backpacker route. The backpacker route developed because of the geographical proximity of several popular backpacker destinations. As former backpackers recommended the route it became increasingly established in the backpacker imagination. Increasing numbers of backpackers following this specific route led to infrastructure being established to provide for this flow of backpackers and the route thereby became increasingly entrenched (see also Wheeler & Wheeler, 2005 and their comments on the hippie trail of the 1970s).

5.3 Marketing implications⁹⁶

When marketing to backpackers it is important to remember not all backpackers are the same (see Thyne, Davies & Nash, 2005). ‘Backpacker’ has now become an umbrella term encompassing, but not limited to: flashpackers on short-term holidays, mainstream or commercial backpackers travelling on hop-on/hop-off backpacker buses, those travelling long-term on a very limited budget⁹⁷, working holiday makers⁹⁸, those combining backpacking with volunteer work or WWOOFing⁹⁹, English language students backpacking before and/or after their course and many more¹⁰⁰. This heterogeneity can lead to conflict between the different groups. For example, anti-backpackers pride themselves on how different – and in their eyes, superior – they are from more commercial or mainstream backpackers. While backpackers can be segmented according to their travel style, they also vary with regards to age, nationality and numerous other factors.

A strong theme that emerged from the research was the idea of New Zealand being on the “backpacker route”. All but three of the backpackers interviewed were visiting Australia either before or after their time in New Zealand and several of the backpackers interviewed mentioned their decision to come to New Zealand was partially related to its geographical proximity to Australia. This lends support to Tourism New Zealand’s current “Go All the Way” campaign (see section 1.5.1) and suggests combined Australia-New Zealand or Pacific-wide marketing campaigns focusing on increasing the total number of backpackers

⁹⁶ This section is based on the assumption that New Zealand wishes to increase its annual number of backpackers. Debate as to whether increased numbers of backpackers visiting the country would be beneficial to New Zealand is outside the scope of this thesis.

⁹⁷ This group is possibly the closest to what Cohen (1973) referred to as “drifters”.

⁹⁸ Working holiday makers includes both ‘temporary migrants’ working long-term in one place and those predominantly travelling but occasionally doing short-term work on the road in order to earn extra spending money.

⁹⁹ WWOOF stands for Willing Workers on Organic Farms (for more information see <http://www.woof.co.nz/>).

¹⁰⁰ For example, this research does not begin to cover domestic tourists, those on Contiki-style all-inclusive tours or international students based in New Zealand and travelling in their school/university holidays. However, it is possible for members of these groups to self-identify as ‘backpackers’ for certain periods of time. There is also some overlap between backpackers and those on gap years or OEs (see section 1.3.3).

to the wider region could potentially be beneficial. This idea of travelling ‘all the way’ to New Zealand is also connected to the backpacker idea of acquiring more cultural capital as a result of visiting more countries.

New Zealand is perceived as a must-see stop on the backpacker route with a well-established backpacker industry. As a result, New Zealand continues to be recommended by former backpackers. This research emphasises the significance of word-of-mouth marketing (see section 4.2.2) and it is therefore important for the New Zealand backpacker industry to continue to meet the needs and expectations of backpackers in order to maintain the country’s position as a recommended destination.

Some of the backpackers interviewed expressed surprise at how developed New Zealand is. This suggests the images currently used to promote New Zealand perhaps over-emphasise the natural landscape and should instead include more cityscapes in order to present a better-rounded image of New Zealand (see Fowler, 2010; Godfrey, 2011). This portrayal of New Zealand as a clean, green, undeveloped landscape also led some backpackers interviewed to express surprise at the number of other backpackers and tourists they encountered during their time in the country. While the backpackers appreciate the well-developed landscape designed to cater for these large numbers of tourists, there was a distinct sense of resentment at being forced to ‘share’ their experience with other tourists.

While somewhat outside the scope of this thesis, the main complaint by backpackers in Queenstown was that hostels in New Zealand are too expensive. While dorm rooms may be relatively cheap per night when compared to the cost of a motel or hotel, for long-term backpackers hostel accommodation is one of their largest daily expenditures. Obviously this is a difficult issue to resolve but it is worth consideration by the New Zealand tourism industry as I believe the price of backpacker hostels is closely associated with the current debate over freedom camping¹⁰¹. As hostels become increasingly expensive sleeping in a car becomes a more attractive option for backpackers with very little money.

¹⁰¹ Freedom camping involves staying overnight in a public place that is not specifically designed for campers (for more on freedom camping see New Zealand Tourism Guide, 2010).

While some of the backpackers interviewed were following a very strict budget, others stated they could in fact afford to stay in hotels while travelling but had chosen to stay in backpacker hostels because of the perceived associated sociality (see section 4.1.2). While it is unclear whether these backpackers behave in similar ways to flashpackers (see section 5.4), this suggests Nomads hostels and Base Backpacker hostels are on the right track by providing up-market rooms combined with more traditional communal areas for socialising. For some backpackers, it appears the choice of backpacker accommodation is less related to budget constraints and more related to the desire to meet other like-minded travellers with whom to socialise.

Backpackers and adventure tourism are often closely intertwined in the public perception of backpacking in New Zealand. However, this research found that while all the backpackers interviewed had taken part in at least some form of adventure sport during their time in New Zealand – most often bungee jumping – this activity was perceived as an added bonus rather than a specific motivating factor. The high cost of many adventure tourism activities may also have some effect on backpackers' attitudes to adventure sports. For example, the 134m Nevis bungee-jump in Queenstown costs NZ\$260 (A J Hackett Bungee, N.D.b) which is a substantial amount of money given that one of the defining criteria of backpackers is that they are travelling on a budget (see section 1.5.1 for more on backpackers' daily spend). The backpackers interviewed appeared to have similar attitudes to cultural tourism in New Zealand and only six of the fourteen backpackers mentioned Maori culture at all during their interview¹⁰².

5.4 Possible future research

While the findings of this research add to the academic literature, they also raise questions that require further research. The main issue that emerged from this research that requires further attention is the increased heterogeneity among backpackers. In the past decade research has begun to address this topic (see chapter 1) but much more is required –

¹⁰² Although it is worth pointing out here that several of the backpackers were only part-way through their trip in New Zealand and as Maori culture is not particularly evident or promoted in Queenstown, it is possible they learned more about Maori culture later on during their trip (see also section 4.2.4).

particularly research relating to the role of nationality and age in backpackers' motivations and behaviours. Further research is also required focusing specifically on backpacker sub-groups such as flashpackers, anti-backpackers and working holiday makers. This research found some backpackers chose to stay in hostels not specifically for budgetary reasons but because of the perceived sociality of backpacking compared to other styles of travel¹⁰³. Further research is therefore required to determine whether these backpackers are in fact 'flashpackers' and whether the backpacker industry is currently meeting the needs of this backpacker sub-group. Other potential topics of further research include the impact of the recent global financial crisis on the backpacker industry and the role technology plays in the lives of contemporary backpackers and how this affects backpacker behaviours (see also Ireland, 2005).

5.5 Chapter summary

This research questioned why backpackers choose to leave home initially and why they choose New Zealand specifically as a destination. Interviews with fourteen backpackers in Queenstown suggest backpackers leave home primarily in order to explore the wider world, to meet new people, as a means of self-development, as a means of accruing cultural capital, as a break or time out and as the culmination of a long-held dream. Backpackers appear to choose New Zealand specifically as a destination because of the country's beautiful scenery and because New Zealand is a highly-recommended destination and on the "backpacker route". These findings are useful to both the academic literature but also to the New Zealand backpacker industry and the worldwide tourism industry more generally. However, the backpacker scene is constantly changing and more research is still needed to better understand backpackers both in New Zealand and worldwide.

¹⁰³ That is *not* to say that all backpackers stay in hostels and that all those staying in hostels are backpackers. The people I am referring to are those who are backpackers the majority of the time – except that they have the means to take a break from backpacking every so often and spoil themselves by staying in a more comfortable motel or hotel. They choose to backpack specifically because of the lifestyle rather than backpacking being the only style of travel they are able to afford.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet

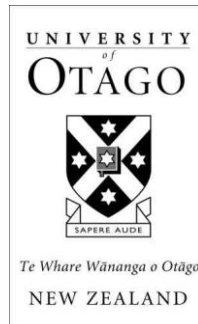
Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form

Appendix 3: Interview Checklist

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet

This study has been approved by the Department of Tourism Human Ethics Committee at the University of Otago

August 2010



MOTIVATIONS OF BACKPACKERS IN NEW ZEALAND

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?

This research is being undertaken as part of the requirements for a Master of Tourism from the University of Otago. It aims to explore what motivates backpackers travelling to New Zealand – both what motivates backpackers to leave home and what motivates them to come to New Zealand specifically.

What Type of Participants are being sought?

Participants are being recruited through Nomads Queenstown. Participants must be backpackers between the ages of eighteen and thirty. Both male and female participants are welcome. All nationalities are welcome but all participants must be backpackers – this excludes New Zealand residents and those on student visas.

What will Participants Be Asked to Do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be interviewed about your motivations and experiences as a backpacker. The interview will take place either at the hostel or in a public place and will last approximately one hour.

Please be aware that you may decide not to take part in the project without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?

All interviews will be audio-taped before being transcribed and analysed. Respondents will be asked to give permission for this in the consent form.

Every effort will be made to preserve respondent identity. All interview participants will be given a pseudonym and this will be used in the thesis and all published findings. Your age and nationality may be referred to in the results of the research. If you are willing to answer any follow-up questions via email then your name and email address will be recorded on the consent form. Your email address will be used for follow-up questions for this research project only and will not be given to anyone else.

You are welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity.

This research is partially funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Tourism. An industry report will be provided to the Ministry of Tourism at the end of this research project and this report will be freely available on their website.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

Reasonable precautions will be taken to protect and destroy data gathered by email. However, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed. Caution is advised in the electronic transmission of sensitive material.

This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes your travel history and your motivations for travel. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the Department of Tourism Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s) and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What if Participants have any Questions?

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Jane Godfrey
Department of Tourism
03 479 8164
jane.godfrey@otago.ac.nz

or

Dr. Tara Duncan
Department of Tourism
03 479 3486
tara.duncan@otago.ac.nz

Appendix 2: Participant Consent Form

This study has been approved by the Department of Tourism Human Ethics Committee at the University of Otago

MOTIVATIONS OF BACKPACKERS IN NEW ZEALAND

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. The interview will be audio-recorded;
4. The data [including audio-tapes] will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed;
5. This project involves an open-questioning technique where the precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind;
6. This research is supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Tourism and an industry report will be made freely available on their website;
7. The results of the project may be published and available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

.....
(Signature of participant)

.....
(Date)

.....
(Email address of participant if you are willing to receive follow-up questions – OPTIONAL)

Appendix 3: Interview Checklist

Background information on interview participant

- Age
- Gender
- Nationality
- Educational/job background at home prior to travelling

Previous travel experience

- Travel history: places visited, who with, what type of travel (e.g. family holiday vs. backpacking).
- Attitudes to travel: is this a once-in-a-lifetime trip or is travel something they intend to continue doing?

Current backpacking trip

- Is this part of a longer round-the-world trip or are they only visiting New Zealand? Discuss amount of time spent in New Zealand, other countries visited, total length of trip.
- Travelling companions: are they travelling alone or with friends/partner/other?

Motivations for travel

- Attitudes towards travel: is travel something they've always wanted to do or was this more of a spontaneous decision?
- Discuss reasons/motivations for travel.
- Reasons for travelling *now*: was there was a particular situational factor that motivated them to go travelling (e.g. made redundant, graduated, inherited money, broke up with partner, friends going travelling, age affecting visa requirements).
- Friends/families' attitudes towards travel: do parents support or approve of their trip? Are friends also travelling?

Travel style

- Travel companions: travelling alone or with a friend/partner or as part of a group?
- Type of travel: independently or part of a tour or a combination of both?
- Accommodation: where are they staying? (e.g. hostel, hotel, motel, campground, campervan, freedom camping, with friends or family, couchsurfing).

- Finances: how are they funding their trip? Attempt to uncover their budget and attitudes to spending during the trip.
- Attitudes towards backpacking: what is a backpacker? How are they different from tourists? Explore ideas relating to accommodation choice, age, budget, drinking/partying, types of activities, etc.
- What motivates backpackers? (i.e. What they believe motivates backpackers in general rather than their own personal motivations).

New Zealand

- Reasons for coming to New Zealand: what attracted/appealed about New Zealand as a destination?
- Previous knowledge about New Zealand: what did they know about New Zealand prior to arriving? Where did they learn this information? (e.g. friends/family, guide books, internet, films/books/documentaries).
- Attitude towards New Zealand as a destination: what do they think of New Zealand? Is it how they expected? Would they recommend it to friends? Discuss why or why not.

The return home

- Total travel time: how long do they intend to travel on this trip?
- After backpacking: what do they intend to do after returning home? Discuss any future travel plans.
- What have they learned while backpacking? These answers can be very specific (e.g. what they have learned about themselves or a destination) or very broad (e.g. what they have learned about people or the world in general).
- How have they changed as a person? Explore changes relating to identity, career prospects, whether they think they will be different from family/friends who haven't travelled etc.
- How did they expect backpacking to affect and/or change them? Discuss whether or not they feel they have changed in these ways and why or why not they feel this is the case.