CHALLENGING HOSTEL USER TYPOLOGIES:

MOTIVATIONS AND MOBILITIES IN NORWAY

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Abstract

In current academic literature hostels have frequently been identified as the primary mode of accommodation for young budget travellers, most notably in the form of backpackers. Although typically identified as a *rite de passage* for many middle-class Westerners, a need to challenge contemporary backpacker typologies was identified as potential travellers from Eastern Europe, Russia, China and Southeast Asia had become increasingly mobilised. Research has focused predominantly outside of Europe and has centred mainly in three regions – India, Southeast Asia, and Australasia. This geographically 'Eastern-centric' research orientation has thus created a regional-based definition which has been used to describe a global phenomenon. Moreover, these typologies have also neglected the motivations of travellers from non-conventional demographic backgrounds and have frequently overlooked those visiting destinations which are deemed unconventional or non-exotic. Backpacker motivations have become heavily stereotyped and rigid, yet many academics have persisted in romanticising their behavioural performances, frequently portraying their journeys as highly mobile, fluid sojourns which are built upon strong desires to attain new cultural experiences and to immerse oneself into the unknown. Building upon the research of Hannam and Ateljevic (2007), Edensor (2007) and Muzaini (2006), this thesis challenges many fundamental definitions and explores the notion that many backpackers may indeed search for the banal as opposed to maintaining its avoidance. Moreover, the role of mobility, which has been neglected from a significant proportion of academic literature on backpackers, is critically observed in order to assess its significance and validity in the overall

experience of backpacking-orientated vacations. While backpackers are frequently identified as highly mobile travellers, the thesis critically examines this notion and suggests that many may be far less mobile than originally perceived. A multi-method qualitative study was developed and undertaken between April 2008 and September, 2009 which details the accounts and experiences of 59 interviewees and additionally documents the findings from several participant observations at a total of 24 different hostels in Southern and Western Norway. The findings of this thesis suggest that the hostel user is a highly versatile character who exhibits a wide spectrum of different motivations, many of which differ considerably from observations in more typical research settings. Moreover, the accounts of many hostel users reveal that mobility is an intrinsic feature to the overall experience of their holidays, while those exhibiting similar characteristics to the conventional backpacker typology frequently opted to perform in significantly different and more *immobile* ways. The thesis therefore represents a genuine contribution to knowledge on a subject which has often failed to escape an academic obsession with creating definitions and a need to oversimplify the large diversity of motivations used to characterise them.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Increasing Significance of Backpacker Tourism

At a time when backpacking, gap years and youth travel appear to be growing at a significant rate and potential travellers from Eastern Europe, Russia, China and Southeast Asia are becoming increasingly mobilised, the need to understand this phenomenon and to subsequently be able to predict future changes is perhaps more apparent than ever before. O'Regan (2010: 146), Peel and Steen (2007) and Prideaux and Coghlan (2006) argue that the increase in backpacker movements have prompted both rising levels of transnational investment and the integration of backpacker inducing government strategies at both the micro and macro level of policy making. In both scenarios it appears that the key motivational reason behind such developments is the rising awareness of the economic potential and profitability of backpacking by both the public and private sectors. It therefore appears that backpacking, as a mode of travel, has become increasingly recognised as an important capital-generating tourism sector. As backpacking continues to increase in volume, the future appears to a potentially prosperous one, particularly for the myriad hostel organisations, budget accommodation owners and other services which elect to cater for these travellers types around the globe (Nash, Thyne and Davies 2006). However, despite the glowing appraisals of the development of backpacker travel as a global phenomenon, a paradox appears to exist which continues to undermine the advancement and development of backpacker destinations and the subsequent facilities designed to cater for them. Visser (2004: 283) argues that while backpacking has now begun to trigger a series of economic

developments at the regional level he adds that, rather frustratingly, this particular cohort has largely been overlooked until recently. Indeed, tourism *per se* has only emerged as a popular topic of research relatively recently, and was only given 'sporadic attention' until the early 1970s (Jafari and Aaser 1988). While tourism is no longer a neglected subject for research, a number of subcategories have yet to acquire the full attention of many academics, of which backpacking is just one of many examples. Research on the topic has only intermittently addressed the numerous gaps, niches and subcategories that exist within the broader sphere of backpacking, and as a consequence, a potentially significant economic contributor is yet to be fully understood.

Hannam and Ateljevic (2007: 12) have discussed how backpacking has become increasingly 'normalised' and 'institutionalised' within the tourism industry due to a greater increase in traveller mobility, which have allowed this form of tourism to move away from the marginalisation it has previously encountered and become 'accepted' (Richards and Wilson 2004a). These effects have been mirrored by the proliferation of backpacker establishments such as budget hotels and youth hostel accommodation, internet cafes and traveller bars, and backpacker-specific tour operators and services which have helped raise the profile of this particular mode of travel. Ultimately it appears that backpacking has now transcended from a 'marginal industry' to one of major importance for many local, regional and national economies (Richards and Wilson 2004a: 10; Welk 2004: 79) and therefore demands further attention in response to these changes.

While there is an obvious increase in those partaking in backpacker-style journeys and an apparent surge of backpacker-oriented establishments and services, Cohen (2004: 43) argues that academic research on the subject has been conducted irregularly and intermittently until the beginning of the 21st Century. To compound matters, research has focused almost exclusively in certain regional locations around the globe. This geographical bias has created narrow typologies, cemented common stereotypes and has effectively led to the construction of a regional-based definition or understanding which has been used to describe a global phenomenon. Backpacker research has remained focused outside of Europe and has centred mainly in three regions – India, Southeast Asia, and Australasia. This geographically 'Eastern-centric' research orientation has thus created a backpacker typology based upon the travellers found predominantly in these regions and have consequently neglected other types who travel elsewhere. Such typologies have therefore been constructed around visitors chiefly from sources such as Western Europe, North America and Australasia but have overlooked the rise of other supplier regions such as Asia or Eastern Europe. Moreover, many countries within Europe have been completely overlooked as possible locations to investigate backpacker destinations, despite evidence to suggest that many who partake in European backpacker trips may differ considerably in terms of nationality, age and motivations to the backpacker typologies constructed over the last two decades. As Hannam and Atelj*evic* (2007) suggest, a common weakness of contemporary backpacker research is that it assumes that Europe is observed as a *source* rather than a *destination* for backpackers. However, while many knowledge gaps remain, recent backpacker research has begun to shed light on a variety of different

areas, particularly based upon *why* the backpacker chooses this distinctive mode of travel. The development of research in this area has continued to gain momentum due to the diversification and the erosion of the contention that backpackers share common motivational interests. Indeed new research projects have confirmed that many now behave largely indifferently from one participant to the next. These views will be observed in the following section.

1.2 The Multiplying Motivations of Backpackers

Recent research has found that the demographic spectrum of participants of backpacking to be much wider than earlier anticipated (see Sørensen 2003; Maoz 2007; Muzaini 2006; Cohen 2004; Westerhausen 2002). Similarly, the motivational aspects of backpackers are perhaps more diverse than first imagined additionally (see Desforges 2000; Maoz 2007; Elsrud 2001; Nash, Thyne and Davies 2006).

Indeed, Mohsin and Ryan (2003: 113) suggest that Cohen's (1973) depiction of hippies and 'aimless drifters' is now all but obsolete as the modern backpacker is often identified as being both highly motivated and well educated as opposed to someone avoiding or deferring commitments in the real world. In addition, such research has aided the erosion of many recent typologies and has also helped dispel a number of backpacker myths which had distorted the way in which they have been collectively perceived and packaged. While O'Reilly (2006: 1001) has suggested that the typologies used to identify backpackers are not without foundation, clear contradictions have now

been observed. It seems that not all backpackers are young, many are not Westerners, several are neither fresh out of college, university or even tertiary educated, few are attempting to 'find themselves', and some do not even carry a backpack. Moreover, the modern backpacker may be Asian, Israeli or South American, in their mid-40s, or even beyond retirement age, and their motivations to undertake multi-destination trips over an extended period of time are not just about 'self-discovery' but are in many cases practical journeys which engage in mundane activities that are neither exotic or 'heroic' (Fussell 1982: 208). Essentially, backpackers found in Southeast Asia, India and Australasia have often been stereotyped and commodified as to what a backpacker is, or more accurately, *should* be. As Welk (2004: 78) suggests, the backpacker is a member of a constantly changing and fluid community, which no longer represents the stereotypes of old. While some have proposed notions of 'distinguishable characteristics' (Bradt 1995, cited in Hampton 1998: 641) to help separate backpackers from other forms of tourism using a distinct set criteria, others (see Vance 2004; Wilson and Richards 2007) have suggested that such a technique may be far more problematic in the long term. In several scenarios it was discovered that even those who met the criteria of a 'typical' backpacker, did not identify themselves as one and would often attempt to distance themselves from being categorised under such a label. The research of Wilson and Richards (2007) in particular suggested that many preferred to identify themselves as travellers or tourists, perhaps because of the many negative connotations associated with backpacking as mode of travel.

Although backpackers have often been identified using negative terms such as ‘aimless drifters’ (Cohen 1973) or ‘hippies’ (Hampton 1998), this mode of tourism has more recently begun to encounter a positive shift in terms of the perceptions held by many. Contemporary backpacking is consequently identified as a ‘better mode of tourism’ (Sørensen 2003: 856), ‘genuine’ (Jacobsen 2000: 287) or an activity which is centred upon notions of ‘authenticity’ (Maoz 2007: 123). The latter has become popular according to Wang (1999: 360) because it has the potential to temporarily ‘idealize’ the life of the subject, enabling them to become ‘freer’, ‘purer’ or ‘more spontaneous’ than usual. These participants can then undertake symbolic journeys which remove the ‘self-constraints’ associated with obligations to act rationally as modernity demands. Likewise, Kim and Jamal (2007: 182) suggest that authenticity has become a key motivational factor because many believe it is unobtainable in the modern world and consequently travel ‘elsewhere’ to discover it. Despite such endorsements, the search for authenticity appears to be an increasingly difficult objective to attain; partly due to the ambiguity of the subject and partly due to the way tourism has infiltrated ‘everyday worlds’ (Edensor 2007: 200). The paradox here is that many tourists attempt to use tourism as a means of escapism from these worlds but have consequently become victims of the success of the vehicle they use to mitigate the mundane. Rather interestingly, others have vehemently disagreed with the notion that backpacker travel is indeed a ‘better mode’ of vacation and have suggested that backpacker travel is now nothing more than a ‘variant’ of mass tourism (Spreitzhofer 1998: 982) whose participants resemble little difference from those of the conventional tourist (Ateljevic and Doorne 2007: 64). Dann (1996: 73-9) and Wang (1999: 360) suggest that rather

than being a vehicle of liberation, tourism is merely another form of ‘constraint’ whereby the notion of ‘freedom’ is only a ‘fantasy and illusion’.

Indeed, the difficulties associated with categorising tourists appear more apparent than ever before as boundaries blur and conventional visitor typology demographics diversify. It seems that that typical criteria associated with mass tourists such as standardisation, predictability, and destination loyalty, have now been replaced by increasing desires to experience individualism, and newer, more remote locations (Aguilio, Alegre and Sard 2005: 220; Poon 1993; and Urry 1995). Similarly, Claver-Corte, Molina-Arozin and Periera-Moliner (2007: 728) argue that tourist desires have now radically changed and ultimately seek ‘something else’. While conventional tourists are now becoming more liberal, it appears that backpackers and independent travellers are now becoming the very antithesis of what originally defined them - *independence*. Wilson and Richards (2004: 123) and Maoz (2007: 127) offer accounts of how backpackers increasingly act and perform *en masse* or congregate together in ‘neo-tribes’ (Mafessoli 1995) *,* while Hottola (1994: 74; 2005) and Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002: 522) speak of the existence of ‘environmental bubbles’ which allow travellers to mitigate unwanted feelings and sensations. These ‘purified tourist spaces’ (Edensor 2007: 208), or backpacker enclaves as they are often termed, permit backpackers to travel in sanitised and controlled locations. It therefore appears that the extremes of the tourism spectrum are edging closer to one another, whereby the tourist begins to seek out difference, while the backpacker moves closer towards conformity and institutionalised modes of travel. Perhaps the emergence of the ‘flashpacker’ (Hannam

and Diekmann 2010: 1-2) summaries the new median between these two traditional opposites, whereby backpacker-type travel is undertaken on a briefer and frequently more up-market itinerary. These changing shifts in travel patterns and desires therefore suggest that research in the field must be proactive, flexible, be constantly aware of rapid developments and must ultimately move away from the previously constructed typologies. As Hampton (1998: 639-40) suggests, a phenomenon which has the power to create significant economic, social and environmental impacts requires much more than a definition centred upon a preference for a particular type of luggage. Europe therefore, and in this particular case, Norway, represents an excellent opportunity to encounter backpackers in a completely different environment to where many have incorrectly assumed them not to be.

1.3 The Research Setting: An Overview of Norwegian Hostels

For a country which is sparsely populated and assumed to be a peripheral destination for backpacking, Norway appears to have a particularly high ratio of hostels in comparison to many other European destinations. The vast majority of major towns and resorts appear to have some form of hostel accommodation, and its largest two cities, Oslo and Bergen, have three main hostelling options each (as of writing in 2007). Hostels which are not located in the larger Norwegian towns and cities appear to be strategically located along the country's major motorway routes. Indeed, most roads and motorway networks reveal a range of hostel nodes or waypoints, making them easily

accessible to motorists in particular. For example, the 300km journey from Oslo to Trondheim using the most logical overland route, would enable the traveller to stop at four different hostels along the way (Gjøvik, Lillehammer, Sjoa and Dombås), while one other (Hammar) would be in close proximity via connecting roads. The majority of Norwegian hostels also appear to share a common trait in that they are members of Hostelling International.

Hostelling International (HI) is an organisation consisting of around 4,000 youth hostels in 80 countries and around 3 million members worldwide. According to official HI figures, their hostels receive approximately 35 million guest nights per annum. The concept was devised by a German schoolteacher named Richard Schirrmann in 1932 who identified the need for accommodation to cater for school trips and excursions. Since then, HI has evolved to not only accommodate educational trips but to also cater for backpackers and independent travellers of all ages. Hostelling International is a non-profit organisation and works in collaboration with the UNESCO Youth Section.

Norske Vandrerhjem (NV) is the Norwegian organisational arm of Hostelling International. NV consists of around 70 hostels the length and breadth of the country, ranging from Oslo and Stavanger in the South to Karasjok and Mehamn in the far North. In addition to the NV hostels, Norway has seen a steady increase of independently owned hostels in its largest three cities: Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim. Oslo's Sentrum Pensjonat hostel has been joined by the Anker Hostel, and Bergen has recently seen the arrival of Jacob's Hostel to rival the NV hostels which have resided there for many

years. While Trondheim has not gained any new hostels, its main hostel, Rosenborg Vandrarhjem, has withdrawn from the NV organisation and now operates independently. The local university's student accommodation campus additionally acts as a makeshift hostel during the summer term break.

Although the range of choices in Oslo may be quite restrictive in comparison to many other European capital cities, it does offer accommodation a number of differing accommodation options to potential guests. For example, Oslo has two centrally located hostels that are not too dissimilar from those found in any major European city, in that they are cheap, caters for guests predominantly in search of dormitories, and are frequented by backpackers from all over the world. In contrast to such establishments, Oslo also has a number of hostels located in the suburbs or outskirts of the city. These locations subsequently offer the guest an alternative setting, which are often quieter and more family orientated with better facilities. Thus, Oslo, and indeed Norway as a whole, has the potential to attract hostel users who exhibit differing needs and demands and thus perform in different ways to conventional typological assumptions. Moreover, this scenario justifies the need to observe hostel users in alternative settings where hostel products are different to those which have been collectively assumed to be representative of the hostel scene overall.

1.4 Backpacking in Norway: A Potential European Niche?

Norway is a country which is not perhaps synonymous with backpacker travel and such an assumption may be attributed to a variety of different reasons. Firstly, Norway is located in Northern Europe; a region which in itself has produced a large number of backpackers, such as those travelling from the UK and Scandinavia, and therefore one assumes that it would be an unlikely destination for a particular type of tourist normally associated with seeking difference and alternative experiences to home. Even for those who travel from external continents such as North America and Oceania, Norway appears to be a location which would rarely appear as a node on the majority of most travel itineraries and its notable absence from European-based backpacker research supports this assumption to some degree. Naturally, locations along the Mediterranean, such as the myriad Greek islands, and the cultural and historical cities of Europe such as Rome, Paris and London are frequently assumed to be more likely backpacker hubs and it is perhaps unsurprising that Oslo or indeed Norway, are recognised in the same context. Secondly, Norway is an expensive country from the perspective of the majority of tourists and consequently it would seem, severely restricts the type of tourist it can attract – particularly backpackers if contemporary typologies are to be believed. Recent reports have revealed that Norway, and its capital Oslo, rank amongst the top 15 most expensive locations in the world according to a 2007 report in *The Economist*. Indeed, Oslo has now overtaken Osaka and Tokyo to become the world's most expensive city, which is based upon criteria such as accommodation, food costs, entertainment and transportation. The consequences of such findings suggest that Norway is ill equipped to adequately perform as setting for the majority of backpackers using typologies

constructed in recent years, largely of course, because they often assume that the backpacker seeks cheap and affordable locations and normally frequents budget accommodation.

Although it appears that there are distinct obstacles facing the potential of backpacker tourism in Norway, evidence suggests that the country is indeed perhaps better equipped to deal with this form of tourism than many others within the European continent due to the proliferation of hostels within the country. Moreover, the apparent infrastructure of budget accommodation reveals that Norway perhaps does offer a potential platform for backpacker tourism to take place. Norske Vandrerhjem has a compliment of 70 youth hostel members which cover a wide and diverse geographical region from Oslo in the South to the Lofoten Islands in the West and to the Arctic Circle in the far North. In addition, there are around ten independently run hostels, which suggest that for a relatively small country, both in terms of geographical size and population, Norway is saturated with budget hostels and similar forms of cheap accommodation. Moreover, the number of guest overnight stays[1] has steadily increased over the past few years suggesting that Norwegian tourism is performing well. However, despite NV appearing to have cornered a large share of the youth travel and budget market in Norway, statistics from Statistik Sentralbyrå (SSB), the Norwegian government's statistical information website, suggest that its performance may not have excelled as well as many would have anticipated.

[1] Guest overnight stays are inclusive of all accommodation types and are not broken down by category.

In 1999 NV received a total of 383,818 guest nights but by 2003, total guest nights had fallen consistently over a 5 year period to 323,885 equating to a reduction of more than 15% overall. Although current figures (349,335) for 2007 suggest that NV is on the way to recovery, growth has been particularly conservative over the past three years. One of the potential reasons for the decline of NV overnight stays and its relatively weak recovery may be due to NV having suffered a decline in visitors from traditional sources such as Sweden and Denmark and a stagnation of visitor numbers from large suppliers such as Germany and the UK. In 1999, overnight stays accounted for by Swedish guests totalled 38,210 but by 2007, total Swedish overnight stays had fallen by over a third to 22,645. Over the same period, overnight stays from Danish guests had fallen from 21,533 in 1999 to 14,999 in 2007, which reveal a reduction by more than one quarter. Similar declining trends in overnight stays were mirrored by guests from other sources popular sources during the last decade such as Finland, the Czech Republic and the United States. Overnight stays from guests coming from Germany, NV's largest international supplier, and the UK have remained relatively consistent but appear to show no indication of increasing upon levels attained in 1999, and have generally levelled off in the past decade.

SSB statistics reveal that there is indeed good news for NV from other sources however. NV has enjoyed an increase in visitor numbers from a range of emerging supplier regions such as Spain, France, Poland, South Korea and China, which have all contributed to offsetting the effects created by the decrease in numbers from more typical sources. Spain is now the 5th largest supplier of overnight stays at NV

accommodation and has seen perhaps the most significant growth. In 1999, Spanish overnight stays were just 4,484 but by 2007, they had almost trebled to 12,864. Over the same period, overnight stays from France have steadily increased from 5,987 in 1999 to 8,514 in 2007 and although Polish overnight stays remained relatively stable between 1999 and 2006, figures have rose sharply in 2007 to an all time high. Chinese, South Korean and Mexican overnight stays were also at their highest recorded levels in 2007 to suggest that the appeal of NV accommodation is at least diversifying if not growing. The evidence from SSB suggests that although NV has seen major decreases in overnight stays from its traditional supply base, stagnation from some of its largest suppliers and additional falls from other relatively large suppliers, a new scenario is developing whereby NV is beginning to rely on a wide range of less traditional sources to provide visitors. As aforementioned, Norway is also host to several independent hostels, many of which have opened in recent years, although SSB has no specific data for the performance of these hostels. As a consequence, this thesis will explore Norwegian hostel networks which reside outside of the typical mainstream backpacker destinations in Europe. This will also potentially open up an opportunity to discover more about the emerging number of hostel users from less conventional sources. These guests will then be compared against the narrowly structured typologies of recent times to see whether they are indeed, consistent or not with such assumptions.

1.5 Aims and Objectives of the Research Project

- Objective 1: To challenge the stereotypical profiles and typologies frequently used to define hostel users.

The first aim of this thesis is to challenge the stereotypical profiles and typologies frequently used to define hostel users. As aforementioned in the introduction section of the thesis, hostel users have been frequently assumed to incorporate a narrow range of guests profiles and have largely been identified to be backpackers (O'Regan 2010). While some researchers have begun to challenge these preconceptions, they have arguably been preoccupied with modifying them as opposed to challenging them and in many cases typologies have been tweaked rather than conceptually deconstructed and critically readdressed. Moreover, many researchers have returned to the same exotic locations such as Australasia and Southeast Asia and have continued to neglect the important issue of observing backpackers and hostel users in different geographical settings around the world. It is important to state early on that this thesis will not attempt to create new typologies, rather it will challenge those offered by other academic researchers who have been keen to acutely define the backpacker using a restrictive range of demographic and motivational criteria. Demographic observations will be made, particularly in terms of hostel user nationalities, however the key objective is to observe the differences between hostel users in a new geographical setting via qualitative data.

- Objective 2: To identify the key motivations of why hostel users choose to visit Norway

The second aim of this thesis is to identify the key motivations influencing why hostel users choose to visit Norway. Backpackers and hostel users in general have frequently been identified as tourists who exhibit a consistent and narrow range of demands at the destinations they frequent. This aim will attempt to ascertain if these travellers differ from any of the contemporary typologies constructed to define the backpacker in terms of motivational behaviour. The quest for authenticity is often identified as a popular driving force for backpackers, while cultural and heritage attractions are also considered to be influential motivational factors as backpackers can be seen in large collective numbers at destinations such as the Taj Mahal, Angkor Wat and Machu Picchu. Consistent with common backpacker motivations, Brown (2007: 379) suggests that contemporary tourism is based upon finding a balance between notions of pleasure and frustration, with the latter prompting cognitive skills to help solve problems and consequently make the journey a more interesting and exciting one.

Gössling (2002: 540) has argued that tourism increases to be centred upon the concepts of nature and natural resources. Such a development appears to be a potentially rewarding one for Norway, thanks to its rich geographical diversity and the relative status quo of many natural Norwegian features (Daugstad 2008: 403). Similarly, Lane and Waitt (2007: 111) suggest that criteria such as ‘unchanged nature’ and ‘wilderness’ remain popular motivational notions additionally. This aim will also attempt

to observe the role of Urry's (2002) notion of 'sensescapes' in relation to backpacker motivations – a theme which has been neglected from large parts of academic literature on the backpacker experience.

These experiences may centre on emotional and physical exchanges which includes feelings such as 'intimacy' (Trauer and Ryan 2005: 482), 'escape' (Gilbert and Abdullah 2004: 104), 'freedom', 'anonymity' (White and White 2004: 212) or 'uniqueness' and solitude (Griffiths 2002). Similarly, O'Dell (2007: 41) and Goossens (2000) argue that the modern tourist experiences are not just based around escaping everyday life, but are simultaneously based around desires to experience 'extraordinary', 'hedonistic' and 'emotional' sensations. The observations of White and White (2004: 201) and Trauer and Ryan 2005: 484 who suggested that vacations of a longer duration potentially yield benefits beyond physical respite and allow the subject to help mitigate social pressures or will also be critically discussed in the context of Norway.

- Objective 3: To assess the methods of transportation used and to examined the levels of mobility exerted by hostel guests

The third aim will attempt to critically examine methods of transportation and the level of mobility exhibited by hostel users in Norway. This will attempt to assess the mobility levels of the hostel user and to identify the methods of transportation they use to travel throughout the country. The role of mobility in travel and tourism is becoming increasingly popular in contemporary research, yet it has only been sporadically observed in academic literature relating to hostel users.

Backpackers have often been observed as exhibitors of highly fluid movements due to the multi-destination journeys they undertake. Moreover, their ability to cover large geographical areas in relatively short periods of time again conjures up notions of boundless or ‘nomadic’ travellers of which mobility is an intrinsic feature of their vacations (Ateljevic and Doorne (2004: 60; Richards and Wilson 2004a: 7)

The use of vehicles and the importance they play in the overall holiday experience has been seldom observed in academic literature Lumsdon (2006: 75) suggests that transport is a term which is synonymous with tourism, while Larsen (2001: 81) argues that vehicles play a far more significant role than merely transporting tourists from point A to point B, but also act as machines for ‘mobile sightseeing’. The purpose of this aim therefore is to build upon Page’s (1999a) assertion that the interfaces between transportation and tourism have often been overlooked and neglected from many research paradigms. Indeed Bauman (1998: 83) has contemplated that travel between destinations is not a trivial or mundane section of the journey, but an opportunity for the subject to experience feelings of of excitement or even ‘bliss’. The views of hostel users towards mobility and transportation and their relative importance to their journeys will be therefore be scrutinised and critically analysed in depth.

- Objective 4: To assess the contention that hostel users are now exhibiting similar behavioural patterns to more mainstream and conventional tourist types

The fourth and final aim will attempt to assess the contention that hostel users exhibit similar behavioural patterns to mainstream/mass tourists. Although backpacker tourism

has frequently been identified as a ‘better mode’ (Sørensen 2003) or more ‘genuine’ type of travel (Jacobsen 2000), others have criticised participants for doing nothing more than mimicking the behaviour of mainstream tourists (Ateljevic and Doorne 2007: 64). Spreitzhofer (1998: 982) has similarly claimed that backpacker and mass tourism are now all but indistinguishable. It seems that not all backpackers and hostel users are highly motivated and indeed several may be distinctly *unmotivated.* Recent research has observed such behaviour and identifies that many tourists seek out or engage in the very mundane practices of home throughout the duration of their vacations (White and White 2007: 94). Similarly, McCabe (2002: 61) has argued that many tourists are likely to be found re-establishing the daily routines of home, particularly because this allows them to experience comfort in unfamiliar surroundings and consequently enables them to relax and enjoy themselves (Edensor 2007: 202). Indeed as MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997: 542),suggest, to some degree, ‘the more familiar a destination is, the more attractive it is’. This aim will therefore build upon Edensor’s (2007) contention that tourism does not offer an escape from the mundane and banal processes of life but instead permits their continuation. The aim will additionally observe whether such views are consistent in the context of hostel users in Norway. The next chapter provides an in depth review of the academic literature on backpacker tourism to provide part of the theoretical context of the thesis.

2. Defining Backpacker Tourism

2.1 Identifying the Backpacker: Typologies and Definitions

The notion of backpacking as a mode of travel appears to have become a significant element of post-modern tourism in recent years. Contemporary research suggests that backpackers are increasing in volume and that new backpacker destinations are constantly emerging, bringing with them a series of changes and impacts to the environments, cultures and societies they chose to visit. Ateljevic and Doorne (2004: 60) suggest that the term 'backpacking' has become synonymous over the past decade with a mode of travel which embodies liberation and mobility and effectively has now assumed 'symbolic status'. Similarly, Cohen (2002) and O'Reilly (2006: 998) suggest that its status as a once 'marginal and unusual activity' undertaken by 'hippies' and 'adventurous drop-outs' has now been replaced as a rite of passage for many young travellers today. Welk (2004: 78) likewise suggests that the backpacker scene has now formed a 'highly dynamic, constantly changing community that has transformed itself from an offspring of hippie counterculture to a mainstream movement'.

The backpacker it seems has now been acknowledged as a rapidly evolving character with a multitude of different profiles and identities travelling under one universal label. The growth of research focusing upon this particular sector of tourism appears to additionally confirm the notion that backpacker tourism is now a 'major global industry' and that backpackers can now be located in 'every corner of the globe' (Richards and

Wilson 2004a: 3-10). Moreover, Richards and Wilson (2004a; 2004b) argue that this mode of travel is not only expanding, but diversifying in terms of the locations which have begun to attract backpackers. These newly identified locations appear to transcend the boundaries of developing world, and have simultaneously begun to erode the contention that traditional backpacker enclaves are found predominantly in emerging economic regions such as the Indian subcontinent or Southeast Asia, and instead have begun to incorporate many urban centres in the West.

Despite the arrival of backpacker research in academic literature, the debate surrounding the notion, criteria and characteristics of what backpacking entails as a particular mode of travel still remain open. Backpacking has persisted to be a difficult concept to define and many have disagreed upon the characteristics and traits that should identify one. Others indeed have yet to agree on what makes the backpacker different to other particular modes of travel. Vance (2004: 238) suggests that the difficulty to accurately define the backpacker has been further compromised by the overlapping of terms such as ‘backpacker’, ‘independent traveller’ and ‘fully independent traveller’, which are often grouped together and largely accepted as alternative labels for the same thing.

Although the concept of backpacking has sporadically appeared in tourism literature since as early as the 1970’s (see Cohen 1973; Vogt 1976), its emergence and rising importance has called for a more comprehensive understanding of this sector, moving away from the traditional typologies frequently associated with it. The metaphorical

journey of the backpacker throughout academic literature reveals a transition from that of an unwanted hippie or 'condemned' traveller, because of their perceived attitudes towards sexual freedom and drugs (Cohen 2004: 43), to that of a socially aware, middle class, tertiary educated Westerner. Moreover, it appears that many young backpackers now undertake such journeys in order to forge middle-class identities, which can be performed and narrated during the transformation of the 'Self' (Desforges 2000: 928). The original contention that backpackers were merely a small group of 'aimless drifters' (Cohen 1973) in far flung destinations appears to have long since expired and has therefore raised the importance of formulating a new definition of this form of travel, largely because original typologies were frequently negative in their depiction of the backpacker. While researching backpackers in Southeast Asia Hampton (1998: 639) asserted that a better understanding of this traveller typology was required and that it was imperative that this mode of travel received more serious attention in terms of academic research which moved away from many inaccurate generalisations. Moreover, Hampton (1998) added that the significance of this mode of travel was intensified by the undoubted economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts it created and that further research was required to intricately distinguish who these travellers were.

For many academics, an obvious starting point has been to clarify who and what the backpacker is using demographic criteria via quantitative research methodologies (see Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995). However, many contemporary definitions have remained demographically narrow and presumptuous and are perhaps only reflective of

backpackers who have been researched in popular destinations. According to Murphy (2001: 50-51), in a Southeast Asian and Australasian context, backpackers are often portrayed as being young, budget-minded, on long term itineraries, and are particularly driven by a motivation to communicate with other people, both in terms of other travellers and local people in the places they visit. In terms of defining this mode of travel, Sørensen (2003) however warns of the dangers of attempting to define backpackers using a narrow set of demographic criteria and suggests that many definitions appear to have become too restrictive. In such scenarios the qualifying criteria used to distinguish who and what a backpacker should be, have been constructed almost exclusively from an empirical viewpoint and therefore have resulted in a rigid category which permits little flexibility. Despite these concerns, several academics have persisted to develop a demographically specific definition of the typical backpacker, and O'Reilly (2006: 1001) offers one such example:

> 'Primarily, though not exclusively middle class and white, a large proportion come from Northern European countries, especially the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Scandinavia. Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and Israel are also significant backpacker-producing countries.'

The research of Maoz (2007: 124) concurs with these assumptions stating that backpackers are 'predominantly of Western origin and culture' and identified that although Europe is recognised as major source, this only applies to the Northern and Western regions of the continent. According to Maoz (2007) Southern Europe and the Mediterranean regions are invariably 'underrepresented' in terms of supplying

backpackers compared to their Northern European and Scandinavian counterparts. Mohsin and Ryan (2003) also appear to agree with these demographic generalisations indicating that backpackers are a product of Western society and are indeed a reflection of the changing characteristics of contemporary society as a whole. They argue that modern backpackers exhibit high education levels and see travel as an intrinsic part of the decision making process for their careers and life aspirations, further deconstructing the previously held notion that backpacking is an activity associated predominantly with wanderers, drifters and carefree nomads.

In terms of the gender distribution of backpackers, research findings have been inconsistent, revealing different ratios of male to female backpackers in different locations around the world. As a result, the sex of the typical backpacker remains undetermined and is frequently absent from many contemporary typologies offered by academic researchers. Sørensen (2003: 852) initially argued that although the ratios of male to female backpackers remain roughly even in developed destinations, the ratio of men to women grew in destinations which were classified as ‘developing’. Sørensen (2003) added that this ratio may rise to approximately 60/40 and suggested that the ratio could be even higher in other areas which were of a lower developed status. However, these findings appear to by contradictory to those discovered by O’Reilly (2006: 1002) who suggested that the ratio of males to females was approximately the same at a variety of regions in both the developed and developing world. The research of Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995: 832) also suggested that gender ratios of

backpackers were roughly the same although the data was only attained from Australia, a clearly developed country.

While the gender ratios of backpackers have posed serious points of debate amongst academics, the average age of the backpacker appears to a more consistent notion. Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995: 831) suggested that the majority were aged between 15 and 29 years, Sørensen (2003: 852) believed that most were aged between 18 and 33 years, and O'Reilly (2006: 1002) offered an acutely more accurate figure of 26.4 years, which comfortably resides within Loker-Murphy *et al.* and Sørensen's age ranges. Although others academics have often refrained from being age-specific when constructing their own typologies, invariably they are described as being 'young' or recent leavers of tertiary education, which one would assume would also suggest that they are of an age range comfortably under 30 years old.

While many definitions have attempted to specify who the backpacker is, several have also been designed to help separate them from other types of travellers - chiefly, the mainstream or mass tourist. Here definitions have tended to move away from demographic profiles and have instead focused upon specific motivational differences between backpackers and mainstream tourists. Bradt (1995), cited in Hampton (1998), attempted to identify five key characteristics which attempted to isolate the backpacker from other types of contemporary tourist: (i) They seek out 'badges of honor'; (ii) They use local transport; (iii) They carry their belongings on their back; (iv) They bargain for goods and services (thus avoiding being ripped off); and (v) they avoid crowds and visit

less popular destinations. Bradt's identified characteristics appear to closely tie in with Sørensen's (2003: 856) notion of backpacker 'road status', which is the aim to be seen as a credible backpacker by avoiding tourist traps and by bargaining for better deals and rates:

> 'Road status is obtained in many ways: paying 'local prices', getting the best deal, travelling off the beaten track, long-term travel, diseases, dangerous experiences, and more. In total, it comprises hardship, experience, competence, cheap travel, along with the ability to communicate it properly.'

Bradt's first characteristic, searching for 'badges of honor', is exemplified by the backpacker's desire to attain things, such as finding accommodation and food, on a stringent budget. The 'badge of honor' or achievement in this scenario is that the backpacker is effectively seen (or perhaps perceived) to be living on a daily basis as any local would. Hampton (1998) discovered that the search for cheap accommodation was a common trait of the backpacker and that their success in achieving better deals was rewarded by lengthy stays in various locations as well as bragging rites amongst their fellow backpackers. The research of Firth and Hing (1999: 253) which focused upon hostel users in Australia supports this idea, as they also discovered that the most importantly ranked criteria for backpackers when in search of accommodation was the price, even before the location or facilities and amenities on offer.

The second criteria, travel via local transport, again revolves around the backpacker's needs to distinguish themselves as 'going local' (Muzaini 2006: 148), although some

academics (see Suvantola 2002) have argued that the use of local transport is due to financial restraints rather than a desire to attain more authentic experiences. However, both Bell (2002) and Noy (2004), cited in Muzaini (2006), suggest that this particular trend is due to a genuine attempt to attain a more realistic experience and therefore they will actively seek out local buses over tourist chartered buses to achieve this. Sørensen (2003: 865) also suggested that many backpackers went beyond the necessary need to budget when travelling long-term, with several possessing wealth and credit cards that simply were not used in order to attain a more 'whole' experience.

Bradt's third criteria, which suggests that backpackers can be identified by the type of luggage on their backs, of course is not a motivational characteristic but an externally identifiable feature due to their unique methods of transporting their personal belongings. However, as Timmermans (2002) suggests, the use of a backpack has only recently been used as a defining characteristic and is perhaps a response to the proliferation of travellers who select this type of baggage over other forms. The fourth criterion, bartering for goods and services, is also seen to be a frequent characteristic of the backpacker. According to Muzaini (2006: 149), 'consuming the local' is a common trait undertaken by many backpackers who attempt to avoid being ripped off or overcharged. Here, the backpacker avoids particular places or 'tourist traps' such as restaurants which offer Western dishes or Westernised local food, and shopping areas designed for holidaymakers which charge higher prices than at shopping streets frequented by the locals. Citing the findings of Riley (1998), this characteristic is also sharpened by the rivalries and bragging rites of backpackers who desire to compete

with other backpackers in attaining the best prices. This notion once again ties in with Sørensen's (2003) notion of 'road status' and the competitive rivalries which appear to develop between participants of this mode of travel.

The final characteristic cited by Bradt (1995) is perhaps one of the most commonly imagined characteristics of the backpacker - the desire or need to visit somewhere 'off the beaten track', or a destination which is not yet assumed to be a popular domain for the masses. According to Sørensen (2003: 856) the backpacker is constantly at pains to distance themselves from other mass tourists and even from the unwanted tag of being 'untraveled' amongst their peers. Such behaviour in its most extreme form may result in backpackers' 'ageing' or damaging their kit to make it appear well used and travelled, thus to avoid being exposed as a newcomer to the scene. Similarly, Kontogeorgopolous (2003) and Muzaini (2006) suggest that the backpacker will even go to the lengths of experiencing discomfort or sleeping rough in order to achieve their goal of reaching locations which are not deemed to be 'touristy'. Moreover, it appears that a fundamentally key characteristic of the modern backpacker is that he or she will attempt to distance themselves from others, most notably the tourist. The backpacker essentially identifies themselves as being 'representatives of a better mode of tourism' (Sørensen 2003: 856) because of a strong belief that their journeys are self-controlled and self-fulfilling. The backpacker also believes that he or she is control of their destiny, whereas the tourist is merely controlled and 'herded' around by tour operators to tourist-saturated locations. Such viewpoints have inevitably led to a new backpacker defining characteristic – that of harbouring anti-tourist attitudes. According to Muzaini (2006:

145), backpackers desire to be at ‘one with the locals’, which delves into a deeper travel experience beyond ‘superficial encounters’ such as gazing at tourist sites and landmarks. Urry (1990) suggests that the tourist is satisfied by merely seeing the ‘Other’ as opposed to building a closer rapport with it and developing a greater sense of the local culture. Maoz (2007: 123) summarises the differences between the two:

> ‘They [backpackers] are often keen to experience the local lifestyle, attempt to ‘‘look local,’’ and cite ‘‘meeting other people’’ as a key motivation. Their recreational activities are likely to focus around nature, culture, or adventure. This pattern is consonant with the tendency of backpackers to travel more widely than other tourists, seeking unusual routes. Many travel under a strictly controlled budget, often due to the relatively long duration of their journey. They are described as people who search for authentic experiences, a search based on exclusion of other tourists.’

Although backpackers are keen to detach themselves from tourist crowds many still feel that they possess a common bond with their fellow backpacker. Sørensen (2003: 854) implies that this ‘relationship’ is a difficult concept to understand due to the fact that most only share two certain common characteristics: firstly, they are strangers in an unfamiliar location; and secondly they undertake the same mode of travel. According to Mafessoli (1995) however, backpackers can be characterised as ‘neo-tribes’, which amalgamate together in times of ‘uncertainty and disembeddedness’ (Wilson and Richards 2004: 123). The backpacker it seems will often cooperate with his or her backpacking contemporary and frequent the same places despite the suggestions of

rivalry discussed earlier. Some, as Maoz (2007: 135) reveals in a latter chapter, will even actively seek out their fellow backpackers, though a similar symbiotic relationship with a 'tourist' will be seldom tolerated. Effectively, for many academics, the contemporary definition of a backpacker is the opposite of anything that a tourist is perceived to be. The backpacker will frequently position themselves at the opposite end of the Plog's (1974) scale to the psychocentric 'conventional' tourist and the 'conventional society' which they have chosen to reject (Wilson and Richards 2004: 123). The backpacker finds transport for themselves, while the tourist is transported by others; the backpacker finds cheap accommodation frequently devoid of mod-cons and Westernised amenities, while the tourist craves comfort and reliability and has arrangements made on their behalf; the backpacker seeks destinations where no others go, while the tourist follows wherever is popular in contemporary travel; and the backpacker engages with locals, while the tourist merely stares or takes photographs of them. Indeed in many ways the backpacker is portrayed as a 'superior' (Sørensen 2006) or more 'genuine' (Jacobsen 2000) traveller. As Buzzard (1993: 81) suggests, while the 'sense-less mob' are transported to a destination, travellers reject 'familiarity and modernity' of the domestic environment, as these criteria are assumed to destroy foreignness and the other they strive to seek. Buzzard (1993: 81) expands upon the notion of a clear distinctiveness between both modes of travel:

> 'Travellers abandon the centre for the periphery. Everywhere they go is a place. They journey every step of the way, without leaving an imprint, without effecting change. Unlike tourism, travel offers real difference, self actualization and, above all, freedom.'

The backpacker will frequently combine self actualisation and freedom by travelling alone, which according to Maoz (2007: 131) allows them to 'face challenges and risks' and additionally helps them to 'gain maturity'. The modern travel book, according to Jacobsen (2000: 287-8), has additionally extended these romantic impressions of the backpacker, which Fussell (1982: 208) termed the 'myth of a hero' due to the way in which the authors portrayed themselves as explorers and 'real' travellers of unexplored worlds, despite the fact that arguably few, if indeed any, still exist. As Adler (1985, cited in Cohen 2004: 44) suggests, the wandering 'lower class tramp' has evolved into the 'modern middle class traveller' and has consequently shed many of the negative terms it originally carried with it.

It could be alternatively argued that perhaps an evolutionary process has not taken place and that the 'drifter' and the 'backpacker' are indeed two different things after all. According to Cohen (2004: 44), drifters may still be found in remote locations which remain untouched by contemporary 'mainstream' backpackers. Cohen argues that their very remoteness has led to the drifter being overlooked as many researchers have only focused upon popular backpacker destinations and itineraries. Such an approach has consequently led them to identifying only the mainstream backpacker while the drifter remains hidden away and inadequately understood. Wilson and Richards (2004: 145) assert a similar viewpoint, suggesting that rhe backpacker as a 'clearly defined species of tourist' is disappearing, at the simultaneous moment of its discovery. The backpacker

it seems will remain inadequately defined and understood for a little while longer if indeed, ever at all.

2.2 Criticisms of Previous Backpacker Research

While attempts have been made to address particular facets of backpacker behaviour, a number of criticisms have persisted regarding the choice of which aspects or 'gaps' within backpacker tourism should be investigated next. The emphases of such approaches have particularly attempted to quantify demographic characteristics as opposed to the qualitative aspects of backpacking and the deeper meanings behind their motivations and behaviour. Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995: 831), as part of their original study on backpackers in Australia, concluded that further research had to focus upon the 'needs and wants' of this genre of tourist and emphasised a greater need for an awareness of similar characteristics that were not necessarily empirically based.

Despite these warnings, Sørensen (2003) has stated that little research had still yet to be published on the holistic socio-cultural studies of backpackers despite its obvious expansion. Quantitative led approaches were often seen to be more viable because of their ability to accurately reveal statistical data which then could be utilised to predict economic trends (Niggel And Benson 2007: 221). The lack of a sociological perspective was also identified via the concerns of Wilson and Richards (2007: 24-25) who suggested that the demographic profiles of backpackers were too frequently studied in relation to other types of tourists to compare trends and therefore failed to recognise

this mode of tourism as a unique form of travel in its own right. One of the key weaknesses of this over-generalising approach was that it attempted to further confine the backpacker into a narrow set of criteria to further 'underline the apparent coherence of the group', and thus dismissed the wide range of motivational characteristics that may be intrinsic to the backpacker (Wilson and Richards 2007). In addition, such methodologies yielded a backpacker classification which was formed distinctly from an external perspective and consequently oversimplified the complicated, intrinsic variants associated with these forms of travellers. The observations of Ateljevic and Hannam (2007: 370) concur with these negative apprasails:

> '[Backpacker] conceptualisations frequently suffer from ethnocentrism, overgeneralisations, functionalism and an obsession with developing typologies, as well as saturation with idiosyncratic case study empiricism.'

Therefore, this 'obsessive' approach to using pre-set criteria has ironically revealed an expansive range of demographic profiles, dissolving the ability to differentiate backpackers from other groups within the wider tourism spectrum. Moreover, this issue has triggered the need to identify 'pure' or 'real' backpackers away from mainstream backpackers and which continued to blur academic understanding. Wilson and Richards (2007: 25) underline the issues associated with categorisation further, and suggest that such a restrictive methodology has inevitably led to serious issues:

> 'The emphasis tends to be on the so called 'real' backpacker, who is usually seen as somebody travelling independently for several months and only staying in budget accommodation. Such studies are usually unable to capture the

changing nature of backpacking, since the largely pre-determined view of who is a ‘backpacker’ tends to preclude newcomers to the scene or those utilising new backpacker products.’

The main problem associated with such an approach is that it attempts to be overly precise in defining the criteria of who and what a backpacker should be, and as a consequence tolerates little variation. Current research appears to be at polar opposites of the spectrum, with one extreme revealing a broad, holistic categorisation process which accumulates empirical data, while the other assumes a highly specific categorisation process extracting large volumes of anthropological data from a small range of subjects (Sørensen 2003: 849). Despite these problems, Ateljevic and Doorne (2007: 60) suggest that the expansion of backpacker tourism has prompted a greater awareness and interest in research into the subject, particularly from differing research perspectives which helped address a number of issues. Hannam and Ateljevic (2007: 13) emphasise that the significance of this newly emerging literature is that it is now frequently conducted via a ‘qualitative methodological approach’ to further identify and study the increasing variants of backpacker profiles and identities. Sørensen (2003: 848) argues that a more subjective approach is vital, particularly as the ‘institutionalization’ of backpacker facilities and amenities has failed to create a more demographically stable notion of what criteria a backpacker must possess. Sørensen (2003: 848) goes on to suggest that if anything, backpackers are now ‘more composite and multifaceted than ever’, and are continuously becoming more difficult to identify.

From an economic perspective Nash, Thyne and Davies (2006: 525) highlight the potential advantages of alternative research focus areas, indicating that this 'neglected' area could in fact yield many commercial and financial benefits. Citing the UK as an example, backpacker specific research could in fact open up many further opportunities particularly as little is known about the potential size or value of this sector of the tourism industry in a number of different locations. Thus, current backpacker specific literature appears to be still largely fragmented at best and the need to address these issues is now more apparent than ever before.

2.3 The Erosion of the Backpacker Typology

The need for a deeper understanding and an accurate and viable definition of the backpacker still appears to be an obsession for many. Such demands appear to stem from two different academic viewpoints. The first is that backpacking is seen to be a rapidly growing sector of the world tourism market and consequently, a fuller understanding is required of the backpacker psyche in order to distinguish why backpackers choose this form of travel over more conventional methods. The second requirement originates from a series of misconceptions, inaccuracies and generalisations which have perhaps unfairly led to a distinct typecast of the modern backpacker. Hampton (1998: 640) suggested that the continuation of the theme of backpackers as 'hippies' or 'drifters' had led to many unfounded prejudicial attitudes being formed. Although improvements in backpacker image have undoubtedly taken

place, Sørensen (2003: 852) has echoed the need for this unfair stereotype to be dispelled once and for all:

> ‘Contemporary backpackers do not fit the description of drifters, deviants and escapees depicted in a few publications from the 70s (Cohen 1972 1973; ten Have 1974). In general, they are (future) pillars of society, on temporary leave from affluence, but with clear and unwavering intentions to return to ‘normal’ life.’

Perhaps rather fortunately, recent research has now begun to see the backpacker in a far more different light, but although there is evidence to suggest that negatively perceived terms such as drifters and hippies are being shed, newer typologies can be equally presumptuous and inaccurate. Backpacker research has been sporadic in its global focus and has frequently focused upon small groups of travellers in popular destinations. This small range of research locations has unsurprisingly yielded a narrow range of criteria which has been used to define this multifaceted sector. Contemporary endorsements of backpacker identification reveal that they are now considered to be more desirable types of tourists and typical typologies suggest that they are from a small range of Western countries, ethnically white, university or college educated and of a middle class upbringing, and that they are certainly seen to be far more rounded members of their host societies than in the 1970s. However despite these advancements in terms of acceptance, it appears that a negative stereotype has been merely swapped for a more positive one. Sørensen (2003: 848) highlights some of these more positive accounts of affluent backpackers during his research on the backpacker enclave on Khao San Road in Bangkok, Thailand:

> ‘In this small area one can observe the interactions and groupings of disparate characters such as well-educated young Westerners on extended leave from affluent society, high school graduates on gap year travels, Israelis fresh out of military service, university students on holiday or sabbatical leave, young Japanese in rite-of-passage attire, ordinary holidaymakers, (ex-) volunteers from various organisations, and the like. The heterogeneity is manifest, whether viewed in terms of nationality, age, purpose, motivation, organisation of trip, or life cycle standing.’

As well as portraying the backpackers he witnessed as being more affluent, Sørensen also identifies the wide cultural range of the backpackers he identified. Maoz (2007: 124) and Westerhausen (2002) additionally cite the emergence of Israelis, Japanese and other Asian nationalities as evidence to indicate an ‘erosion’ of the contention that backpacking is a predominantly European, North American and Australasian activity. According to Muzaini (2006: 146) Asian travellers are increasingly ‘making up’ backpacker numbers, yet they remain an emerging group much neglected in current studies. Sørensen (2003: 852) has additionally argued that the typical age range of many backpackers, somewhere between the late teens and the early thirties, may also be changing. The term ‘backpacker’ appears to be no longer an exclusive title belonging to the younger traveller as people of all ages are becoming increasingly frequent participants of this mode of travel. As a consequence, the erosion of the original backpacker definitions and typologies has revealed many weaknesses and shortcomings in terms of knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. Cohen

(2004: 99), noted that not only do many different nationalities of backpacker appear to be emerging, but also that their behaviour and habits can change significantly from one nationality to the next. One such example is that of Israeli backpackers who have been identified as a particularly 'distinctive group' (Hottola 1999: 78) in terms of their behaviour and motivations in comparison to similar traveller types from other countries. According to Hottola (1999: 74) Israeli backpackers travelled in much more isolated groups than many of their backpacking counterparts:

> 'Israelis cling to other tourists from their own society and to language, culture and even religion drawn from it. They travel in closed groups and shut themselves in an environmental bubble in a way that is more reminiscent of immigrants than of Western tourists, who are inclined to befriend tourists from other nations and actively avoid those from their own society.'

Maoz (2007: 136) also adds a further example of the differences between Israelis and other backpackers, particularly in terms of what they desire to achieve and the experiences they wish to derive from their journeys:

> '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. Israeli backpackers, like some Asians, are inclined to travel in groups, while other Westerners tend to withdraw from their own compatriots.'

According to Maoz (2007: 136) this example clearly identifies the need to avoid the assertion that backpackers are a ‘single entity’, particularly when considering the different cultural backgrounds of these travellers. Others have also argued that backpackers can be distinguished as being different from other travellers and tourists because of their desires to engage with locals, new cultures and to encounter new experiences off the beaten track. Muzaini (2006: 150) cited the behavioural tactics of many backpackers as they attempted to ‘look local’, which many believed would help them to immerse more deeply into the host society. Although some appear to be successful in keeping up this charade, many more as Maoz (2007: 127) points out, quickly lose the impetus to behave in such a manner and will often attempt to seek out and ‘cling to’ their nationalities as their journeys progress and their enthusiasm declines. Moreover, Maoz (2007: 124) argues that many backpackers indeed have no interest in interacting with locals or learning about their different cultures,and goes as far as to add that many will show a ‘blatant disregard for social norms’ and that a new found sense of freedom may actually foster ‘culturally and socially inappropriate patterns of behaviour.’

In terms of the motivational aspects of backpacker, it has been frequently asserted that many backpackers embark upon their journeys after graduating from college or university. Indeed many more are now taking ‘gap years’ before they have even completed their tertiary education. Frequently, the motivations for these journeys have been identified as life junctures such as opportunities for the participant to decide on their future career paths, or to delay their decisions on which careers to choose. According to Desforges (2000: 928) many destinations act as places of self transition for

young travellers whereby they can experience ‘individual achievement’, a growth in their ‘strength of character’, and an increase in their ‘adaptability’ skills. The emphasis has almost solely focused upon the young backpacker and the opportunities long term travel offers them in terms of shaping the lives. Sørensen (2003: 853) discusses the ‘rite of passage’ backpacking offers to many young adults, while Maoz (2007: 131) has additionally asserted that individually undertaken journeys allow them to ‘gain maturity’, which again may imply that the traveller is of a young age. Alternative research however has revealed that many older participants of backpacking are also using this mode of travel to help make decisions on their futures. Sørensen (2000: 853), cites the research of Riley (1988) to explain how backpacking is no longer a tool for young adolescents to metaphorically find themselves, but may also be used by mature backpackers with far more sobering issues: ‘Temporarily, however, normal life is suspended. Many backpackers are at a crossroads in life: recently graduated, married or divorced, between jobs; such explanations are frequent when they are asked why they travel.’

Further reasons for travel have included ‘life crises’ (Ateljevic and Doorne 2000) or even retirement (White and White 2004), which have prompted many to engage in journeys similar to those of the conventional backpacker typology. Backpackers are often identified as travellers who harbour differing motivational desires to the more common tourist type, but alternative evidence suggests that these motivational desires are indeed reflective of other types of tourists and travellers of other genres too. Many, such as Elsrud (2001: 601) and Maoz (2007: 126), have asserted that one of the key motivations of the backpacker is that he or she is strongly motivated by a desire to

become involved in travel which involved elements of ‘risk’ and ‘adventure’, which would fulfil their drive to be seen as being ‘brave’, ‘courageous’ or ‘independent’. These ambitions it seems are not the sole domain of the backpacker and are open to many other traveller types who reveal different interpretations of risk and adventure. Maoz (2007: 126) concurs, revealing the potential identity development tourism universally offers all:

> ‘Tourism provides the potential for a new form of identity, allowing individuals to define themselves according to their personal experiences of the world, rather than through paradigms offered by their society relating to their age, nationality, background, and gender.’

Despite such assertions, Maoz (2007: 135) additionally suggests that many backpackers are not in search of creating new identities but are rather more preoccupied by reaffirming their current ones. While researching Israeli backpackers she discovered that many revealed a ‘strong affinity to their national identity’ which was largely instigated by a desire to ‘distinguish themselves from other nationalities’. Indeed the motivations for many were quite mundane, says Maoz (2007: 128):

> ‘The subjects’ [Israeli backpackers] main motivation and source of satisfaction was to rest and ‘‘do nothing’’ during their journey. They usually do not visit sites nor go on treks. By acting in this way, they differentiate and distance themselves from the ‘‘superficial’’ and ‘‘gullible’’ tourist.’

Paradoxically, it seems that while many Israelis chose to avoid popular tourist destinations, their banal behaviour drastically reduced their capacity to engage with new cultures and to develop new experiences, thus deconstructing the notion that they really were backpackers using contemporary typologies.

A further commonly cited characteristic of the backpacker is that he or she will engage in lengthy journeys, many of which can take up to a year in duration and such behaviour is also a feature which distinguishes them as being different from other tourists and travellers. However, several academics have argued that many backpackers now travel for short-term durations, which Hannam and Diekmann (2010: 12) term as 'flashpackers'. Sørensen (2003: 861) suggests that these individuals 'travel backpacker-like, but within the time limits of cyclical holiday patterns.' Despite their shortened length of journey, Sørensen (2003: 861) asserts that they behave in the same manner as 'ordinary backpackers' and interact with their fellow backpackers during similar itineraries despite the obvious difference in how far and long they can travel for. As a consequence of these findings, Sørensen (2003: 849) has subsequently criticised the findings of Riley (1988) as her research on backpacker portrayed them unanimously as long-term travellers who would normally spend in excess of a year away from the home countries:

> 'The time factor disqualifies most present-day backpackers, and the ability to represent all backpackers by means of Riley's findings is thus doubtful. Nevertheless, her findings are often cited as if they represent backpackers in general, rather than a hardcore sub-segment.'

Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) and Sørensen (2003) suggested that backpackers were a diverse range of people, each containing a mixture of differing characteristics and argued that backpackers should not be defined by a uniformed list of 'unambiguous criteria'. This, they argue, is because they display particular characteristics which relate to behavioural trends rather than economic profiles or fixed demographic criteria. According to Ross (1997), these behavioural criteria include a preference for budget accommodation, flexible travel identities and a desire to meet travellers of the same type, none of which are restricted to simple demographics. Nash, Thyne and Davies (2006: 526) concur adding that the underlying problem of backpacker definition is that it is difficult to distinguish from either an economical or demographical context, while Sørensen (2003: 848) states that such an attempt would perhaps be futile:

'The variation and fractionation make it all but impossible to subsume all the above-mentioned individuals and groupings under one uniform category, for it would be so broad as to be devoid of significance.'

Others however argue that demographic profiles are not completely obsolete when attempting to understand the behaviours and motivations of many backpackers. Maoz (2007: 136-7) suggests that many backpacker motivations are intrinsically linked back to their nationalities, cultural backgrounds or even ethnicity and are frequently reflective of these characteristics in terms of how they perform and behave. To further complicate the issue of backpacker definition, Wilson and Richards (2007) indicate that many travellers who met the generalised criteria to be labelled under this category did not

want to be classified as backpackers. During their research, Wilson and Richards (2007: 37-38) identified not only backpackers, but subjects who identified themselves as ‘travellers’ or ‘tourists’. Effectively, the resulting division amongst people’s self classifications meant that almost 40% of interviewees in hostels did not identify themselves as being backpackers. Many, termed ‘hybrids’, believed that they could actually fall within a variety of categories and therefore were not deemed to be conventional backpackers or ‘purists’. Despite this issue Sørensen (2003: 848) argues that regardless of their label, ‘most of these individuals will generally acknowledge that they are backpackers or (budget) travellers, and even those who do not accept such labels still relate or react to them’. Sørensen (2003: 852) maintains however that the backpacker in a modern context is a ‘social constructed identity’ as opposed to a ‘clearly defined category’ and as a consequence, labels may still be irrelevant after all.

It is widely believed that backpacking is more associated with ‘self-definition’ (O’Reilly 2006: 999) as opposed to ‘conformity to a set description’ and the vast majority of individuals would reveal many demographic, characteristic or motivational differences from the next. It also appears that the classification of the modern backpacker would be an inherently difficult task, particularly attempting to do so using a set of demographic criteria. Additional research suggests that the profiles from both an economic and socio-cultural perspective are diversifying as well as the general demographic expansion of participants. The consequence of these findings is that future definitions will need to be more pro-active and responsive to change, if they are to be used at all. Ateljevic and Doorne (2006: 61) concur with these views, suggesting that any attempts to understand

the concepts and characteristics of backpacking should acknowledge that a constant process of re-definition must take place to counter a dynamic and evolving 'market segment'. The problems of defining the backpacker are compounded by the arrival of many new participants who could potentially fall within the general criteria of this complex phenomenon. Chambers (2009: 354) identifies one potential reason for the growth of this sector:

> 'It is at least worth speculating as to the extent to which this trend might lead to a differentiation of tourist expectations, with increased number of tourists rejecting package tours and mass tourism to seek out more individualised experiences that combine leisure and play opportunities with the possibility of self improvement—a partial return to the elite European travel and recreational traditions of the 18th and 19th centuries, under the rubric of experience-based travel.'

Chambers (2009) therefore speculates that many more will potentially undertake future travel plans which link closely with that most typically identified as backpacker travel. As a consequence, backpackers will persist to be a largely difficult tourism sector to identify due to the increasing involvement of tourists looking for similar objectives at the destinations they choose to visit. The backpacker typology it seems should be severely scrutinised once again in response to these possible changes.

2.4 The Neglect of Europe as a Backpacker Destination

As highlighted previously, Hannam and Ateljevic (2007) have acknowledged the rising importance of backpacker tourism and the responses of academic researchers to further understand the backpacker phenomenon and the characteristics they entail. Despite these developments however, current research, like many definitions offered earlier in this section, appear to heavily involve quantitative methodologies and as a consequence have neglected other 'deeper' aspects of this mode of travel. A further weakness is that contemporary research still appears to be too case specific and does not encompass a wider range of geographical destinations, leaving a notable void of research for alternative regions worldwide. While acknowledging the increasing depth of research on 'budget' and 'youth' travel, Wilson, Fischer and Moore (2007), concur that there is still an apparent gap in the European based research. Effectively, Europe is identified as a *source* of outbound backpacker travellers and not as a destination *per se* (Hannam and Ateljevic 2007) and research has tended to follow these travellers as they visit Asia, South America and Oceania. To help explain these research trends, it is perhaps a truism that many European backpackers prefer destinations in Southeast Asia as their 'preferred habitat' due to the minimal costs for accommodation and travel within the region. In theory, such destinations permit longer journeys and a lengthier exposure to rich and diverse cultures (Muzaini 2006: 145) and consequently, researchers have naturally focused upon these regions first. However, while such a methodology may seem logical, the danger of focusing upon Southeast Asia and other popular destinations such as India and Australia is that alternative regions which attract backpackers are consistently being overlooked.

Wilson *et al.* (2007: 195-96) express that one of the chief detrimental effects of ignoring Europe as a destination has meant that non-European backpackers such as North Americans, South Africans and even South Americans have also been neglected as recognised participants of backpacker research. Backpacker hubs or enclaves in Southeast Asia and Australasia are significantly populated by European travellers, but equivalent destinations in Europe, which have been experiencing high volumes of non-Europeans, have been ignored in comparison. Ateljevic and Doorne (2006: 66) agree with this viewpoint, citing the research of Shipway (2000) which investigated backpacking in Europe as opposed to Australasia, as a 'rare exception' and subsequently suggested that this imbalance needed to be further addressed in order to offer a fairer perspective of backpackers in a global context. Wilson and Richards (2007: 23) suggest that the current examinations of backpacker travel still centre upon more traditional or 'exotic' locations, whereby studies were largely found to focus upon popular destinations found in Asia or Oceania, and as a consequence have limited the research conducted in 'backpacker experience'. Wilson *et al.* (2007: 195-96) also argue that the current depth and range of facilities in Australia could be attributed to the wide number of visitors from Oceania using their own experiences and knowledge from their European travels to accommodate for inbound backpackers. Therefore, the proliferation and success of backpacker orientated hostels in Australia and New Zealand may be in some part, attributed to the successful replication of experiences found outside of the typical regions backpacker research focuses upon. In terms of the locality and destination selection processes of backpacker research, it seems that future projects

must encompass a wider range of regions and additionally address the emergence of new backpacker enclaves. Ultimately, the knock on effect of current research trends has resulted in a proliferation of knowledge on European and North American backpackers at the expense of research on Australians, New Zealanders and Asians.

While the significance of Europe as a backpacking region is still undetermined, relatively little research exists on the subject in comparison to studies undertaken in other continents. Although academics have traditionally centred their research on exotic locations, trends finally appear to be changing as alternative destinations are now being slowly identified as research locations. Wilson *et al.'s* (2007: 194) research on Australasian travellers in Europe is one such example of an attempt to address this imbalance. Citing the 'OE', a common term used for European trips by Australasians, participants revealed a wide range of motivations including; colonial history, the availability of working holiday visas, geographic remoteness, longstanding OE 'traditions'. Many of these motivations appear to contradict the motivations of contemporary backpacker typologies based on those researched elsewhere. Moreover, the absence of European-centric research has resulted in a lack of awareness in understanding the economic potential of this particular market.

Cave, Thyne and Ryan (2007) have cited the UK as one such country which has yet to become fully aware of its own potential in terms of hostels – the typical mode of accommodation associated with backpackers. During their research of hostels in Scotland, Cave *et al.* (2007: 332) discovered that few hostels were aware of the

diversity of the visitors they attracted and were still largely governed by the notion or misconception that their facilities should be equipped to cater for a relatively young demographic based market. The research yielded that although the Youth Hostelling Association (YHA) facilities in Scotland were correct in planning for this demographic group, they were relatively unaware of the need to cater for a second group - the over 50's. The reason for this lack of awareness according to Cave *et al.* (2007: 335) was largely attributed to the notion that earlier literature had failed to address the gap in understanding the differences in attitudes of accommodation facilities in response to an ever increasing number of age groups using such facilities. Essentially, it seems that several European regions are also suffering from the use of contemporary backpacker typologies to address the assumed needs of guests, again because such notions remain both narrow and inflexible.

The same question may be asked of the YHA's facilities in Norway, which has now seen a major proliferation of hostels within the country. According to Statistik Sentralbyrå (SSB) the number of overnight stays in hostels increased by 4.3% between 2005 and 2006 and the number of overnight stays attributed to international visitors accounted for 52%, with the largest contributors being Germany, Sweden, Denmark and the UK respectively. The data revealed that the largest contributors to hostel overnight stays were from a narrow source of developed Western nations, with over 72% of all visitors being from the previously identified nations or from Norway itself. These findings appear to concur with the notion that a greater proportion of backpackers are from a financially stronger and more refined demographic background. However, despite these

assumptions data from the SSB revealed that a greater proportion of visitors were emerging from a range of less obvious nations. Eastern Europe now appears to be providing Norway with an alternative to tourists from the developed nations of the West. In 2006, visitor overnight stays from Poland, Latvia, Estonia and the Ukraine all experienced growth in excess of 85% on the previous year, suggesting that Norway is now attracting a greater number of tourists from more untraditional sources. Similarly, the number of overnight stays from Brazilian visitors also rose by 104%, again emphasising new growth markets from previously unidentified sources. Despite the potential significance of these statistics, little research has been conducted in Norway with a specific goal to monitor these changes and assess the profiles of backpackers using hostels within Norway or indeed anywhere else in Scandinavia. This research project therefore represents a genuine opportunity to further address an existing gap in backpacker/hostel centred research in Europe.

2.5 Beyond Backpacking – More Mass Tourism?

Cohen (2004: 50) poses an interesting question regarding the backpacker. Is the backpacker the opponent of postmodern tourism or indeed merely the trendsetter for it? Perhaps an equally salient question may ask, is backpacking the trendsetter for mass tourism or is backpacking now merely a form of mass tourism? Differentiating backpacking as a form of tourism from other modes of travel appears to be an increasingly difficult task due to its multifaceted nature and broader range of participant characteristics. Moreover, the growth and scale of backpacking has now led to some

academics believing that this mode of travel is almost indifferent from that of the many subcategories classified under ‘mass tourism’.

While the backpacker has often been heralded as a seeker of thrills and differing cultures McCabe and Stokoe (2004: 602) suggest that this, in the majority of cases, is typical of most tourists who attempt to temporarily leave behind the mundane world of home. According to Spreitzhofer (1998: 982) backpacking in the modern context is now nothing more than ‘a variant of mass tourism on a low budget’ and suggests that the differences between both types continue to narrow. The views of Ateljevic and Doorne 2006: 64) appear to concur with this viewpoint, suggesting that the ‘traditional backpacker’ is now displaying characteristics which are more inline with those of a conventional tourist. It has therefore been suggested that although some characteristics are continuously different, the majority of backpackers share many similarities with the conventional tourist and will engage in many mainstream activities such as participating in sightseeing while undertaking their journeys or continue the mundane practices of home. Trauer and Ryan (2005: 482) likewise discovered that while many backpackers were originally motivated by the ‘purposes of prestige’, many eventually ended up behaving like typical tourists – gazing and gawping at the natives. Mohsin and Ryan (2003) explaining this concept further, signifies the relationship between backpacking and mainstream modes of tourism:

> ‘There exists a symbiotic relationship between types of tourism and backpacking. Backpackers arguably thrive in locations where much of tourism industry is based upon sightseeing, a tendency to small scale accommodation with a wide

range of pricing, adventure style options, locations, attracting high numbers of international visitors.'

Despite these assumptions, it could perhaps be alternatively argued that traditional participants of mass tourism are now shifting towards the concept of backpacking as an alternative means of travel, thus deconstructing the conventional divide between the two groups. Møller Jensen (2006: 261-2) argues that such shifting trends have prompted many within the tourist industry to develop market segmentation in order to deal with the increasingly diverse characteristics displayed by contemporary consumers of tourism. Others such as Mossberg (2007: 59) suggest that a better understanding is required because many tourism markets have become saturated, meaning that new marketing strategies are required to entice those who have changed their destination consumption patterns.

As with the issue of outdated conventional backpacker typologies identified earlier, Decrop and Snelders (2005: 122-3) have argued that many of the typologies used to define different types of tourists have also begun to expire and that many, incorrectly, have been applied to represent large universal groups regardless of their interpersonal differences, backgrounds and demographic profiles. Citing Pearce (1988), Decrop and Snelders (2005: 123) argue that these groups are both 'mutually exclusive' and inflexible, which do not allow travellers or tourists to change or evolve during their 'vacation careers'. Definitions and market segmentation appear to be a major preoccupation amongst many within the travel and tourism industry and several

academics have attempted to sub-categorise tourism to offer more flexible categories, which tourists can be consequently placed into. Cohen (1972) was perhaps the first to attempt such a proposal and suggested that perhaps four types of tourist existed: (1) The organised mass tourist; (2) The individual mass tourist; (3) The explorer and (4) The drifter.

The first two categories were determined as ‘institutionalized’ tourists, while the latter two categories were identified as representing ‘non-institutionalized’ tourists. According to Mehmetoglu, Dann, and Larsen (2001: 20) one of the defining differences between the two groups is that the non-institutionalized traveller seeks and values ‘novelty, spontaneity, risk, independence’ and is additionally open-minded to use a variety of travel options to achieve this. Mehmetoglu *et al.* (2001: 20) suggest that Cohen (1972) had already pre-empted the inconsistencies that would be created by a universal backpacker typology and had noted that distinct differences could be identified within the backpacker collective. Cohen (1972) acknowledged that perhaps two types of backpacker could be witnessed during his study. The first was the now infamous ‘Drifter’, a backpacker who would isolate themselves from their own society and go to extreme lengths to avoid other tourists and links to their own country. The drifter would additionally avoid contact with tourism establishments and conceived that the tourist experience was ‘contrived’ (Mehmetoglu *et al.* 2001: 20). However, Cohen (1972) had equally noticed that not all backpackers would go to such extreme lengths to attain the requirements of the drifter. Parallels between the drifter and the explorer were clear to see, such as their avoidance of tourist hotspots, the commonness of solitary planning

techniques, and the search for places beyond the realm of conventional tourists but distinct differences were also apparent. As Mehmetoglu *et al.* (2001: 20) additionally note, the explorer would do so only if they could couple these journey requirements with 'comfortable accommodation and reliable means of transportation'.

As with Cohen's (1972) two categories of institutionalised tourists and the differences in attitude between them, it appears that these behavioural characteristics can blur to reveal further subcategories. Indeed it is quite possible that the boundary between the institutionalised and non-institutionalised may not be as clear as even Cohen had envisaged it and that it may soon be impossible to identify the clear differences between the 'individual mass tourist' and the 'explorer'. Despite the contention that backpackers are now merely a further branch of mass tourism however, it must be still acknowledged that these types of visitors still exhibit a range of unique behavioural characteristics. Additionally, it could also be argued that their destination decision making process can also differ from that of the mainstream mass tourist as well as their habits on arrival. Decrop and Snelders (2005: 125) suggest that six types of vacationers can be identified by their 'decision-making styles' rather than using their demographic profiles or performances at the vacation: (1) Habitual; (2) rational; (3) hedonic; (4) opportunistic; (5) constrained; and (6) adaptable.

The habitual tourist/vacationer, according to Decrop and Snelders (2005: 125) is a visitor who engages heavily in routines, prefer 'certainty' and frequently repeat their journeys to the same destination. Here, the traveller is governed by a psychocentric

desire to avoid risks and is subsequently buoyed by their ability to ‘feel at home’ in familiar surroundings. A further advantage of repeat visiting for the habitual vacationer is that allows them to optimise the usage of their time at their frequent destinations because they do not need to waste time familiarising themselves in a new environment. The bounded or rational vacationer is described by Decrop and Snelders (2005: 126) as also motivated by a strong desire to avoid risk but will be prepared to visit alternative destinations so long as they are well thought-out and carefully planned. Although the rational vacationer will consider alternatives, their tendency to remain loyal to certain brands and their preference for using ‘well-defined decision criteria’ means that their final choice of destination will almost certainly be predictable. The hedonic vacationer enjoys planning and ‘dreaming’ of their ideal destination but will often let their emotional needs override pragmatic constraints. However, despite these imagined rehearsals, Decrop and Snelders (2005: 127) suggest that the trip is never made or ‘substituted by a proxy destination experience’. The opportunistic vacationer is more preoccupied by external constraints such as time and money as opposed to the actual destination of their journey. These types will keep planning to a minimum and will wait for opportunities to arise even at the risk of missing out on a holiday altogether. As a result, the opportunistic vacationer will often find themselves in unpredictable destinations with which they hold little knowledge about. The constrained vacationer say Decrop and Snelders (2005: 128), like the opportunistic vacationer, is also limited by external constraints or ‘contextual inhibitors’ which means planning cannot always be controlled. Finally, the adaptable vacationer is a traveller who possesses the ability to change and modify travel plans depending on the situation which arises. They possess the ability to

‘revise their decisions and modify their behaviour’ and as a consequence they choose their destination shortly before they actually go. Planning is superseded by the need for flexibility and according to Decrop and Snelders (2005: 129) are people who ‘hate group constraints and organized tours.’

In addition to Decrop and Snelders’ (2005) categories, myriad other examples of attempts to define and categorise tourists into a variety of different groups have been undertaken. Variables such as demographical data, geography, levels of expenditure, distance travelled, frequency of travel, and activities sought, have been assessed and have consequently resulted in further segments or categories such as Bronner and De Hoog’s (1985) ‘nature seekers’, ‘sun and beech seekers’ and ‘culture seekers’, but all appear to offer only broad definitions which fail to adequately represent many of whom they claim to represent. Using their own research statistics, Mohsin and Ryan (2003) revealed that most backpackers are distinguishable from other guests because they tended to engage in lengthier journey (on average 66 nights) and were also different from mainstream tourists because of their relatively large spending habits on specific types of outdoor orientated activities. According to Ateljevic and Doorne (2007: 63), Cohen (1973: 94) and Maoz (2006: 223), their ability to do this is through strong financial management skills and a preference for budget accommodation or ‘less comfortable facilities’ (Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995). These behavioural characteristics do not appear to concur with the majority of mass tourists who still embark upon package tours and holidays, where the quality and facilities of the hotel would still be highly ranked amongst the preferences of the vacation. These types of

tourists are also strongly associated with short term stays and are not typically associated with a great deal of mobility when arriving at their chosen destination. Lue, Crompton and Fesenmaier (1993: 294) give one such example of this preconceived notion:

'In social research and specialist literature, tourists are often treated as if they go to a single destination and stay there, while for instance, regional tours and round trips are prevalent to the single destination pattern.'

While Firth and Hing (1999: 253) conducted research on backpacker hostel guests, they discovered that when backpackers were asked to rank the most important criteria when selecting a hostel, over one third were governed by their desire to find the cheapest location. Only 15% ranked the choice of facilities and services as the most important factor when selecting a hostel, which again appear to contradict the characteristics of many conventional mass tourists. However, to contradict such a finding, Sørensen (2003: 861) noted an emerging trend whereby many backpackers were identified as taking shorter duration journeys, meaning they would potentially have the opportunity to stay in better accommodation if they desired. Cave *et al.* (2007: 331) and Ross (1997) argue that the 'control needs' of backpackers are particularly prominent in their thought process, with a need to create a sense of achievement when embarking upon travel. Backpackers will often select accommodation based particularly on its cheap cost and location as opposed to selecting a hotel or hostel which offers better facilities or amenities at a more expensive rate. For many backpackers the 'discovery' of a hostel in a favourable location or at an excellent rate is seen as part of

the achievement process, further highlighting another diverse characteristic of backpacking.

Indeed, it must be acknowledged that not only has backpacker tourism changed but also mass tourism additionally. Aguilo and Juaneda (2000: 624) have suggested that the prominent characteristics of mass tourism, most notably, a 'lack of product differentiation' and 'high standardisation' have gradually begun to erode as a result of motivational changes, new travel patterns and the rising prominence of alternative services. Aguilo and Juaneda (2000) acknowledge that the fundamentals of mass tourism can still be identified in a variety of destinations but at the same time indicate that the market has evolved to incorporate changing demands. Perez and Sampol (2000: 624) concur, suggesting that tourists are now showing 'substantial changes in their motivations and travel patterns' which has resulted in the emergence of a new set of services. Aguilo, Alegre and Sard (2005: 220), Poon (1993) and Urry (1995) expand this notion further and argue that consumer 'loyalty' to typical package holiday destinations has been lost due to a significant behavioural shift. This shift is largely attributed to an increase in the number of annual holidays people take, a decrease in their length of stay at a selected destination and an increasing preference for destinations which are 'individualised' and 'remote'. Moreover, Chambers (2009: 355) has argued that the stereotypical portrayal of the tourist, a being who is simultaneously indiscriminating and unable to distinguish between superficiality and real experiences/objects, may not be as gullible and impressionable as many academics have previously asserted. In addition, it appears that such behavioural shifts could be

attributed to the metamorphosis of backpackers during their travel careers to shift towards the typical characteristics of more conventional travel forms. Moreover Sørensen (2003: 861) suggested that the experience of being a backpacker may 'influence the individual's future patterns of tourism demand and consumption'. Claver-Cortes *et al.* (2007: 728) indicate that 'new' tourists have now modified their values and lifestyles and as a consequence are now far more flexible and independent.

It appears that the conventional imagery of mass tourism has evolved and can longer be categorised in the 'sun, sea and sand' bracket due to the emergence of Neo-Fordist trends (Ioannides and Debbage 1997). Claver-Cortes *et al.* (2007: 728) suggest that the tastes of tourists have now radically changed due to an increase in a desire to experience 'something else' and no longer content with the usual criteria associated with this particular mode of tourism. In addition to these changes, it is also argued that conventional mass tourists are now exposed to new forms of destinations or attractions, aided in part by their increasing exposure to new forms of media technology. Aguilo *et al.* (2005: 219) identify that this 'new consumer' type of tourist now requires a new type of product which caters for their differing needs. They suggest that these new type of tourists are the result of a greater wealth, a more acute awareness of the importance of culture during leisure time and a change in the socio-demographic profiles of many mass tourists. Poon (1993) cited in Aguilo *et al.* (2005: 219) signifies the rise of the new tourist as being: 'fundamentally different, being more experienced, more ecologically aware, more spontaneous and more unpredictable, with a higher degree of flexibility and independence.' Poon (1993) additionally underlines these differing desires by

suggesting that these new consumers attempt to be ‘different from the crowd’ and that they subsequently want to ‘affirm their individuality’ and aim ‘to be in control’. In terms of mass tourism on the whole, Aguilo and Juaneda (2000: 625) contest that this mode of travel must be rethought in terms of creating a general set of demographic criteria to determine its participants:

> ‘The characterization of the tourists each market receives, and thus of the product on offer, cannot be undertaken on the basis of isolated consideration of each attribute like nationality, age, type of accommodation, and the like. Rather, it is necessary to differentiate one from another via the complex combination of defining characteristics.’

These views appear to correspond closely with Sørensen’s (2003) concerns on defining backpacker tourism which were highlighted earlier in this chapter. Sørensen (2003: 851) suggests that modern definitions can only be used as rough guide to ‘objectively distinguish backpackers from other tourists’ particularly as only a small number of participants adequately meet these criteria. Indeed, it seems that the problem of defining of backpacker tourism is not too dissimilar to the problem of defining mass tourism.

3. Contemporary Tourist Motivations

3.1 Searching for Something

The motivations and decisions made by tourists in determining where they choose to go on holiday have been divulged for many years in academic journals of research. Crompton's (1979) 'push-pull' model, which observes the factors or 'forces' which drive tourists away from or to a destination, has widely been accepted by many academics, say Bansal and Eiselt (2004: 388), as a key instrument in understanding why people choose to travel and the forces which act as catalysts to these movements. Crompton's model centres upon two dominant forces; one which pushes the tourist away from their home, and a second simultaneous force which has the power to attract the tourist to a particular destination. While the 'pull' forces are associated with 'tangible characteristics' particular to specific places, the 'push' forces will instigate a desire to go almost anywhere, and are not destination-specific (Bansal and Eiselt 2004: 388). Harrison (2003) and White and White (2007: 101) suggest that the push motivational factors have frequently been identified as the need for escapism, yet remain simplified and require further, more complex levels of understanding. Similarly, Edensor (2007: 201) suggests that other motivational desires such as 'freedom' and 'relaxation' have been effectively 'circumscribed' by a notion that they are simplistic, common sense terms. According to Rojek and Urry (1997: 3) the contemporary understanding of tourism is not identified merely as a 'distinct social practice in time or space from culture' but as a means of attaining one of five important 'dynamics' (Jamal and Hollinshead 1999: 64).

Each dynamic represents a different perspective as to why the tourist embarks upon their journey and signifies the outcomes they wish to attain. These 5 key emergent dynamics are identified as the following*:* (1) Tourism as an agent of seeing; (2) Tourism as an agent of being; (3) Tourism as an agent of experience; (4) Tourism as an agent of cultural invention; and (5) Tourism as an agent of knowing.

Tourism as an agent of seeing, suggest Jamal and Hollinshead (1999: 64), revolves around the notion that tourists not only seek out places but interpret them using their own opinions and biases and effectively 're-fantasize' and 're-fabricate it' (Baudelaire 1972, cited in Jamal and Hollinshead 1999: 64). Such a notion appears to conflict MacCannell's (1973) suggestion that tourism is largely associated with the search for authenticity, and that authenticity in this scenario is determined in whichever shape and form the subject desires it to be. Dynamic 2, observes tourism as an opportunity to assert a definition of the 'self'. In this scenario, tourism acts as an opportunity to develop notions or spirituality and deeper meanings which additionally help educate the subject as to *who* they are. The agent of experience marks dynamic 3. In this scenario, it is argued that tourism is not a continuation of the mundane and banal, but a means of escapism from the routines of suburban life back home. This notion has been commonly asserted via various research projects and will be discussed in-depth later in this section. Fourthly, tourism may act as an agent of cultural intervention. Here, tourism permits performances which help the subject define who they are from a cultural perspective. While it is suggested that tourism often occurs in sanitised and commodified environments, it is counter-argued that tourism has the potential to act as

a platform for ‘new spatial and relational possibilities in and of life’ (Jamal and Hollinshead 1999: 64).

The final dynamic, which observes tourism as a means of *knowing*, suggests that tourism enables a ‘sort of new nomadological empowerment by which all sorts of individuals can re-understand themselves and re-think their cultural and national heritages’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, cited in Jamal and Hollinshead 1999: 64). Such power says, Rojek and Urry (1997: 11), is fuelled by increasing geographic mobility, whereby the subject can go literally and metaphorically further than ever before. Based upon these emergent dynamics, a range of tangible and intangible searches will be assessed, observing more deeply, why tourists attempt to discover them. The search for heritage, authenticity and the metaphorical ‘paradise’ will be scrutinised, due to their prominence in academic literature and their potential as outlets to attain some of these dynamics. However, the search for the opposite – the mundane – will also be observed as an alternative viewpoint which has also emerged in contemporary research.

3.2 Searching for Heritage

According to Munt (1994: 112) and Lane and Waitt (2007: 106), the concept of travel is seen to be an ‘important informal qualification’ whereby the passport acts as a ‘professional certification; a record of achievement and experience’. Trauer and Ryan (2005: 483-4) suggest that tourism destinations are no longer merely locations in time and space but are used and consumed by travellers to convey their physical and emotional achievements and experiences, while Bargeman and van der Poel (2006:

709) imply that vacation decision making processes are not just about reducing risks and finding ‘pleasure’, but also about identifying the hedonic values of the destination and the symbolic meanings which are attached to them. Stokowski (2002: 373) reveals that life stories and narratives require the incorporation of others and meaningful places to give deeper meanings to their encounters and, according to Desforges, (2000: 936) ‘A density of good memories is associated with having lived life to the full, and what provides good memories are experiences which are different from the everyday’.

Richards and Wilson (2006: 1214) and Giddens (1991) suggest that narratives are essential for the traveller as he or she needs to give meaning to the personal experiences they have encountered and simultaneously because of the ‘uncertainty and fragmentation of postmodern life’. Travel is therefore an effective tool for contemporary social life because it has the perceived ability to answer questions about personal identity and because it may also help define their personal role in an ever-changing world. Desforges (2000: 937) adds that these biographies can be utilised in a variety of ways which allow the ‘narration of a fulfilled self, an educated self, a youthful self or even a mature self’. Munt (1994) suggests that rewards such as individual achievements, tests of character and adaptability are also important criteria for the traveller to attain and the role of the narrative or biography however, is not just a personal possession but also a means of asserting one’s abilities and achievements to others (Brown 2007: 378). Brown (2007: 379) argues that tourism is simultaneously a forum for conversation with others as much as it is a visit and that the importance of opportunity for social interaction and exchange may actually exceed that of the

destination visited. Brown (2007: 372) signifies the importance of travel stories via the following account:

> ‘They [travel accounts] provide a ‘ticket to talk’ (Sacks 1995): an excuse and a basis for more general conversation. The social contact that these conversations initiate may be of more value than the mere exchange of information-they are as much platforms for establishing other (possibly temporary) social bonds, as enjoying the company of new people.’

Travel and tourism may also offer ‘nostalgic references’ to a lost or more accurately desired sense of community where strangers meet, discuss and share their experiences in exotic locations (White and White 2004: 213). Galani-Moutafi (2000: 220) implies that tourism amongst many other social fields has provided an ‘outlet’ for those seeking the opposite of modern social products such as individualism, mobility and fragmentation and are motivated to find ‘ideal, integral communities’. Others see travel as means of acquiring ‘societal acceptance’ (Hlavin-Schulze 1998; Trauer and Ryan 2005: 484) where they increasingly adjust their behavioural patterns and interests to meet the perceived expectations of others. As Palmer (1998: 313) suggests, many ask themselves questions about who they are and where they fit into a rapidly changing world. According to Gilroy (1993) the contemporary age is one which is experiencing ‘cultural diffusion’ and ‘hybridity’, while Marcus and Fischer (1986) and Jamal and Hollinshead (1999: 63) suggest that many are now facing a ‘crisis of representation’ due to an inability to recognise the differences between one culture and the next. Likewise, Featherstone (1995: 126) suggests that the ‘complexity’ and ‘fluidity’ of modern life has

blurred conventional cultural rules and have subsequently led to confusion amongst many in terms of identity.

The erosion of identities has often been identified as one of the many side effects of globalisation, and recent research has begun to identify the relationship between places and the meanings tourists attach to them (McCabe and Stokoe 2004: 601-2). The consequences of such changes has led to a resurgence in nationalism and the need for acceptance or belonging amongst people perceived to be the same, or as Anderson (1991: 6-7) terms it, the 'imagined community'. Gellner (1983) cited in Palmer (1999: 314) suggests that people develop the idea of a nation 'composed of people with similar ways of behaving, communicating and thinking'. Anderson (1991) argues that the idea of imagined community, no matter how futile or intangible (Connor 1994) in reality it may be, is a popular concept amongst many who feel attached to a particular nationality. This 'community' is constructed upon an assumption that these people share a common culture which is structured upon historic territories, common myths and historical memories amongst other criteria (Smith 1991: 14).

As Park (2010: 118) asserts, the complex meanings of 'national identity' are by no means fixed or easily identifiable and is therefore a term which remains both fluid and changeable. Indeed, the likes of Driscoll (2003), Howard (1994), Iyer (2003) and Palmer (2005: 8) argue that identities are developed on a personal or individual level and can actually involve numerous alternatives which can be changed and adapted to the surroundings or mood of the subject. Thus a national identity is not a structured and

confined group, but a fluid and reflexive category which can be manipulated by the individual depending upon the situation they are exposed to. While many are more than content to perform in such ways, others it seems are keen to develop a clearer sense of meaning and clarity regarding their historical backgrounds in a world which continues to erode cultural and ethnic differences. Lowenthal (1998: 2) suggests that heritage has become 'a chief focus of patriotism', while Palmer (1999: 315-8) argues that heritage had become a 'buzzword' of the 1990s due to its ability to help promote tourism. She argues that the heritage industry has continuously 'emphasize[d] specific aspects of the past as being representative of what the nation is really all about, or perhaps, what it should be about'. Palmer (1999: 316) identifies the power possessed by the idea of nationhood in the heritage industry and its subsequent effect on heritage tourism:

> 'The national symbols, ceremonies and customs of a nation…provide an almost inexhaustible supply of material which can be appropriated and adapted for the purpose of creating a distinctive sense of nationhood for tourists. It is this idea of nation which is so powerfully present in the language of heritage of tourism.'

Pretes (2003: 127) suggests that tourism attractions have the ability to act as 'official' or 'hegemonic' communicators for the concept of nationalism. Similarly, Palmer (1999: 318) implies that while attractions and images such as museums and historic-themed centres have the power to experience enjoyment and excitement they simultaneously act as 'reminders' as to whom and what they are and where they belong in relation to a particular nation or group. Many of these attractions, argues Smith (1991: 16), act as 'sacred centres' or become the pivotal purpose for spiritual and historical journeys.

These experiences are then structured to form ‘material testimony of identity’ (Macdonald 2006: 11) and allow the subject to create a self-narrative which have the potential to answer a series of personal questions. Franklin (2003) adds that tourism forms an ‘integral part’ of allowing people to experience notions of nationhood and a collective past, and potentially enables them to develop a clearer sense of what it means to be from a particular place or country.

Externally, tourism attractions have also encountered wide scale promotion (Hall 2000) because of their distinct ability to project a nation’s cultural identity (Light: 2007: 747). Ashworth (1994) however is critical of the use of such images from the past in heritage tourism because they can define a nation using a narrow range of social and physical stereotypes which may possibly trigger the mechanisms of cultural commodification. Moreover, Cano and Mysyk (2004) and Wood (1984) imply that cultural affirmation is largely based upon the role of the state, who act as ‘definer and arbiter’ of culture and ultimately decide which images are used at the cost other to construct meaning. Nevertheless, heritage suggests Light (2007: 747), has been used continuously as means of attracting tourists, particularly because it has the ability to foster international tourists to understand the notion of the hosts’ cultural identity. Gonzalez (2008: 807-08) argues that this interest is often governed by a desire to ‘incorporate’ alternative cultures in to one’s own ‘personal cosmopolitan identity’.

Heritage it appears, is now a popular way of acquiring cultural capital which elevate the tourist above the rest on the basis that they are savvier travellers than the uncultured

masses. Culture has often been identified as a means of emancipation or as a ‘goal of perfection’ which ultimately leads to ‘progressive moral development’ (Jenks 1993). Similarly, citing Crompton (1979), Bansal and Eiselt (2004: 390) argue that these tourists are additionally motivated not only by an aspiration to become further educated but similarly attempt to experience other cultures and see particular attractions because they assume that this helps transform them to be more ‘rounded’ individuals. Indeed, such modes of tourism are undertaken because it is also assumed that they ‘ought’ to be seen participating in if they are to acquire cultural capital and further develop their educational desires. Thus, Timothy (1997: 751) suggests that heritage is now indeed the very ‘essence’ of many vacations and will attract millions of tourists worldwide even though few hold any intricate personal ties with the location or country itself. While the majority of these tourists are content to temporarily immerse themselves in foreign culture, it appears that others desire a much lengthier affiliation, which transcends mere curiosity. Perhaps, as Urry (1990) suggests, not all tourists come to merely ‘gaze’ but some additionally would rather ‘feel’. The desire to visit heritage attractions, says Sternberg (1997) is mainly driven be a desire to create both ‘physical’ and ‘experiential’ links to a particular nation and its people. Bansal and Eiselt (2004: 390) additionally offer myriad reasons as to why these particular tourists cross the divide and become more intent upon tapping into these alternative cultures. They argue that these potential reasons include Crompton’s (1979) search for ‘prestige’, ‘nostalgia’ or ‘exploration and evaluation of self’, or alternatively Lundberg’s (1971) search for ‘one-upmanship’ and ‘conformity’, which Bansal and Eiselt (2004: 390) say incorporates the motives of genealogy also.

Hudman and Jackson (1992) and Timothy (1997) suggest that the search for family history is an important feature of heritage tourism, which propels thousands of people around the globe with the intent of discovering family ties and roots and to help strengthen their identities. These desires to discover roots and clarify identities appear to have been intensified by the loss and removal of many historical features, which have consequently heightened the motives of some to seek out nostalgia and a deeper understanding of the past (Lowenthal 1979). Indeed 'nostalgia tourism' as Palmer (1998: 316) and Dann (1996) term it, has certainly gained popularity because of its perceived ability to offer solutions to questions such as: 'who am I?' or 'who was I?' Additionally, such desires relate closely to Yang, Wall and Smith's (2006: 752) notion of 'ethnic tourism' which focuses upon visitor aspirations to experience cultures which are simultaneously different yet familiar.

Norway it seems, is a fertile ground for heritage tourism. The country is a relatively new one, having only gained full independence from Sweden in 1814, and as a consequence, the nation is still coming to terms with its own identity and the meanings asserted to it. It could argued that one way of constructing this identity has been via the number of cultural and heritage attractions which have emerged in the post-independence era such as the University Historical Museum and the Vikingskiphuset (Viking Ship Museum) in Oslo. Domestic tourism in Norway remains strong, and it is perhaps unsurprising to see that Norway has developed a series of attractions which are designed to attract external tourists, but significant numbers of internal ones also.

Light (2007: 747) suggests that such a rationale supports the views of Edensor (2002), Franklin (2003) and Palmer (1999) who unanimously agree that domestic tourism is a useful tool in terms of perpetuating the notion of 'nation-building', which simultaneously allowing its citizens to establish a stronger sense of identity.

Heritage tourism therefore is a mixture of tangible and intangible experiences which inevitably create difficulties when attempting to define such a concept (see McIntosh and Prentice 1999; Poria, Butler and Airey 2001; Garrod and Fyall 2001 and Park 2010). As a consequence, Halewood and Hannam (2001: 566) reveal that recent tourism studies which have focused upon heritage have centred upon a wide range of attractions and activities which has ultimately created several conflicting perspectives (see Crang 1994, 1996; and Urry 1990 1995). During their research on Viking-orientated attractions in Western Europe, Halewood and Hannam (2001: 566-72), suggested that heritage tourism existed in one of four broad types, which revealed distinct differences and complete contradictions in terms of the products they offered the heritage-seeking tourist. Firstly, they argue via the views of Hewison (1987) and Wright (1985), that heritage acts as a 'landscape of nostalgia' whereby the tourist can attain feelings of 'security' and 'stability' in a rapidly changing world. Secondly, they imply that heritage is akin to MacCannell's (1992) notion of 'staged authenticity', whereby the attraction is based upon the expectations of tourists rather than reality. The third type centres upon the process of commodification. While these attractions often start out as being genuine and 'authentic', the popularity they generate eventually prompts them to respond by mass producing handicrafts which paradoxically, devalue the very attraction

that made them popular in the first place. Halewood and Hannam's (2001: 566-72) final type of heritage attraction is based upon reconstructions, which mimic the ways of life of bygone ages and communities of old. Regardless of whether heritage is indeed accurate or an amalgamation of both, it appears that the concept of experiencing the past, or at least a perception of it, is an important reason for many tourists to travel.

Viking-centred tourism appears a typical example of the rise of heritage as a motivator to travel, with myriads of museums, battle re-enactments, theme parks and habitat reconstructions emerging all over Europe in the past 25 years. Halewood and Hannam's (2001: 566) suggest what was once perhaps a peripheral interest has now become an important feature in Europe which has seen a proliferation of attractions appear all over Scandinavia and Western Europe. Despite this rising trend however, Poria, Reichel and Biran (2006: 162) suggest that a void still exists in terms of the relationship between the tourist and the heritage space. According to Palmer (2005: 7-8) little attention has been paid to the processes of identity formation from the perspective of those who visit nationally symbolic locations and attractions. Indeed, Palmer (2005: 7) adds that there has also been an absence of research which observes the role of landscapes, buildings or monuments in creating a 'collective belonging'. This Palmer suggests, is pivotal if we are to help further understand how 'people make sense of the world in which they live'.

3.3 Searching for Authenticity

Tourism, Jamal and Hollinshead (1999: 63-64) suggest, has perpetually been associated with locations which are ‘contrived’ and ‘inauthentic’. Likewise, say Rojek and Urry (1997: 11) is it often increasingly regarded as ‘artificial’ or ‘impure’. While heritage tourism is has become more prominent in recent times, its current role has not been devoid of criticism. Halewood and Hannam (2001: 567) discuss these criticisms, ranging from Walsh’s (1992: 1) ‘tabloid history’ to Hewison’s (1987) ‘bogus history’, which essentially focus upon the notion that heritage tourism may indeed by an ‘inauthentic’ experience. The problem frequently associated with heritage tourism is that the spectrum of attractions it incorporates ranges between the completely authentic and the inauthentic, whereby the latter often places the entertainment needs of the tourist before fact and accuracy. While Cohen (1988: 383) suggests that commodification does not necessarily lessen or reduce the meanings associated with such attractions, the influential power held by tourists is seen to be problematic at best. Similarly, Sternberg (1997: 951) argues that tourism attractions appeal to the desires of tourists using ‘myths’, ‘histories’ and ‘fantasies’ to arouse imagination regardless of whether fact or fiction is the basis for such constructs. Halewood and Hannam (2001: 574) therefore argue that all heritage features are often compared against one another even though in reality they are completely different features due the varying degrees of authenticity they offer.

The notion of authenticity has faced particular criticism when related to either culture or heritage as it assumed to play an active role in the deconstruction of authentic

attractions by systematically commodifying, packaging and then selling them to tourists (Cole 2007: 945). Many of these tourists remain unaware of the processes which occur behind the scenes, but regardless of whether they fully understand the places and experiences they immerse themselves in, authenticity remains a powerful motivator for contemporary tourists. Indeed, regardless of whether something is authentic or inauthentic, or seen to be commodified or pure, tourists use such experiences to help construct identities. Macdonald (1997) implies that even the most commodified facets of culture still have the potential to help the participant affirm meaning or enable them to construct personal stories or biographies as to who they are. Authenticity, or at least ones understanding or interpretation of it, is therefore negotiable and constructed independently (Cole 2007: 945) and consequently becomes a powerful tool in attracting tourists. Moreover, Halewood and Hannam (2001: 567) suggest that role of authenticity in many contemporary travel plans has led to it emergence as an actual marketing strategy in its own right. Cole (2007: 946) argues that the role of authenticity has been at the 'heart of discussions' in recent academic literature observing motivations. Lane and Waitt (2007: 106) outline that the desire for authenticity in terms of destination experience is 'well understood' and add that such a desire is reaction to the 'structures of modernity on daily life'. Similarly, Halewood and Hannam (2001: 567) state that the search for authenticity is a common component of the alternative tourism movement whereby particular journeys are undertaken because of their potential to reach beyond the 'limits of tourist space' and consequently enable Cohen's (1995: 13) notion of 'authentic experiences' to take place. As Cole (2007: 946) implies, authenticity is a Western cultural phenomenon which is typically associated with the 'primitive Other' in

direct response to the processes of modernity, and is often portrayed as portal to escaping the trappings of the routines associated with daily life. Likewise, Wang (1999: 360) argues that tourism is commonly associated with the term ‘authentic’ because it has the ability to allow participants to be ‘simpler’, ‘freer’ or ‘spontaneous’ and effectively permits them to transcend from their daily lives to something which may indeed be quite different.

However, despite its popularity in academic literature, the notion of authenticity still appears to be an ambiguous term and a largely unstable concept. Steiner and Reisinger (2006: 299) expand upon these issues by suggesting that:

> ‘It’s meaning tends to be a muddled amalgam of philosophical, psychological, and spiritual concepts, which reflects its multifaceted history. The problem is compounded within tourism because the term is often used in two distinct senses: authenticity as genuineness or realness of artefacts or events, and also as a human attribute signifying being one’s true self or being true to one’s essential nature.’

Wang (1999: 349) is equally critical of the how the concept has been identified and defined and suggests that its ambiguity and limitations have become ‘increasingly exposed’. Wang (1999) explains that its validity must be questioned because many tourist motivations cannot be adequately determined and explained using the ‘conventional concept of authenticity’. The typical dichotomy, suggests Cole (2007: 946), is that anything pre-modern is considered to be authentic while anything modern

is determined as being inauthentic. Selwyn (1996) separates authenticity using the terms ‘hot’ and ‘cool’. This notion suggests that cool authenticity is based upon attractions and experiences which are deemed to be real or genuine, while hot authenticity is based around ‘fake’ alternatives.

Authenticity it seems, has most frequently centred upon two different perspectives to signify different interpretations; ‘constructive authenticity’ and ‘objective authenticity’. According to Wang (1999: 352), constructive authenticity refers to the way in which authenticity is manipulated by tourists or tour operators and consequently interpreted as authentic due to perceived images, consumer expectations and preferences and personal beliefs, chiefly via processes such as commodification. Objective authenticity, state Kim and Jamal (2007: 183), ‘presumes there is an undistorted standard to determine what is or is not genuine (authentic)’. Here, the traveller seeks ‘originals or ‘truths’ in an attempt to understand modernity and uses personal encounters with which one defines their own meaning of authenticity. ‘Existential authenticity’ has been identified as a further alternative to understanding the quest for authenticity and centres on the subjects ‘state of being’ (Wang 1999: 352). Here the authenticity of a place is secondary to the authenticity of the personal experience. Wang (1999: 359) suggests that the ‘existential experience is the authenticity of *Being’.* The need for personal authentic experiences derives from the loss of the ‘true self’ (Berger 1973, cited in Wang 1999: 359) and a desire to be ‘true to oneself’. Kierkegaard (1985) and Steiner and Reisinger (2006: 300) argue that such a perspective is now becoming increasingly associated with the notion of authenticity whereby ‘being in touch with one’s self’ and

subsequently ‘living in accord with one’s self’ ultimately permits actual authenticity. Wang (1999: 361) explains this notion further, suggest that the ‘authentic self’ is constructed to resist the ‘mainstream institutions of modernity’. Citing Graburn (1989) he argues that by resisting ‘inauthenticity’ and subsequently the mainstream, subjects are able to cross ‘cultural and symbolic boundaries’ from profane spaces to sacred ones, which temporarily eliminate feelings of responsibility or obligation. The traverse of such boundaries therefore allows the participant to be in touch with their authentic self and detached from their ‘inauthentic’ public roles and commitments. Similarly, Kim and Jamal (2007: 184) suggest that the crossing of these boundaries enables them to escape and behave in a way which contrasts ‘social norms’, ‘regulations’ and the structures of contemporary daily life. They add that such liberation therefore allows them to construct ‘new social worlds’ which propel them towards an ‘authentic self’ which consequently enables them to be ‘true’ to themselves additionally. The search for the true self is said to originate from a state of disillusionment with contemporary society in Western countries, which results in the need to reaffirm both identity and integrity. McIntosh and Prentice (1999: 590) and Steiner and Reisinger (2006: 309) argue that many members of Western society rely upon tourism attractions to help reassert identity and a ‘sense of their origins’, which have gradually been eroded by increasing level urbanisation and migration. Likewise Cohen (1979) has suggested that tourists often seek authenticity in distant or exotic locations because they believe they have become alienated from their own cultural origins. However, the differing opinions on what the notion of authenticity truly represents in the field of tourism still exist and many academics offer their own interpretations. Berman (1970), Ryan (2000), Arsenault

(2003) and McIntosh and Prentice (1999) all offer different meanings to the notion of authenticity. Berman (1970) argues that authentic tourism is associated with identity and self-realisation, Ryan (2000) suggests that such experiences are individualistic, Arsenault (2003) implies that authentic travel involves an inherently personal journey, while McIntosh and Prentice (1999) note that tourists and travellers can attain a better understanding of their own roles in space and time based upon the experiences of different cultures which consequently allow them to reaffirm their identities.

Although Wang (1999: 350) maintains that the popular notion of authenticity is relevant to certain modes of tourism such as ethnic, history or culture tourism, Steiner and Reisinger (2006: 312) assert that this notion can also involve much more mundane and simplistic modes of tourism. Obrador Pons (2003) argues that even the most 'banal' or 'depthless' forms of tourism have the potential to instigate notions of existential authenticity. Authenticity, in terms of 'genuineness' or 'realness' according to Handler (1986: 2) is an experience which searches for 'the unspoiled, pristine, genuine, untouched and traditional'. According to Go, Lee and Russo (2003) the quest for authenticity is often borne from a continuing dissatisfaction among many travellers who feel that tourism products and destinations have become 'commercialized' or 'commodified' which has ultimately led to the 'disintegration of local cultures'. Such outcomes result in a reduction of authenticity as the untouched or 'remote' destinations are effectively transformed and modernised to slowly resemble the origins of where the tourist has come from. The less 'different' or 'distinct' the destination becomes, argues Taylor (2001: 15), the less attractive the location will become, simultaneously reducing

the ‘value’ of its product also. McIntosh *et al.* (1999: 593) likewise argue that many places are experiencing a ‘McDonaldization of culture’ which is typified by Ritzer’s (1993) assertions that consumer experiences are now based upon efficiency, calculability, standardisation, predictability, and control. Jacobsen (2000: 287) argues that the search for authenticity revolves around the desire to experience ‘nostalgic’ modes of travel, which centred upon ‘aristocratic and more exclusive’ times of travel. This concept closely ties in with the anti-tourist attitudes cited by the likes of MacCannell (1976), Fussell (1979 1980) Buzzard (1993), Dann (1999) and Brown (2007) and as Jacobsen suggests (2000: 287), many travellers believe that the ‘possibilities of experiencing something authentic and typical are inversely proportional to the number of tourists present in an area’. However, as Wang (1999: 352) maintains, authenticity is a subjective disposition and highly malleable depending upon who is experiencing it. In certain situations an object may not be necessarily authentic, but may appear to be so because of the points of view, beliefs and perspective of the subject who is experiencing it (Wang 1999: 352). Aramberri (2001: 740) concurs, and suggests that authenticity is determined by the individual:

> ‘What some people experience as authentic is often considered as alienated by others; one individual’s true experience is another’s kitsch, and vice versa. In most cases, there is no generally accepted way to tell the authentic from a fake’.

Moreover, many tourists do not seek ‘genuine’ authenticity and are happy to experience a fake, some are fully aware that it is a reconstruction aimed at satisfying the tourist. Wang (1999: 356) suggest that even for those tourists intent on experiencing

authenticity, they often do not seek out *objective* authenticity but rather *symbolic* authenticity. In such a scenario authenticity is not determined by whether the images or objects are genuine or originals but by the meanings visitors to can attach to these objects from a social or cultural perspective. Kim and Jamal (2007: 182) suggest that several empirical studies which have attempted to identify the perceptions of authenticity a variety of locations have often assumed that the experiences are based upon the objects on display rather than the experiences which are actively negotiated by the tourists themselves. Cohen (1972) cited in Steiner and Reisinger (2006: 312) suggests that many tourists are content to accept such a scenario because they prefer to be 'insulated' from authentic experiences of 'alien cultures' and 'tourism hassles'. Indeed, Steiner and Reisinger (2006: 312) argue that many tourists choose not to choose authenticity and alternatively prefer to simply 'go with the flow'. Preferences to avoid hassles have inevitably led to Boorstin's (1964) 'staged events' and Steiner and Resinger (2006) additionally identify that the expectations of tourists, however inaccurate they may be, often drive many cultural experiences to 'distort' themselves to match these unfounded expectations.

As Sternberg (1997) asserts, many tourists visit a destination because of the images they imagine and perceive, thus prompting the destination to modify itself to match that image, rather than attempt to change the preconceptions and stereotypical imagery held by the visitor. Effectively, tourism products, like any other products for that matter, must provide potential customers with a certain sense of appeal, an 'evocative image' or 'an image that evokes desire' (Sternberg 1997: 955). The loss of authenticity according to

Cohen (1995: 16-21) is merely reflective of postmodern attitudes who have shifted away from seeking the original and is more than content with a ‘playful search for enjoyment’ or an ‘aesthetic enjoyment of services’. Kim and Jamal (2007: 182) similarly suggest that tourism is now a ‘commodity-driven industry’ sought after by an ‘image-driven consumer society’ which has helped generate a sense of ‘false touristic consciousness’. They argue that culture, as a tourism product, has now been simultaneously distorted and reproduced and this has consequently led to the ‘collapse’ of the distinction between original and copy. Cohen (1995) argues that the neglect of seeking ‘real’ or ‘genuine’ authentic experiences may not be due to gullible and misconceived tourist attitudes but because they are prepared to accept ‘substitutes’ because they are aware that many destinations, cultures and communities would be severely compromised if they were allowed to go in large volumes.

An additional cause of the quest for authenticity has been the rapid changes associated with the urban and suburban environments where people live and has consequently prompted many to find places which have remained ‘unchanged’ and ‘empty’ (Lane and Waitt 2007: 106). McIntosh and Prentice (1999: 590) reveal that such attitudes are commonplace in Western societies because many have become ‘divorced from their origins’ due to the processes of urbanization and migration. In an earlier chapter, Crouch (2000: 720) has identified the ‘unreal’ and ‘false geography’ of many modern environments which have been coupled with new buildings designed to mimic older ones or replicate different places altogether. Desires to escape such environments closely match the desires of independent travellers and backpackers in their search for

places ‘beyond the beaten track’ (Muzaini 2006), which Cohen (1982: 221) has already identified by suggesting that the backpacker is one of the most popular seekers of ‘authentic experiences.’ However, as Kim and Jamal (2007: 183) suggest, the traveller is constantly thwarted in their search for the authentic as tourism itself consumes and commodities many locations. Taylor (2001: 15) reveals that many destinations are ruined the instant they become identified as places of culture and subsequently objects of tourism. In such scenarios, the place loses authentic value of ‘aura’ as it becomes ‘segmented and detached from its indigenous sphere.’

The quest for authentic experiences is not a phenomenon exclusive to backpackers in exotic and far flung destinations it seems. McIntosh and Prentice (1999: 590) reveal that the loss of identities in many Western countries has resulted in the need for many to re-assert a sense of ‘pride and place’. Similarly, Laenen (1989), cited in Steiner and Reisinger (2006: 301), argues that many are now going through a form of ‘identity crisis’, due to a lack of morals and a fragile position in contemporary society or culture . Here, attractions such as museums act as important nodes which represent an ‘authoritative interpretation of the significance of a place through time’ (McIntosh and Prentice 1999: 590). Handler (1986) implies that the ‘commodification of pastness’ has begun to play an important role in the search by many for identity or ‘self realization’, which are seen as vital components in the quest for authenticity. Indeed, Steiner and Reisinger (2006: 309) point out that heritage tourism closely ties in with the notion of existential authenticity because the past can be used as a tool to help shape and identify themselves in the present. McIntosh *et al.* (1999: 609) summarise this concept:

> ‘Insight is gained from heritage settings, whether contrived or real, and that information is assimilated by tourists and personal meaning added, thus making tourists active players in the production of their own ``meaningful environment'' and their own experiences of authenticity.’

However, despite the acknowledgement that many tourists are in search of authenticity, few can agree on what forms of tourism constitute genuine authenticity and which ones do not. Halewood and Hannam’s (2001: 578) research on Viking heritage tourism revealed that the differences between authentic attraction and unauthentic attractions was relatively plain for all to see, however, all of these attractions were deemed to be ‘authentic’ in some way largely due to the notion that tourists defined what this meant from a personal perspective. Similarly, McIntosh *et al.* (1999: 609) argue that the experiences derived from an attraction can often outweigh ‘cognitive outcomes’ and the level of historical accuracy. They additionally suggest that these experiential thought processes are far more important than the concerns of whether the information and knowledge they acquire is factual or not. Wang (1999: 353) suggests that the concept of authenticity is not a matter of ‘black or white’, but involves a ‘much wider spectrum, rich in ambiguous colours’. The outcome of this he argues, is that both inauthentic and staged events, as determined by experts or intellectuals, may indeed be the way in which authentic or real experiences are consumed by mass tourists. Perhaps Aramberri (2001: 740) summarises this dilemma the most coherently:

> ‘In the end, authentic is what academics and other social scientists define as such, and the question of why should an ecotour in the Amazon be a more

genuine experience than a visit to Disneyworld begs a final answer: because some scholars say so'.

Dann (1996: 73-79) suggests however, that authenticity and the feelings and freedoms it permits may be indeed just be 'fantasy and illusion' and argues that tourism is now a 'constraint' in itself which is characterised by schedules and planning. Sternberg (1997: 954) also argues that while tourists attempt to negotiate 'disenchanted' or 'mundane' lives, tourism establishments effectively 'make it their business to shape, package, and sell such experiences'. Such an outcome therefore creates commodified tourism products which ultimately add to the disenchantment people feel in their controlled and obligated lives in modernity.

While cultural commodification is often highlighted as a negative process, which is paradoxically triggered and vilified by the West, Cole (2007: 946) argues that the negative connotations are frequently unfounded from a local perspective. She argues that such a process, even if elitist academics and self-proclaimed superior travellers criticise it, may in fact be seen as opportunity for many cultures to express their pride associated with the creation of a new definable identity. Citing both Bruner (1994) and Taylor (2001), Cole (2007: 946) highlights this issue using one particular question: *who* has the right, authority, or power to define what is authentic? The answer, it seems, is a unique to each and every tourist, of which few will remotely share similar ideologies.

3.4 Escaping the Mundane

It has been implied that increased mobility has resulted in ongoing conflicts between the contemporary notions of the tourist and the traveller, and that the latter are effectively on the run from the former. Kontogeorgopoulos (2003: 177) suggests that many travellers attempt to shun the 'conventional tourism industry' and to avoid tours and packages controlled and determined by others. However, according to Buzzard (1993: 108-109) it can also be argued that many are trying to escape from the mundane experiences of home, whereby the tedium of daily routines has prompted the subject into action: 'If all tourists are anti-tourists, then perhaps anti-tourism has become a way of responding to the nature of that society tourists must come home to.'

Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002: 524) suggest that leisure activities in their purest form allow the tourist or traveller to take 'time out' from routines or daily life and enable participants to 'restore energy' before their return to their routines encountered at home. Although home represents a 'safe haven' (Trauer and Ryan 2005: 84), it also represents a world of obligations, expectations and mundane lives, with ever decreasing challenges and opportunities. Sternberg (1997: 954) suggests that tourists are essentially tourists because they wish to 'compensate for their secular, disenchanted, mundane lives through a temporary exposure to the other-to the adventurous, foreign, ancient, or spectacular'.

Boredom and a lack of excitement may not be the only motives to escape home however, as White and White (2007: 93) suggest that travel can also act as a break

from routines of hardship rather the routines of banal activities, and cites the motivations of Israelis as popular example. Here, Israelis could leave behind the repetitive troubles and dangers of home behind for a temporary period of time. According to Yeoman, Brass, McMahon-Beattie (2007: 1135) holidays and recreational breaks have become a 'means of escaping from everyday life' or an opportunity to become 'in touch with one's true self', while Wang (1999: 351) suggests that tourists can attain feelings of self-expression because they are participating in 'nonordinary activities' which remove the constraints of daily life. These journeys subsequently permit metaphorical journeys to 'liminal touristic spaces' whereby social norms can be temporarily placed on hold as the subject, to some degree, become anonymous and free from 'community scrutiny' (Kim and Jamal 2007: 184). Similarly, Gilbert and Abdullah (2004: 104) argue that travel affords the tourist a sense of 'escape' or 'freedom', and this escape from the mundane, everyday life, suggests Edensor (2007: 199) has been repeatedly identified in academic literature. Being 'away' suggest White and White (2007: 90), is an opportunity to develop distances from the certain places and particular relationships and travel therefore repents a physical boundary to ensure that this distance is cemented for a temporary period of time. Muller and O'Cass (2001) additionally argue that long term travel offers the traveller a break from the routines of life back home and simultaneously a time for reflection. According to White and White (2004: 201) long term journeys represent 'transitional times' where the participant can take respite from social pressures or the impending arrival of new responsibilities. The research of Desforges (2000: 935) on long term travellers found many such examples of subjects experiencing such transitional life phases:

> ‘They included…those leaving higher education, leaving work, going bankrupt, starting a new job, emigrating…, finding a new partner, and going through a mid-life crisis. For those interviewed, travel played a relatively powerful role in helping them to feel as though they were moving towards a rewarding self in the future. They used this occasion as a response to the anxieties and opportunities offered by their own fateful moments’.

According to Giddens (1991: 112-114) these ‘fateful moments’ are times when people’s lives are encountering a new stage of their lives or if they are entering a mode of transition in their personal lives. Desforges (2000: 935) argues that the consequences of their decisions during this stage will have a huge bearing on their ‘self actualization’ and the resulting outcomes will shape and form their ‘self-identity’ for many years ahead. The process of ‘self-actualization’ according to Giddens (1991: 77) involves a formulation of choices which will highly influence the lifestyles for future life phases and is an attempt by the subject to help define and identify how to ‘live life to the full’. The research of Desforges (2000: 933) discovered that many of the ideas here were apparent and that for many of the travellers interviewed, the decision to embark upon their journeys was closely linked to moments in their lives when their ‘self-identity’ was open to question. White and White (2004: 203) imply that long distance travel offers different demographic groups different opportunities in terms of asserting their identities during transitional times. For the younger traveller, travel offered a solution to deferring adult responsibilities and an opportunity to postpone the need to begin a career. Others used travel as means of escaping routines, particularly after experiencing low levels of

job satisfaction. For those in early mid-life, the journey offered simultaneously the opportunity to escape routines but also them a path to ‘personal growth’. Indeed, Hannam and Myers (2007), White and White (2004) and Ateljevic and Doorne 2000) discovered that many women were also using travel as a process of transformation and an opportunity to find a ‘new meaning in life’ while at the same time also looking to break the routines of home. Desforges (1998 2000: 937) suggests that for the younger traveller, the perceived trappings and commitments of home were interpreted as barriers to their mobile lives. For these travellers, the period of youth was a time to do things before it was deemed to be ‘too late’ and effectively they feared that this missed opportunity would leave them feeling left out in their later years. Furthermore, White and White (2004: 205) argue that middle-aged travellers were particularly motivated by a number of problematic issues.

Although many travellers were seeking to escape routines and mundane daily lives, others, particularly those of a retirement ages, were seeking a much more complicated objective: an opportunity to escape life changes back home. White and White’s (2004: 205) research on campers in the Australian outback, revealed that those many participants aged between their late 30s and early 50s were embarking upon their journeys due to several problematic issues experienced back at their homes. These issues included job dissatisfaction, an approaching fear of retrenchment, and decisions to move on from their current abodes after a considerable period of time living there. In these scenarios, people who were faced with the transition from one life phase to another, notably the end of the working phase to the beginning of the retirement phase,

used travel and the stops in between as ‘neutral zones’ which allowed people to prepare for ‘potential impacts’ faced by such transitions (White and White 2004: 206). These feared ‘endings’ were hypothesised to be more manageable away from the home environment and that the change of scenario would create a vacuum of space and time where they could adequately reflect, prepare and even look forward to. Although some embarked upon these phases in a positive mindset, many of those experiencing such transitional times were more than content to embark upon such journeys because it delayed the fears and anxieties associated with a return to home.

The notion of ‘inalienability’ as Lane and Waitt (2007: 109) note, is a concept which may apply to places where travellers and tourists can obtain a ‘unique unchanging identity’ which contrasts their changing circumstances back home. Effectively, according to White and White (2004: 216), these places act as stable locations where transitional phases between ‘old’ and potential ‘new’ ways of life could be perceived to be managed more easily. Galani-Moutafi (2000: 205) defines these journeys as *passages* in time where the ‘interlocking dimensions of time and space make the journey a potent metaphor that symbolises discovery of the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’. Desforges (2000: 943) claims that significant ‘personal investments’ are placed in travel and leisure practices in an order to solve problems and to help develop new directions and meanings to life. Reflection and self discovery appear to be key motivational themes in the reasons behind engaging in travel. The discovery of the ‘self’ and the need for a development of personhood are additionally seen to be significant reasons behind travel desires (Desforges 2000: 926). To Giddens (1991: 59) the notion of ‘personhood’ is about self

definition and poses internal questions to the traveller, such as ‘what sort of a person am I’, ‘who I am’ and ‘how am I to live.’ Minh-ha (1994: 9) suggests that the journey has the ‘potential to facilitate a re-setting of boundaries as the travelling self’ due to the movements between places and the additional constant negotiation of journeys between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Brown (2007: 379) suggests that tourism frequently involves shifts between ‘work’ and play’, where pleasures and frustrations entice the need for skills such as ‘problem-solving’ which are balanced by ‘straightforward pleasures’. Travel is often seen as means of answering challenging questions which are offered to test the self along their journeys. According to Trauer and Ryan (2005: 483), the concept of ‘the self’ is ‘located at the centre of a range of enveloping worlds - the immediate of family, work and leisure moving out into structures of the local, regional, national and international.’ Smail (1993: 63) reveals that the tourist is a complicated phenomenon that is part body and part environment. The traveller therefore interacts with both the places and the people they meet at the various locations they visit. White and White (2004: 211) imply that a ‘deep connection’ exists between a sense of place and sense of self, while Lanfrant (1995) suggests that tourists visit places to discover identities which they cannot obtain in their daily lives back home.

The key purpose for many seeking and compiling new experiences identities, is that they allow the creation of a self-narrative which can be used to help define the self (Cantrill and Senecah 2001). Moreover, these self-narratives or tourism experiences, and the ways in which they are imagined and consumed, help the tourist define themselves and answer the questions they identified prior to the vacation (Desforges

2000: 930). Narration says Neuman (1992: 177-178) allows the traveller to give meaning to the experiences and images they encounter which in turn help define the self and consequently their personal identity. White and White (2004: 216) and Elsrud (2001) suggest that the performance of travellers during these journeys consequently enables them to imagine themselves as being a certain type of person, who is 'evolving' due to the adventures and experiences they have negotiated. According to Desforges (2000: 943) long-haul destinations are seen as key platforms to allow such experiences to take place and allow for the connection between their desires and their 'spatial imagination'. He adds that the relationship between traveller desires and spatial imaginations is of 'great importance' to understanding modern tourism practices.

Trauer and Ryan (2005: 484) reveal that many vacationers are on the search for 'paradise' or the 'ultimate' where they can obtain new experiences and stimuli while simultaneously leaving 'bad' ones in the past. This complex search for paradise, or the perfect vacation, where the processes of self-definition and achievement can be maximised, now appears to be simultaneously more important yet equally less obtainable. Ryan (1997: 194-195) identified that many holidays and destinations were sold and marketed as 'a once in a lifetime experience', while Gilbert *et al.* (2004: 103) suggest that the idea of vacationing has been facilitated to stimulate notions of the 'ultimate fantasy trip' where people can experience one-offs and 'have the time of their lives'. Gilbert *et al.* (2004: 104) add that the 'dream vacation' is modelled to be an 'alternative experience of time' which offers an 'alternative rhythm, free from the constraints of the daily tempo.' These journeys are often depicted as opportunities to attain new 'strength', 'energy', 'lifeblood' and 'happiness' (Krippendorf 1987: 17) and of

ways of invigorating lives which have become sedate and lacking in some form or another. However, according to Opaschowski (2001) cited in Trauer and Ryan (2005: 484), the notion of destinations of paradise are merely a concept located within the human mind, and is purely a self-constructed ideology: 'there is no specific place that is paradise, and there is no specific time for happiness, both are constructs within ourselves.' The tourist or traveller attaches their own unique meanings and feelings to places, which Trauer and Ryan (2005: 481) suggest are constructed from previous journeys and experiences, perceived and 'actual' knowledge, host reactions, whether the destination lived up to the 'promise' asserted by the commercial sector and the 'actual nature' of the destination, which includes criteria such as culture, scenery and history. As O'Dell (2007: 41) points out, tourist experiences are more than just different form of everyday life, as they can result in physical and emotional experiences which leave the subject with a contentment of an 'extraordinary' experience, which can be both 'hedonic' and 'emotional' (Goossens 2000).

The increasing use of terms like 'freedom', 'uniqueness', 'solitude' and 'emptiness' appear to be central to the thoughts of many travellers or ethnographers in the quest for paradise and the desire to transcend 'frontiers' (Griffiths 2002). Lane and Waitt (2007: 106) suggest that this in part may be influenced by increasing social pressures and rapidly changing spatial environments and are therefore drawn to places that appear unchanged and devoid of people. Trauer and Ryan (2005: 484) signify these locations are 'places of escape' where self-recovery and re-creation are frequently sought objectives. Such experiences were evident in White and White's (2004: 216-217)

accounts of travellers to the Australian Outback who sought isolation, an 'uncluttered psychological space' and a distinct physical environment to accommodate their transitions from one phase of life to another. Nilsson (2001: 55) and Goode *et al.* (2000) acknowledge the search for mountain landscapes and the serenity and calm they offer as a further example of physical spaces which offer much more than just a pleasant vista. In such locations it is argued that tourists attain a 'sense of renewal and spiritual well being' while simultaneously satisfying the needs of 'romanticism' and a 'taste for adventure'. Lane and Waitt (2007: 112) cite MacCannell's (1976) accounts of the 'spiritual search' or 'pilgrimage' and Stewart's (1993) 'fictive domain' as further examples to salience to these increasing requirements for journeys that require social and psychological requirements as well as physical experiences. Lane and Waitt (2007: 112) accounts of self-drive tourists in NorthWest Australia revealed that they used terms such as 'soulfood', 'sacred', 'authentic', 'frontier' and 'magic' to help describe their equally important physical and emotional journeys. The result of such accounts reveal the importance of understanding the motivations behind travel and the important spiritual journeys undertaken while in transit and on location in these destinations. Trauer and Ryan (2005: 489) argue that fulfilling tourism experiences are the result of visitors having 'open minds, hearts and senses towards place, their hosts and their travelling partners.' Boniface (2000) and Trauer and Ryan (2005) acknowledge the increasing importance of 'personal, emotional and spiritual values' and their role in conjunction with the processes of tourism if the industry is to remain successful.

The traveller and the ethnographer is on the look out for the ‘Other’ where both physical and intellectual challenges can be discovered and faced, which they cannot find in their own worlds (Galani-Moutafi 2000: 220). Effectively it seems, destinations are not just physical places, but places where psychological, emotional and social requirements can be fulfilled. However, while many are in search of escaping the mundane world, the opportunities to do this are becoming increasingly compromised. Edensor (2007: 201) suggests that tourism’s ability to offer tourists a way of experiencing ‘otherness’ is becoming severely diluted by the large increases in the numbers of people who now engage in travel and leisure activities. While those in search of the tourist gaze are a popular example of how tourism is destructive on a visual level (Deng, King and Bauer 2002; McCabe and Stokoe 2004), it is perhaps on the emotional or experiential level that the more damaging effects large scale tourism can result in.

Essentially, tourism is now longer the object of myths and fantasies in far away places but a product which is packaged and exported around the world into the everyday lives of people at home and in ‘banal urban spaces’ which ultimately transports the ‘exotic’ to the ‘mundane’ and into the ‘quotidian’ (Edensor 2007: 201). Escaping these sensations may now be more difficult to escape than ever before, if indeed tourists genuinely desire to do so in the first place.

3.5 In search of the Mundane

The previous section has explored the notion that the modern tourist or traveller is increasingly seeking to escape the mundane world and to facilitate new experiences, embark upon curiosity, and to encounter novel and new adventures (Bansal and Eiselt 2004: 390). Dann (1999) and Buzzard (1993) contest that tourists are constantly seeking change and are simultaneously attempting to avoid the routines and obligations they face everyday at home. Similarly, Selanniemi (2001) suggests that the destination is often secondary to the experiences they yield, offering opportunities to 'escape home' or to develop new identities (Palmer 1998; Park 2010). The assumption here however, is that home is therefore seen to be a negative setting, whereby people feel trapped or confined by routines and daily obligations.

While White and White (2007: 89-95) suggest that a home to some may be nothing more than a 'physical entity', to others it represents a place of physical or emotional well-being; a place where the parameters of life can be more easily controlled; and a place where loved ones are close by. Indeed, they argue, home acts as a place of emotion and physical well-being and that a temporal detachment from such a place triggered a constant desire to communicate with home to attain reassurance and to ensure that that they still had a place in the lives of those who they were in contact with. Likewise, Selanniemi (2001) argues that tourists were motivated by an opportunity to engage in hedonistic and liminal activities, they were also driven by a desire to experience the 'comforts of home' without the problems associated with being at home. Indeed McCabe (2002) suggests that while tourists are away from home they constantly inundate their journeys with references and comparisons to life back home.

Contemporary research therefore suggests that the traveller has not been quite so successful in attaining the objectives of escaping home. The tourist will often encounter a series of routines before, during and after the vacation and will normally make decisions based upon 'pre-existing discursive, practical, embodied norms' which are used to construct plans regarding what they should do (Edensor 2007: 202-3). Brown (2007: 364) identifies that the action of travel requires a variety of 'practical organisational activities', which are considered to be part of the 'mundane' processes associated with preparation before the journey takes place. According to Brown (2007: 369) tourists face four general 'mundane problems': tourists need to decide *what* activities to do, *how* to do those activities, *when* to do them, and finally *where* those activities are (and how they can get there). These processes, such as arranging transport, finding accommodation or shopping for sun tan lotions and beachwear are examples of unavoidable criteria which Trauer and Ryan (2005: 486) identify as 'ritualistic behaviours' and are necessary before they depart for their 'temporal escape from the ordinary'. While these rituals are deemed to be part and parcel of the travel planning process for many, these practices are not merely superficial activities but highly detailed arrangements which must be negotiated by the participant to ensure that things go smoothly during and indeed, after the journey has commenced. Bargeman *et al.*'s (2006: 708-709) research on the pre-departure decision making processes of tourists yielded that tourists spend large amounts of time and effort *before* they have even embarked upon their journeys. Such expenditures of energy, they argue, are spent on 'extensive information gathering' using travel brochures, reading guidebooks and

viewing travel shows as tourists are rational beings who evaluate all available options in a given time frame. These tourists also undertake a step-by-step, in-depth evaluation of numerous alternative destinations which help mitigate problems such as cost, perceptions of value and pleasure, and the symbolic meanings of each place (Bargeman *et al. 2*006: 708-9). Moreover, it could also be argued that these rituals and mundane encounters do not cease on embarkation of the journey, but systematically continue throughout the journey.

Edensor (2007: 203) suggests that the repetitive and mundane practice of taking photographs at the destination is a typical example of the banal activities which occur while on holiday. Here the subject goes through a regular cyclical process of staging, framing and taking throughout the course of the holiday. Similarly, communications are maintained with friends or even work colleagues which ensure that news, gossip and updates can be maintained as if one had never left. As White and White (2007: 89-94) suggest, tourists are now simultaneously ‘‘home and away’’, and can exist in two separate, unrelated worlds concurrently. Improvements in communication techniques have benefited the tourist in a number of ways; such as enabling them to book flights or hotels instantly online, empowering them to be able to see ‘live’ weather reports, permitting them to read about political developments which render places safe or unsafe, and to enable them to mitigate the difficulties faced with being away from loved ones. Many of the problematic scenarios involving geographical distance have now been reduced or even eradicated, and the improvement in technologies such as email, blackberries and Wi-Fi have permitted communication to continue almost seamlessly.

However, while many assume that mainstream tourists are the most likely to take advantage and benefit, Edensor (2007: 204) suggests that the routines and rituals are also undertaken by those less frequently associated with planning:

> 'Those who regard themselves as 'travellers' or more independent tourists are equally likely to pursue particular repertoires of procedures and rituals…while backpackers frequently articulate their identity as separate from the hordes of package tourists whom they deride, they are likely to follow a suite of alternative routine enactions which depend upon other competencies and networks.'

Edensor (2007: 204) suggest that these alternative routines will include regular haggling, the continuous search for cheap accommodation, adapting to behave 'locally' from one destination to the next and the methodical upkeep of a journal or travel diary. Indeed all tourists follow mundane routines, frequently because they believe that this the appropriate form of tourism they participate in. Carlson (1996: 16) refers to this process as the 'discrete concretisation of cultural assumptions', whereby tourists maintain performance levels based upon how they feel they should act. McCabe (2002: 61) adds that contemporary tourist activities are now reflective of a 'microcosm of everyday', while White and White (2007: 94) suggest that this is typified by the tourist's desire to bring 'home with them' and subsequently 're-establishing the routines of everyday home life while away'. Haug, Dann and Mehmetoglu (2007: 211) similarly suggest that tourists will often surround themselves in foreign lands with the 'familiar paraphernalia' of their home environments which consequently allows them to 'relocate' their daily lives to new settings. Cheong and Miller (2000) argue that these problems

have been largely negotiated by travel agents and tour guides who not only solve these problems but additionally control and restrict the movements, behaviours and thoughts of tourists who consult them.

Despite the negative perceptions associated with such occurrences, it has been counter-argued that many tourists require such dictation as to their vacational experiences and indeed, unwittingly seek 'mundane' experiences. Edensor (2007: 202) offers one such explanation as to why this may be and argues that exposure to new environments, unfamiliarity and the subsequent confusion it causes, will often render the tourist unable to enjoy themselves, relax or 'let go':

> 'Reflexive improvisation and self-consciousness are mobilized, perhaps because of surprising intrusions or dissident or competing performances, any resultant confusion can threaten the often central tourist imperative to relax and let go. This is one of the central paradoxes of tourism, for while the confrontation of alterity is desired, the disruption this creates can engender self-doubt or self-consciousness, not conducive to having a good time.'

The outcome therefore is that the majority of tourists are inevitably limited to a small range of destinations over a limited period of time. This, says Edensor (2007: 210-11), when combined with familiar hotels and predictable environments, transports the tourist to nothing more than banal unchallenging environments and subsequently permits routines to continue. Similarly, Steiner and Reisinger (2006: 312) argue that many tourists require such control, even if it resembles an 'unauthentic' type of vacation. They

argue that many tourists visit non-Western countries yet stay in Western-style hotels, which subsequently remove the difficulties associated with ‘daily hassles’ and ‘dealing with locals’, and consequently allow them to participate in activities which are organised by others. As Muzaini (2006: 147) claims, tourists will often abandon their initial desires to engage with ‘authentic cultures’ particularly when problems or discomforts occur, which in extreme instances leads to ‘counterlocalization’. In this scenario, tourists do not only try to distance themselves from foreign culture but actively seek their own, simultaneously rejecting the other outright. It seems that for many tourists, conformity, standardised products and external dictation are imperative if they wish to actually enjoy their holidays. Mundane routines appear to act as links to the more familiar surroundings of their homelands and subsequently allow them to feel more relaxed in their new settings. Indeed, Wang (1999: 361) argues that even those who manage to temporarily shun ‘social order’ and ‘social responsibilities’, most are more than content to return to home and readapt their home societies once more. The notion that tourists can therefore use travel as means of developing identities may be true, however, instead of creating new ones, they appear to consolidate the ones they have already constructed at home (Edensor 2007: 202).

It is not just the common tourist who is a regular participant in mundane travel behaviour however. While Pearce (1982: 32) argues that backpackers will experiment with local food and seek out new destinations, others have implied that this behaviour may not always be an accurate appraisal. Jacobsen’s (2000: 288) suggestion that tourists seek

out ‘protection against the experience of foreignness’ may indeed, be also applicable to the contemporary backpacker.

Hannam and Ateljevic (2007: 12) highlight the institutionalisation and standardisation of backpacking as a mode of travel which has often been interpreted as a negative outcome by many academics. It could alternatively be argued that such processes are responsive to the demands by travellers who seek the adventure and excitement of a new destination, yet simultaneously require familiar surroundings such as chain hostels and backpacker themed bars. Hannam and Ateljevic (2007: 12) have identified the backpacker enclave as a particular example of how destinations associated with perceived liberal and free-thinking travellers are now paradoxically areas of familiarity and standardisation – the original antithesis of the backpackers’ travel agenda.

Although the enclave has been observed from a backpacking perspective, the phenomenon has deeper roots in more conventional modes of tourism as many tourists have been observed spending the complete duration of their holidays in such sanitised, foreignness-free zones. Cohen (1972), cited in Prentice (2004: 924) had originally suggested that the need for ‘familiarity’ and ‘comfort’ amongst many tourists could additionally be defined as ‘preference for the tourist bubble’. Indeed the popularity of tourist bubbles and a preference for vacations which revolve around such notions has given rise to the term ‘enclave tourism’ (Ceballos-Lascurain 1996). Enclave tourism involves small resorts or destinations which exist outside of the realistic, cultural and social realm of the region or nation they are found in. The tourist is transported from

arrival points such as ports and airports to such locations which ensure that they remain out of contact with local environments. Bansal and Eiselt (2004: 394) refer to such tourists as 'limited clientele' because of their desire to choose packaged services and facilities which effectively require them never to the leave the resort for the duration of their stays. The rise of all-inclusive-resorts in the Caribbean, Western Africa and other developing regions throughout the world have effective lead to 'internal colonialism' as Mbaiwa (2003: 159) defines it, whereby the rich and wealthy tourists of the Western world develop and reside in environments which are alien to the regional environments in which they are actually staying and display little concern to the wants and needs of the host communities. Rojek (1995: 62) suggests that an added attractive feature of these 'purified tourist spaces' is that they remove 'extraneous, chaotic elements' while simultaneously reducing the plethora of sights and images of the destination to a 'few key images'. Similar examples are also identifiable in the countless ex-patriate communities and 'holiday home' enclaves which are emerging all over the world. For many who visited these regions initially as tourists, the 'pull factor' of these locations, according to Haug *et al.* (2007: 211), is that they offer residents 'home-from-home icons of familiarity' (Edensor 2007: 208), which additionally arouse feelings of 'safety'.

Haug *et al.'s* (2007) research into Norwegian enclaves in Spain revealed that contemporary Norwegian life continued in Spain as it would in back in Norway, and that these enclaves fostered the 'relocation of Norwegian life elsewhere'. Indeed many understood and acknowledge that they were inhabitants of enclaves rather than residents in Spain and that their lifestyle choices where reflective of 'ordinary' or

‘normal’ behaviour back in Norway. A further advantage of the enclave or ‘ghetto’ was that it permitted a ‘counter-structure’ (Lengkeek 1996) or dual living status, whereby the inhabitants of the enclave could leave their environmental bubbles and traverse between Spain and Norway at will. In this situation the Norwegian inhabitants could engage with Spanish society and culture at will and could retreat back to their enclaves if they believed they had had enough ‘Spanishness’ for the day (Haug, Dann and Mehmetoglu (2007: 219). Despite the growth of enclaves and the advantages they hold for the many tourists who use them, there appears to be a fine line between attraction and rejection of such facilities however. MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997: 542) and Prentice (2004: 925) argue that although over-familiarity prompts a desire to reject standardised tourism products, familiarity in itself, is an attractive to feature to many tourists and travellers, even if the latter would deny such an admission. Nordstrom (2004: 61) additionally argues that tourists revisit destinations that they like because it reduces the risk of uncertainty associated with holidaymaking due to familiarity. The backpacker enclave appears to dispel the notion that the sole respondent of familiarity, standardisation and institutionalised products is the common mass tourist. According to Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) and Hyde (2008), the desire for familiarity and institutionalised facilities increases with age, as does the reduction in requirement for ‘novelty-seeking’. However, they argue that other factors may also play a role in whether such approaches are adopted. For example, Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002: 521) suggest that the avoidance of conventional facilities may be attributed to budget limitations, and that they travel as backpackers not because they attempt to discover ‘meaning’ or because they hold ‘anti-establishment views’, but because they cannot

afford to stay in more comfortable surroundings. It has previously been asserted that backpackers will go to great lengths to avoid the masses and will be even prepared to accept discomfort (Kontogeorgopolous 2003; Muzaini 2006) in order to do so. However, Foster (1999) suggests that many backpackers in reality will be governed by the importance of 'hygienic factors', which includes the cleanliness of accommodation, restaurants and other facilities they choose to utilise. Bansal and Eiselt (2004: 388) argue that while hygienic factors seldom act as an incentive to choose a particular location, the absence of such features will often act as a strong deterrent. Citing Cohen (1973) Uriely *et al.* (2002: 523) argue that backpackers are additionally often found to be 'inward-orientated' and effectively participants of a prolonged summer trip. These backpackers fail to interact with locals and establish ties and communications only exist with those who exhibit similar to demographic characteristics to themselves. Muzaini (2006: 148-149) additionally argues that many budget tourists and travellers who have frequented cheaper modes of accommodation have often been cited as examples of tourists experiencing travelling the 'local way', often have little choice to select anything else. Muzaini's (2006) contention is that if tourists had the benefit of a greater budget then many would object to staying in these types of accommodation.

It appears that those in search of the exotic or places off the beaten track perceive their journeys as unique and perhaps as behaviour which is in contract to the rest of their host society back home. However, in contemporary life, travel and distance are negotiated easier and accessible than ever before. Edensor (2007: 201) suggests that the opportunity to discover otherness has been severely 'diluted' by a significant growth

in leisure opportunities which are now available to growing numbers of tourists. Bargeman and van der Poel (2006: 707) likewise argue that travel is no longer the domain of the obscure or different but rather a 'normal' activity for most people in Western society, while Haug, Dann and Mehmetoglu (2007: 219) imply that future research should identify tourism as an 'essential ingredient of contemporary everyday life'. Citing the research of the likes of Baranowski and Furlough (2000), Harrison (2003) and their own previous research, White and White (2007: 101) argue that present studies have now begun to challenge the earlier assertions that travel offers a 'state of liminality which frees them from the structures which encumber their everyday lives back home'. Likewise, Haug *et al.* (2007: 219) state that tourism's role in postmodern society has effectively become a 'de-differentiating way of accessing a foreign culture' and is now seen as a further 'dimension of daily living'. Edensor (2007: 211) suggests meanwhile that tourism should no longer be conceived as a process which is antithetical to the everyday and that this activity is now 'imbricated' with both the 'mundane' and 'quotidian'. While it perhaps impossible to remove all routines and mundane process from the formulation and enactment of the vacation, it appears that there is a wide spectrum of travellers who fall somewhere in between two extremes particularly when a potential holiday destination is first conceived. Bargeman *et al.*'s (2006: 717) research observations revealed that while many tourists displayed a preference for unknown 'challenging' destinations which they lacked experience of, it was additionally noted that this lack of experience was a reason in itself not to consider the destination any further for many others. It appears therefore that while the mundane is inevitable, some will go to greater lengths than others to avoid it.

Journeys to exotic places are now controlled, organised and packaged and frequently enable the seamless transition from one set of mundane routines to another. Indeed, matters are compounded by the relocation of the exotic to the mundane locations many originally attempt to temporarily leave behind. Binnie, Holloway, Millington and Young (2006) suggest that the production of cultural events such as festivals and parades or exhibitions and displays effectively remove the ‘exotic’ from its natural habitat to the home. The after-effect of such a ‘penetration’ of the exotic world into ‘banal urban spaces’ effectively dilutes and devalues their original meaning, and even deconstructs the exotic to become mundane. As a result it seems, travel may no longer be a guaranteed way to escaping the routines of everyday life back home.

4. Mobilities

4.1 The Rise of the Mobility Paradigm

The notion of mobility is an increasingly prominent feature in the changing trends of modern social science and is perhaps best exemplified by the proliferation of large volume and large scale movements worldwide. According to Urry (2007: 3), contemporary research predicts that by 2010 legal international arrivals will reach a minimum of 1 billion – a hugely significant increase from 25 million in 1950. Such figures preclude domestic arrivals, of which many engage in multiple journeys without ever crossing international boundaries. Similarly, the world experiences countless illegal movements and as Papastergiadis (2000: 10-54) suggests, perhaps more than 31 million refugees are located in situ around the globe, although precise figures naturally remain contentious. The movement of people from one place to another has often been identified as one of the many intrinsic features associated with contemporary human geography and has thus attracted an expanding range of academics (Kesselring 2001; Kaufmann 2002; Urry 2003; Sheller and Urry 2006; Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006;) to investigate the multifaceted nature of this paradigm further. Mobility, as one would assume, focuses primarily upon the movement and mobilisation of people and has consequently become increasingly associated with a field synonymous with movements *en masse* - travel and tourism. Hannam and Ateljevic (2007: 10) suggest that travel is 'necessary for social life' and effectively enables a series of complex connections to be made which are centred upon social or political 'obligations'. These necessities and

obligations are expanding rapidly, as the processes of globalisation and transportation developments have enabled travel to become easier and more time-efficient than ever before. Such developments are particularly embodied by the notions of 'aeromobility' (Urry 2007: 155) and 'automobility' Featherstone (2004: 1) which have revolutionised the way in which people travel today. At a time when people are moving not only in greater numbers but greater distances, a more significant emphasis has now been placed upon understanding this contemporary 'phenomenon' and the intrinsic features hidden within it (Kaufmann 2002). Naturally, travel does not just focus upon those undertaking journeys due to business or because of leisure needs, but also upon those who are triggered by a series of other influencing factors such as wars, famines, natural disasters, political developments and economic recessions. Mobility therefore is not just a fixation with the movement of people by choice but also with those who are prompted to travel be it their conscious personal decision or not. The outcome instigated by the mobilisation of many of the world's inhabitants is that social scientists are now faced with the added dilemma of a charting and understanding a widening base of travellers who are mobilised by a significant spectrum of reasons. Traditional perspectives, which have notably observed the movements of tourists or business travellers, are now being adjusted to incorporate a multitude of other social groups which are also exhibiting similar trends. Moreover, new perspectives no longer focus solely upon the movement of humans but on inanimate objects and the intangible flows of data and ideas for example. Nigel Thrift (1997: 18) termed this notion as 'hypermobility', whereby millions of messages travel simultaneously around the globe and financial capital has emerged as an 'elemental force', consequently pulling places closer together and 'shrinking' the

world. Likewise, Nowicka (2006: 411) suggests that the tendency to observe mobility as the geographical movement of people has been modified to include the flows of 'objects, information and images'.

Charting the movement of people and tangible and intangible objects is not the sole objective of transcribing the concept of mobility. There is also the need to understand *why* they are moving and the processes which act as catalysts to these flows. Macdonald and Grieco (2007: 1) concur, arguing that the aim of understanding 'mobility' and 'connectivity' is not only transfixed with how they control and shape social networks but the type of goods they transfer also. Allon, Anderson and Bushell (2008: 73) signify the continuing and elevated presence of mobility in contemporary life, suggesting that the common 'images of mobility' are becoming increasingly normalised and have essentially become salient examples of 'a world ever more densely stitched together through both technological systems of communication and transportation'.

According to Hannam and Ateljevic (2007: 4), a proliferation of new research initiatives aimed at understanding the linkages between social and cultural practices and developments in transportation and communication infrastructures have now become apparent. Urry (2004) agrees, suggesting that the 'complex assemblage' between these different mobilities which enable social connections across varied and social distances to be maintained, has become an essential requirement.

To further understand this 'complex assemblage', Urry (2007: 47) outlines five key interdependent 'mobilities' which are intrinsic to the modern viewpoint of this concept.

These are identified as: (1) The corporeal travel of people for work, travel and migration; (2) The physical movement of objects to producers, consumers and retailers; (3) The imaginative travel through the images of people and places via the media; (4) Virtual travel, which transcends geographical and social distance; and finally, (5) Communicative travel, which occurs through the medium of telephone, fax machines or the mobile phone. The construction of such a multifaceted divisional process underlines the intricacies associated with the phenomenon and both implies and reiterates that there is much more to this concept than simply flows of people and goods. As aforementioned, the traditional notion that world migration was almost an exclusively a Western phenomenon appears to be a dated perception. Travel and a general ability to reach places further a field now appears to be undertaken by people of all social backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities, all of whom reveal a plethora of different motivations. In an attempt to illustrate this idea, Urry (2007: 17) outlines a range of examples by suggesting that this phenomenon may include anything from asylum seekers to international students and from business employees to backpackers. Hannam and Ateljevic (2007: 2) suggest that these 'intersecting mobilities' had led to a 'networked' structure of contemporary life both at work at and at play, whereby even those who have not moved are now indeed more connected than ever before. Moreover, Urry (2002: 265) argues that of the four types of travel, only corporeal travel actually involves the physical movement of people, while the others can be facilitated by improved communication techniques such as mobile telephones and the internet (Hannam and Ateljevic 2007). Using tourists as an example, White and White (2007: 88-9) suggest that the latest developments in communication have therefore enabled

the idea of ‘keeping in touch’ to become a simple process which is no longer restricted by problems of accessibility or geographical location and thus enables ‘one to be socially present while physically absent’ (see Gergen 2002: 227). Similarly, White and White (2007: 89) imply that a subject’s ability to be present, yet geographically detached, may also be frequently termed as ‘virtual presence’, whereby the communicator is placed in a ‘simulated’ virtual setting. Sheridan (1992) and Steuer (1992) suggest that virtual presence is now a key feature of contemporary life, and that even when the tourist is on vacation and attempting to temporarily leave home behind, they inevitably find themselves metaphorically present in the spaces of home. Moreover, Sørensen (2003: 861) has implied that boundaries between ‘home’ and ‘away’ have eroded, particularly due to the significant leaps made in communicational technology.

Though Sørensen (2003) argues that the tourist can keep in touch with home on their travels, he additionally argues that they can alternatively keep in touch with other travellers once their journeys have ceased, thus permitting a simultaneous existence in two different worlds. Such a scenario therefore ensures that life back home and the completed journey, to some degree, is continued despite the subject being geographically detached. However, it seems that not all problems associated with geographical distance are as easy to solve. Although the communication problems triggered by geography may be more easily negotiated than before, the ‘psychological’ and ‘emotional dimensions of distance’ are not so easy to mitigate (White and White 2007: 94). Here, communication opportunities help connect the subject with friends and

family back home on a more regular basis, but may paradoxically intensify the sensations of distance and absence from home. These interactions, imply White and White (2007: 94) served as reminders as to *who* they were missing and *what* they were missing out on.

4.2 Mobilised Places and Technological Mobility

As aforementioned, the mobilities paradigm is not solely preoccupied with the movement of people, but also their ideas, thoughts, information, images and transactions to name but a few of an inexhaustible list. However, it is not just people and objects which move but indeed places also. Hetherington (1997) suggests that places are also travelling both at different speeds and distances and are influenced by 'human and non-human agents'. These agents determine the location of particular place either at the epicentre or periphery of social and economic spaces and can move within these boundaries at different periods in time. Urry (2007: 17) argues these flows are now a composite feature of 21st century migration and have enabled the construction of rapidly moving urban centres. Despite the acknowledgment of these new flows, Hannam and Ateljevic (2007) and Capra (2002) maintain that it would be naïve to attempt to categorise or oversimplify them, 'Mobilities seem to involve the analysis of complex systems that are neither perfectly ordered nor anarchic'. Allon *et al.* (2008: 73) concur with these suggesting that:

> 'Multiple interacting systems and networks of mobility are appearing, and groups as diverse as backpackers and students, migrants and cosmopolitan

> professionals are more likely than ever to merge and intersect in various ways, shaping, changing and impacting on 'local' communities.'

Hannam and Ateljevic (2007: 12) argue that these multiple interactions take place in distinct social places and are organised via 'nodes' such as airports, stations and hostels and essentially help 'orchestrate new forms of social life'. McGehee (2002: 126) suggests that these 'mutual social networks' help facilitate relationships with a particular group of people who share common thoughts or ideas and have become a key driving force behind social movement participation.

According to Urry (2007: 253), mobilities can be determined as the simple movement of people between places, but it must be additionally acknowledged that these places are 'complicit within that movement.' Hetherington (1997) has already identified the notion of 'places of movement', emphasising their dynamism and the ever changing nature of their behaviour. Hannam and Ateljevic (2007: 13) elaborate upon this notion further by suggesting that places are like 'ships', constantly moving in terms of distance, location within both complex networks of human and non-human agents. Similarly, Urry (2007: 254) acknowledges the evolution of place and suggests that such locations act as venues for 'performances'. He additionally speculates that without the existence of these performances, a place has the potential to ultimately re-adapt and attain a new identity in order to reposition itself. The importance of travel and tourism in the context of mobilities has particularly been ignored despite its increasing importance in the economical and social climate of the present. As mentioned previously, the enclave has

emerged within academic literature to become synonymous with particular modes of travel, namely backpacking. Enclaves can be identified as an excellent example of a social network of nodal points constructed via the highly efficient flows of communication and transportation links. A selection of enclaves or hubs are now dotted around the globe, fortified by their specific ability to cater for particular social groups. Here, the 'performances' they permit enable social connections to traverse social distances (Urry 2004). Williams (2006) signifies just one example of how such a concept works, 'The discovery travel of students, au pairs and other young people on their 'oversees experience' generally involves going to civilization centres but often where many others go, so forming backpacker enclaves'. Backpacker enclaves appear to be the product of mobilities due their ability to offer a controlled social setting both familiar and appealing to people who exhibit the same travel aspirations and similarly share a demographic profile with participants from other parts of the world. The enclave thus becomes one of many stepping stones or nodal points created by transportation links such as 'round-the-world tickets' which for many operate between a relatively limited list of backpacker hubs such as London, Bangkok and Sydney. The social desires of this group, such as 'experience hunger' (Richards and Wilson 2004: 5; de Cauter 1995) then formulates the network between these places as backpackers continuously move from one to another. However, despite the acknowledgement of this social network the linkages they incorporate, the nodal points associated with the social desires of a particular group are multifaceted and ever changing. As Urry (2007: 265) warns, places can find themselves located at different stages within certain visitor flows,

leaving a place situated precariously if it does not adapt to change, ultimately leaving it ‘left behind’.

Effectively, as Hannam and Ateljevic (2007) mention earlier, places are often required to ‘move’ in order to reassert themselves in a certain network or to place themselves onto a particular map. To explain this notion via tourism, Urry (2007: 265), argues that while some places ‘move’ closer to numerous ‘global centres’, which are also simultaneously moving, or in ‘play’, others move in opposite directions. These actions and reactions therefore take place on a ‘global stage’ and ultimately shape the destinies of towns, cities and even countries which constantly develop, redevelop and brand themselves to attract tourists and to appeal to their ever changing needs. Kesselring and Vogl (2006) and Hannam and Ateljevic (2007) cite airports as a tangible example of how places can move closer to global centres while others move further way towards the periphery. Airports, they argue, have the ability to create links and systems with other locations which effectively enable places to be brought ‘closer together’, while those which remain outside of such systems continue to exist largely unconnected and remain on the edges of the global stage due to distance. The use of peripheral airports by budget carriers such as Ryanair, Air Asia and Easyjet is a particularly salient example, as they transform relatively obscure airfields such as the ex-RAF base in Finningley in the UK or the disused U.S. military Clark Airbase in the Philippines to become vibrant hubs for tourism. The increased network of social mobilities induced by greater transportation networks and ever more efficient communication has required places to become more adaptable and responsive to changing trends and contemporary tourism fashions. Urry

(2007: 254-6) determines such a development as a ‘global competition’ fought between places in an attempt to attract more and more visitors. This outcome has pressurized destinations to become more acutely aware of competition and their need to monitor developments regarding emerging global travel patterns. Urry (2007: 266) argues that these developments have additionally produced the notion of ‘place reflexivity’, which he explains in further depth: ‘This reflexivity is concerned with identifying a particular place’s location within the contours of geography, history and culture that swirl the globe, and in particular identifying that place’s actual and potential material and semiotic resources.’ Essentially, Urry (2007) argues that destinations are increasingly in search of reasons to attract tourists, as competition continues to develop and consumer trends change rapidly.

Mobility therefore is a notion which applies to the movements of differing bodies of people, be it from an ethnical, cultural or social background. Paperstergiadis (2000: 89) signifies this by identifying the ‘diasporization of communities in the contemporary era’. Coles and Timothy (2004: 2) further explain the notion of the ‘diaspora’ which is a common feature of contemporary mobility:

> ‘Definitions and conceptualizations of diaspora are fluid and contested and have been the focus of considerable debate. Diasporas are groups of people scattered across the world but drawn together as a community by their actual (and in some cases perceived or imagined) common bonds of ethnicity, culture, religion, national identity and, sometimes, race.’

Effectively, these groups or ‘communities’ become highly mobile and are evident in major cities all over the world. Los Angeles now exhibits a large Mexican population; Marseille reveals a thriving Algerian community and many British cities contain large Indian or Pakistani enclaves. Indeed some cities are nothing but an amalgamation of different ethnic diasporas, wedged together to form contemporary multicultural urban spaces. Hall (1992) concurs and suggests that the cultural differences which are presumed to be found between societies are now increasingly being found to exist within societies.

Although the vast majority of these movements have been wilful migrations, an ever increasing movement of refugees and asylum seekers are also supporting this notion of entire communities on the move. The wars, famines, environmental disasters and economic downturns which have recently struck several regions of Africa, the Middle East and the former Yugoslavia are also significant contributors to this theory. Large Croatian and Bosnian communities have prospered in Sweden, the Lebanese and Vietnamese are now present in large numbers in Australia, and many Iranians have taken refuge in Germany. Similarly, Somalis, Kosovans, Kurds, Sudanese, Bosnians, Afghans, Zimbabweans and Iraqis are all further examples of nationalities or ethnic groups which are moving in large scale groups in the name of political asylum. The mobilisation and movements of such groups have become popular discussion points in contemporary politics and reveal the divisions in thought regarding one type of migration to another. While the increasing movements of tourists and business travellers are often regarded as positive developments in the postmodern world, the movement of

impoverished people in search of work or safety is often deemed to be a negative process. The recent influx of large numbers of Poles, Czechs and Romanians in to Western Europe, due to a relaxation of European Union employment and migration laws are a salient example and have thus ensured that mobility remains at the forefront of ,many news bulletins today. The outcome of such movements has led to significant changes within the populations of many developed countries in the West. Coles and Timothy (2004: 291) identify how many countries which have traditionally harboured conservative immigration policies and a strong homogenous population are now increasingly becoming home to a wide range of migrants from all over the world. Despite the contentions of Coles and Timothy (2004), several academics still believe that mobilities have not provided us with a freely moving and accessible world offering the participant almost unrestricted choices but have rather benefited only a select minority. The rich and the affluent of Western societies appear to be the main benefactors of the emergence of mobility. These privileged few can now have more destination choices than ever before as well as quicker and more efficient ways of getting there. Neumayer (2006) likewise argues that there is still an 'unequal access to foreign spaces' which particularly impacts 'mobility escapees'.

'Unequal' migrants will be faced with a limited range of destinations and modes of transportation, perfectly capturing the notion of imbalanced opportunities in terms of mobility and social movement. At the same time, not only is it estimated that more people will be moving, but additionally the distance they will be travelling to move to these places. Schafer and Victor (2000: 171) predict that by 2050 the world's citizens

will cover a combined distance of 106 billion kilometres, dwarfing the current estimate of 23 billion kilometres covered by today's population. It seems that airports and border crossings will continue to become even busier and this has been perhaps pre-empted by the ongoing conflicts between residents and airports around the world who wish to expand and build new runways. However, mobility has not been highlighted solely because of international movements but also due the additional movements of people within a country also. Through increased mobilities, even peripheral regions are also encountering similar trends, with local populations changing beyond recognition.

The rise of mobility has been largely aided by the rapid growth of technology and new innovations. Castells (2001) suggested over a deacade ago that 1/6th of the world's population were already in use of the internet; while Katz and Aakhus (2002) revealed that the mobile phone had now overtaken the use of landlines worldwide at the turn of the century. As Coles and Timothy (2004: 1) explain, the concepts of 'time' and 'space' have been compressed due the advancements in communication technology which has essentially become 'more straightforward, rapid and efficient', thus permitting the emergence of 'more extensive, intricate transnational social networks'. Allon *et al.* (2008: 73-74) also concur, suggesting that the technological developments which act as catalysts to the time-space compression of people and places have become standardised and interwoven into the lives of many. Indeed, they additionally add that these outcomes have now been synthesised to become 'part of the very fabric of social life' as the internet, mobile phones, and new transportation systems become quickly assimilated into contemporary social existence. The output of these changes and

innovations, say Allon *et al.* (2008), have not only reduced the metaphorical notion of distance but have additionally revolutionised the speed at which these distances can be negotiated.'

4.3 Tourism Mobilities

While much progress has been achieved in observing tourism from a range of perspectives, other areas of discussion have remained noticeably absent from academic literature. McGehee (2002: 124-5) argues that research has often neglected tourism's relationship with social movements, with the exception of a few notable contributions from Light and Wong (1975), Hall (1994) and Tonkin (1995). Moreover, while McGehee (2002: 124-5) and Hannam and Ateljevic (2007: 10) have asserted that while tourism and social movements are inevitably and intrinsically linked, research upon the subject has largely centred upon specific relationships. Indeed, Modavi (1993) argued that research had centred upon the relationship between tourism and the social movements of the host communities, while Featherstone (1997: 129-30) suggested that 'scant attention' has been afforded to the relationship between mobility, migration and travel. Moreover, Jamal and Hollinshead (1999: 65) added that that the 'power of sojourn' had often been overlooked, particularly when associated with the discovery of the self and the other. It is therefore argued that new research agendas are required to help asses this power and to assert whether travel and tourism is indeed, a key feature of mobility, and consequently an essential feature which can be used to help further understand the 'actuality of the contemporary world' (Featherstone 1997: 154). Such a

perspective therefore opens up a niche for research which focuses on tourism and its potential to act as a catalyst for 'social movement participation', particular from the perspective of the guests themselves. Larsen (2001: 81) reflects upon the close relationship between both concepts:

> 'Modern tourism is a reflection of, and indeed constitutive of modernity's mobility; tourism by definition involves geographical performances of corporeal mobility through physical space via mobility technologies or vehicles.'

Hannam and Ateljevic (2007: 10) single out tourism as being 'crucial to mobilities research', suggesting that its role and relationship with migration, return migration and diaspora are pivotal to its understanding. Lundmark (2006: 199) similarly points out that a strong relationship exists between mobility, tourism and migration and asserts that many different forms of migration have subsequently generated tourism flows. The relationship between migration and tourism however is a two way process, as tourism may also generate different types of migration. Tourism does not just mobilise tourists, but also workers and those in search of employment at popular destinations. These movements have been identified by Lundmark (2006: 199) as examples of 'temporal labour mobility', which are directly connected to tourism flows. Allon *et al.* (2008: 74) reveal that tourism and travel are now amongst the largest industries in the world, and as a consequence, 'virtually nowhere is untouched by their reach'. Due to the driving forces of globalisation, the world has we know it, has become smaller and easier to traverse than ever before and time-space compression has opened many new gateways to those on the move. Such opportunities have evidently benefited the various

social groups predominantly associated with travel as a form of leisure, and Axhausen (2007: 22) comments that travellers will adjust their travel distances in direct response to system improvements, which to some degree, explains the growth of long distance travel. The more reliable, efficient, quicker, comfortable and cost effective the system becomes, the more like likely the traveller will go it seems. Although it appears that there has never been a better time to travel, the knock on effect as identified earlier, is that it has become increasingly difficult to find locations which remain undiscovered by mass tourism. Increased tourism mobility has arguably been a key instigator of anti-tourism attitudes (Welk 2004) and although the traveller is on the constant search for new locations which are off the beaten track (Buzzard 1993) and further away than before, distance is now no longer an obstacle to the masses and can be negotiated relatively easily.

Indeed, the emergence of long-distance budget carriers is one clear example of how 'poorer' mass tourists can now potentially reach new destinations which many would have deemed near impossible a decade ago. Lumsdon and Owen (2004: 157) suggest that a fine balance exists between 'increasing access and convenience for the tourist and the degree of attractiveness of a destination in the long term.' Kastenholz (2000) and Elby and Molnar (2001), have implied that this balance is even more acute in rural destinations which have attracted tourists because of their association with 'outstanding scenery' and 'tranquillity' which would be further diluted as more tourists are drawn.

A particularly significant subgroup of tourism mobility can be attributed to the movements, characteristics and behavioural trends of backpackers. As identified earlier, enclaves can be identified as a particular product of mobility, where certain places which house common traits which are notably salient to a particular social group. Enclaves in the context of backpacker hubs will often exhibit commonalities such as backpacker orientated hostels and accommodation, budget travel agents, themed bars and an abundance of travel activities. As Axhausen (2007: 26) has asserted, enclaves can be seen to act as 'social milieus' which are recognised as 'meeting points' and home to 'common events'. However, despite the recognition of backpacker enclaves it would be perhaps naïve to suggest that backpacker characteristics are additionally identifiable in a social context. As with the problematic issue of identifying *who* travels in the notion of mobility, it is also difficult to identify who travels under the label of the backpacker. Allon *et al.* (2008: 73) suggests that this is because many backpackers are no longer simply conventional tourists, and argues that many are working holidaymakers, highly skilled professionals and to a lesser extent, long-term semi-permanent residents. Allon *et al.* (2008: 73) summarises the 'dilemma' associated with backpacking mobility:

> 'The broadening spectrum of backpacker types has left many academic researchers with a difficult dilemma as Allon *et al.* (2008: 73) elaborate further, suggesting that, 'It is difficult to discern what cultural space and identity this type of mobility and this category of traveller occupy.'

It appears that backpacking as a particular mode of mobility has been difficult to identify because of the multitude of different methods in which they travel and because of their tendency to escape to locations off the beaten track. As backpacking diversifies in nature and new participants begin to undertake this type of travel, a number of niches have seemingly developed as backpacker mobilities proliferate (Allon *et al.* 2008). The outcome, say Allon et al. (2008) is that the mobilities of contemporary backpackers blur as many conceptual and metaphorical boundaries as they do physical ones.'

4.4 Mobility Machines

Transport, according to Lumsdon (2006: 75), has been a necessity to tourists since the first pilgrims made their journeys throughout medieval Europe. Prideaux (2000) has suggested that the tourist's ability to traverse greater distances has consequently led to the 'rapid growth' of many destinations, which further supports the suggestion that transportation is an essential ingredient in the development of tourism.

Air travel and the continuous growth of car ownership are important factors in the expansion of mobility, not only because they enable more people to travel, but also because of the distances it allows them to cover. Recent estimates suggest that there are now over 4 million air passengers on a daily basis and that car ownership will reach 730m by 2020 (Urry 2007: 1). Similarly, Castells (2001: 126) states the importance of air travel in current mobilities, 'Geographical proximity in most countries no longer shapes social relationships'. Urry (2007: 135) states that this is partly due to the fact that many

people can ‘fly rapidly from, over and past such spatial proximities, forming new time-distanciated proximities.’

These new ‘time-distanciated proximities’ have become more prevalent as air travel has expanded in terms of number of flights and the falling costs associated with such journeys. Air travel can longer be seen as a mode of mobility for rich Westerners but rather as an opportunity for larger volumes of people from less conventional sources to travel greater distances in shorter time spans. The emergence and expansion of budget airlines worldwide have now enabled even poorer people to be on the move, further deconstructing the privileged status associated with this particular mode of travel. Air travel in particular may have considerably reduced the time it takes to get from one destination to the next, but research focusing upon tourism mobility has revealed that many tourists frequently prefer old-fashioned methods of transportation while undertaking their journeys because of the experiences these modes can offer the traveller in situ.

Hannam and Ateljevic (2007: 13) suggest that the mobilities paradigm has now begun to examine the experiential relationships associated with particular modes of travel. They suggest that such machines act as platforms for other activities to take place, such as particular types of conversation. Similarly, they assert that certain vehicles act as mediators in alternative methods of interaction with their physical environment. Larsen (2001: 81) explains the significance of land vehicles in the construction of the journey: ‘Trains and especially cars are not only machines for transporting tourists to particular

destinations, but also technologies for visually experiencing or consuming those very places through mobile sightseeing.' Page (1999a) argues that although it has been acknowledged that transport plays a key role in allowing tourists to gain experiences of a destination, the experiences gained while in transit and the 'interfaces' between transport and tourism have seldom been investigated. Highlighting the research of Dann (1994), Lumsdon (2006: 750) argues that the chosen method of transport can significantly strengthen the experience opportunity and cites the popularity of trains amongst heritage seekers who desire nostalgia and tradition. Indeed it has often been assumed that travelling to the destination is often a tedious section of the vacation, but Bauman (1998: 83) argues that this may be a severely inaccurate perception: 'Being on the move is not unpleasant but rather a promise of bliss – perhaps bliss itself'. Moreover, Mohktarian and Salomon (2001: 695) argued that the destination may after all, be 'ancillary to the travel' and not just the mundane process of getting from point A to point B. Similarly, the findings of Page (1999b) suggest that the mode of transport chosen by the tourist can form an 'integral part of their experience' which he additionally implies has be frequently ignored in existing tourism research. Larsen (2001: 81) implies that road and rail travel allows the traveller to experience landscapes and 'virtual otherness' while simultaneously being 'on the move'. Jacobsen (1997; 2001: 100) refers to this phenomenon as the 'passing gaze' – the process of viewing or 'consuming' places while in motion, while Sachs (1992: 155) adds that motor tourism 'embodies an individual way of experiencing landscapes'. Jacobsen (2001: 108) underlines the importance of this concept:

> ‘Sightseeing at a swift pace may provide both sought-after and high-grade sensations of places and landscapes en route. Transience or ephemerality is found among various types of present-day tourists, such as itinerant motorists and roaming backpackers exploring the different landscapes of Europe. It has been indicated here that numerous nomadic sightseeing tourists use forms of travel that are something between the freewheeling and mainly unprepared tours, where the pivotal aspect is being on the go.’

It appears that for many travellers, faster, cheaper and more efficient modes of travel may significantly devalue the range of experiences encountered during the vacation and may consequently be rejected. As Edensor (2007: 203-10) suggests, travel networks have prompted ‘unreflexive endeavours’ which make sure that journeys occur in a rhythmic fashion and are not compromised by problems and difficulties. He argues that such networks permit the notion of ‘comfortable mobility’ which in turn ‘insulates’ passengers and reduces their contact with the outside world. Indeed, White and White (2007: 90-93) suggest that this insulation goes as far as to permit the continuation of everyday routines as tourists can continue typical activities such as the continuation of reading books they have brought from home or by using mobile communication techniques to send text messages and emails to friends, family and even work colleagues. Moreover, White and White (2007: 98-101) add that the continuation of domestic routines such as the keeping of regular contact and the ‘day-to-day management of life on the road’, were integral features of the ‘travel experience’ of many. Such developments argues Edensor, have led to ‘enclavic mobility’ whereby

tourists are shielded away from harsh sensations and are able to travel in comfort and learn about their surroundings from tour guides ensuring that they never have to leave their transportation if they desire. These regulated spaces then permit the tourist to participate in Urry's 'gaze' via the views behind coach windows and from stop-off photographic points, essentially 'desenualizing' the qualities of the places they are travelling by controlling the 'sensual world' (Edensor 2007: 208). To counter such problems, the motor car or cycle effectively offers the traveller freedom and flexibility other modes of travel do not.

The motorist can tailor their own routes and travel itineraries between destinations, and more importantly they can decide when and where to stop. Urry (2000: 61) suggests that the road can 'set people free' by allowing them the liberty of controlling the speed and direction of their journeys, while Sager (2006: 467-9) adds that the 'freedom of mobility' has been largely helped and developed by man's relationship to automobility. This desire for freedom, according to Jacobsen (2004: 7), has resulted in a 'dynamic culture of individualism', and is emphasized by the desires of many contemporary travellers to use personal automobiles. Indeed Sørensen and Sørgaard, (1994) have suggested that the motor car induced mobility is now an 'integral dimension' of modernity because of its ability to set people free in a way in which few other forms of transport can permit. Although the train has also been identified as a vehicle which permits the passing gaze, it remains a 'partial alternative' (Sachs 1992: 155), and is a relatively inflexible or 'rigid' mode of travel in comparison. Larsen (2001: 85) explains

the difference between the two modes of transport and highlights the value as a freedom-enhancing mobility machine:

> ‘While the train mobilized the tourist, the car enabled the a flexible mobile tourism experience in both a spatial and a temporal sense, to the extent that the car tourist’s mobility patterns can be illustrated with the metaphor of nomadism...These quasi-nomadic car tourists are the incarnation of perpetual movement and personalized, subjective temporalities; they roam independently and unpredictably in, alongside and outside tourism’s ‘beaten tracks’.’

Although the car is utilised because it affords the traveller freedom and a sense unpredictability in their journeys, other modes of transport such as the bus for example, are chosen because of their opposite, more sedate effects. Lumsdon’s (2006: 755) research on tourists who uses buses as their main method of transportation found that this mode of travel was frequently chosen because it was perceived as being ‘secure’ and subsequently removed feelings of ‘worry’ which were constructed prior to their trips. Lumsdon additionally discovered that many made the swap from car to bus because of a perception of ‘convenience’ which alienated fears of driving in unfamiliar regions and negotiated the problems of finding places to park and car park fees. Lumsdon (2006) consequently termed these tourists as ‘sightseers’ whose main motivation was to combine scenic rides with interesting stops along the way, but additionally acknowledged that their aforementioned characteristics were not inclusive of all who traveller by bus, noting in particularly a small sub-segment of younger overseas backpackers who had no option of travelling by car due to the financial implications

involved. Moreover, Lumsdon (2006: 756) found one other particular typology associated with bus travel, which he termed the ‘activity seeker’. The activity seeker did not use the bus primarily for scenic routes, nor did they use this particular mode of transport because of its ability to reduce negative connotations such as fear and worry.

As the name suggests, the primary desire of the activity seeker is to find recreational activities and has thus decided to use the bus because of its practical nature. Lumsdon (2006: 756) suggests that the bus offers these travellers added advantages such as the opportunity to negotiate the problems created by their chosen activities, such as for example need to use two cars for point to point walking, or due to their large group compositions. A further cited reason for the sightseer’s preference for the bus is because they are motivated by an ‘environmental consciousness’ which triggers them to shun the car because of its perceived damage to the very environments they inhabit and enjoy. Nevertheless, the car has undoubtedly become an intrinsic tool of holiday mobility, largely because of increasing desire to engage in multi-destination journeys. Lue, Crompton and Stewart’s (1996) research on why tourists engage in multi-destination vacations confirms this viewpoint due to a variety of reasons. The first, is due to the ‘multidimensional interests’ of the individual, who seeks to engage in a number of activities during their trips. Secondly, there is a likelihood that there are a number of decision-makers involved in the planning stage of the trip who reflect different motivations and interests. Thirdly, multiple destinations can reduce the risk of disappointment to the traveller(s), allowing them to leave one place for the next if their experience is a negative one. The final reason, according to Lue *et al.* (1996) is due to

the belief that a combination of facilities and services will satisfy the needs of all, which an additional advantage of reducing the cost and time. Jacobsen (2001: 110) adds a further motivation for engaging in multi destination journeys however, suggesting that many contemporary 'inter-European nomadic holiday tours', are perhaps the only opportunity to see large regions and territories for those who are confined to limited journey time frames. Jacobsen (2001: 110) explains this notion further:

> 'Transient experience[s] of places and landscapes' are an adequate compromise for many travellers or 'roaming sightseers' as he terms them. However, as consequence of fleeting experiences, it is argued that their experiences will be largely restricted to 'visual impressions' and that they will be 'closed off' from constituting deeper relations with the places they visit.'

Jacobsen (2004: 6) asserts that 'holiday mobility' is now an 'essential feature of contemporary European life' which is characterised by the large volumes of motorists travelling throughout the continent, including many of whom who travel in mobile homes or as a form of 'dwelling in travelling' as Clifford (1997) terms it. In an earlier paper, Jacobsen (2001: 102) had additionally noted that 'untouched nature' and 'unique sights' were particularly essential to motor tourism and 'analogous mobile tourism' in both the North-Western European and Scandinavian context. Despite the apparent importance of the 'individual nomadic sightseers' transient sense of landscapes and places', Jacobsen (2001: 100) suggests that research on this area has remained largely ignored and has instead focused upon group tours or 'analogous experiences'. As a

consequence of this lack of research, the types of mobility undertaken by hostel users will be critically observed in this thesis.

5. Methodology

5.1 Introduction

The research methodology was divided into three phases to ensure that sufficient data could be successfully obtained via an extensive qualitative methodology. In addition to two research phases, a pilot study was also conducted in April 2007 to test the viability of the research proposal. The advantages of the pilot study included that it enabled the researcher to evaluate the availability and ease of transportation within Norway out of peak season, the alternative transportation options to mitigate the potentially lengthy journeys which would be encountered, and an opportunity to estimate the potential budget required for the research project. It was decided that as many different hostels as possible in the Southern and Western region of the country would be visited and dormitory rooms would be utilised where available in an attempt to ease the facilitation of conversation with other guests. This approach was also chosen because it was identified as the most financially viable, and subsequently permitted the continuation of the research phases for a longer duration than if alternative methods of accommodation or room types were used.

The pilot study was scheduled for 2 weeks in late April and early May 2007, and focused upon a total of three hostels in two different locations: Haraldsheim Vandrerhjem and Sentrum Pensjonat in Oslo, and Jacob's Hostel in Bergen. The selection of these hostels and their locations were primarily driven by two factors. Firstly, Oslo and Bergen, as well as being Norway's largest two cities, were identified as

the most popular destinations by visitor arrivals in Norway in 2006. These two cities therefore appeared to be logical choices to test the viability of the proposal as it was assumed that both locations would be more likely to attract visitors during the shoulder season of late spring/early summer. Secondly, all three selected hostels were listed on www.hostelworld.com and in the *Lonely Planet: Norway* guidebook. Hostelworld.com is an internet website designed specifically to enable easy searches and efficient online bookings for international hostels. The website is a popular site amongst many backpackers and independent travellers because it allows them to assess competing hostels within a given location and subsequently permits them to book several beds or rooms online simultaneously, should they attempt to instigate a multi-destination itinerary. Such a process allays fears of arriving in locations without a guaranteed place to stay and also permits them to choose hostels based upon the experiences of others. Hostelworld.com also enables the potential user to observe guest ratings of amenities and facilities, and other on other criteria such as 'atmosphere' and 'safety', which are given anonymously by the multitude of previous guests who have stayed there. In addition to this feature, users can also see the positive or negative comments of other recent guests which include a limited demographic profile of each commenter. The researcher used this particular feedback tool as a means of discovering which hostels revealed the largest array of demographic profiles. The feedback tool also revealed the number of recent guest comments which suggested that all three hostels were relatively busy leading up to the research phase.

As aforementioned, all three hostels were listed in the *Lonely Planet: Norway* guidebook for 2006. The role of *Lonely Planet* (LP) guidebooks in independent travel and backpacker circles has developed rapidly since their conception in the 1970s and have perhaps emerged as the most popular amongst backpacking circles as they are often referred to as 'backpacking bibles'. Bansal and Eiselt (2004: 389) suggest that guidebooks have become popular amongst many potential backpackers because they arouse notions of 'adventure' and 'exploration', particularly amongst North American students who are enticed by the perceptions of travelling in Europe. Ioannides and Debbage (1997) argued that it could be assumed that the role of the contemporary travel guidebook has developed in recent years, largely because tourist experiences have become increasingly individualistic and have moved away from more mainstream sources of information. Guidebooks according to several researchers still play a pivotal role in the decision making processes associated with where to visit and where to stay during vacations. Based upon her research findings, Zillinger (2006: 230) argues that for German tourists, the most important neutral source of travel information is the guidebook even though the internet has emerged as an alternative source of information. This, Zillinger argues, is primarily because of their association with reliable information, trustworthiness and their impartiality, particularly as they are seen to show no bias towards tourist organisations or hostel chains.

In the Norwegian context, the role of the guidebook is therefore an intrinsic motivational source to one of its largest international sources - Germany. In 2007, evidence from SSB revealed that the largest international supplier of overnight stays in HI

accommodation was attributed to the German market and therefore makes Zillinger's research more significant in the context of hostel users in Norway. While Norway is home to approximately seventy hostels, few, in 2006, utilised popular hostel booking sites such as hostelworld.com or hostelbookers.com to market and sell their hostels. This was primarily because most hostels were member of the Hostelling International (HI) association and therefore were only listed on the HI website. Although it could be assumed HI website receives a large volume of traffic in terms of hostel searches, it was deemed logical to select hostels which used a variety of different marketing methods.

5.2 The Research Zone

Although Norway is by no means a significantly large geographical area at 325,000 square kilometres, its long and narrow shape does restrict to some degree the feasibility of travel to certain areas in the proposed time frames of research phases 1 and 2. Indeed in its extremity, Norway at its greatest length covers a distance of approximately 2,000 kilometres and it was therefore deemed logical to create a 'research zone' whereby only hostels in a particular area would be used for the purposes of data collection. While the first research phase was designed to incorporate as many hostels in Norway as possible, it was consequently decided that a smaller region of Norway would be plausible for the purposes of the research project. The extent of the research zone was constructed using the Southern and Western coastal boundaries of Norway along with the border with Sweden in the East. To the North an imaginary line of latitude

at Trondheim was designated as the cut off point and concluded the extent of the region to be investigated.. The number of hostels located within the research zone was however deemed plentiful, with approximately 35 hostels located within the region.

Although it could be argued that the hostels of the extreme North may exhibit characteristics different from those in the South, the hostels located within the zone of research still covered a highly diverse geographical area. The research zone covered Norway's largest cities such as Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger and Trondheim, as well as several rural-based hostels found along the fjords and within close proximity to other natural features such as mountains, glaciers and coastal regions. It was therefore decided that the research zone would be more than sufficient to capture the different types of hostels within Norway, thus permitting the observation of the potentially different groups of people travelling within the country.

5.3 Data Collection Techniques

Mehmetoglu (2004: 180) suggests that qualitative methods have continued to grow in popularity in the context of contemporary tourism research. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 2) suggested that qualitative methods of research have been identified as a 'crucial perspective' because they offer an alternative way of understanding social phenomena which a quantitative approach could not. According to Mehmetoglu (2004: 180), many researchers now maintain that qualitative research normally focuses upon four main data sources. These techniques are primarily identified as interviews, observational techniques and documentary sources such as archives and diaries.

The researcher identified a number of qualitative approaches which could be utilised as potentially viable templates for data acquisition and interpretation. The use of a framing analysis was one of many contemplated options, particularly because of its ability to focus on hidden criteria which many may deem be unimportant. As Goffman (1974: 21) suggests, the frame analysis has the potential power to render 'what would be otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful'. Almeida Santos (2004: 149) also argues that of the key advantages of such an approach is that allows the 'understanding of how stories add up to something bigger'.

However, consistent with the views of Denzin and Lincoln (2008), it was determined that the pre-selection of one particular practice could be detrimental to the overall synthesis of the research findings. As Becker (1998: 2) asserts, the qualitative research must often act as a *bricoleur*, the maker of quilts, due to their need to use a variety of strategies, methods and the availability of particular empirical materials. While one could perhaps argue that this is a loose or highly convenient research perspective, Flick (2002: 226-7) argues that qualitative research is 'inherently multimethod in focus' and should be highly responsive to the research arena. Indeed, all research, say Denzin and Lincoln (2004: 31), is interpretive and should 'be guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied'. Moreover, many other methodological approaches, such as the framing analysis, have been also criticised for their 'scattered conceptualization' (Entman 1993, cited in Almeida Santos 2004), and is consistent with the notion that virtually all approaches are criticised to some degree. The researcher thus opted to select an amalgamation of

different empirical materials.: Non-prescribed interviews with guests; participant observations; and non-participant observations via ‘systematic lurking’ (Park 2010: 122),.

Non-prescribed interviews were selected because of their ability to facilitate relaxed environments and to permit the interviewee to divulge information at their own discretion. As Palmer (2005: 11-12) suggests, conversational interviews, if structured and designed to encourage open dialogue, have the potential to put people at ease and subsequently enables them to discuss underlying feelings, assumptions and beliefs without fear of criticism (Murphy 2001: 54). The practice used in this scenario attempted to trigger individuals to ‘talk freely’ and enabled them to ‘express detailed beliefs and feelings on a topic’ (Kinnear, Taylor, Johnson and Armstrong 1993: 240).

Participant observations were selected as a means of supplementing the data acquired from the interviews of hostel guests. Such observations allowed the researcher to obtain ‘first hand’ experiences of tourist behaviour and practices (Desforges 2000: 933) by not only observing but by also actively engaging within the research setting. Participation in this sense was centred upon informal conversations with guests within the confines of the accommodation, the preparation of communal meals in hostel kitchens, undertaking external excursions and activities with guests and also travelling between locations. The researcher therefore mimicked the behaviour of independent travellers and hostel users where applicable. According to Murphy (2001: 51) the communal nature of hostels often help facilitate social engagements to take place and therefore become a practical choice for this particular type of data collection to take place. The role of the non-

participant observation is constructed to help identify other hostel guests who may not be accessible via participant observation techniques. Specifically this method attempted to focus upon groups such as families, older couples and on those who have difficulties conversing freely in English. The researcher acknowledged that the facilitation of relationships which are often required to undertake successful participant observations was more likely to occur with people of a similar demographic profile and that potentially, this could have created a distortion of the hostel user typologies which this research project attempted to elaborate upon. Thus, non-participant observations were undertaken in the hostel vicinity, such as communal lounges, communal kitchens, hostel gardens and in the dormitories themselves. Systematic lurking was also used as an alternative method of acquiring data. According to Strickland and Schlesinger (1969: 248), systematic lurking is a method which involves the researcher obtaining casual observations by self-consciously locating themselves on the periphery of particular social settings. In such a scenario, the information obtained is taken as evidence of public behaviour as opposed to the attitudes and opinions of the specific subjects who are being observed.

The range of different research gathering methods were selected to mitigate the problems each individual method entailed, and also because qualitative approaches, say Riley and Love (2000: 168) should be ‘multi-method in focus’ which permit an interpretive approach to the research scenario. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 2) add that qualitative methodologies should undertake such an approach because the typical research study requires the researcher to collate a range of different ‘empirical

materials'. These empirical criteria range from interviews to learning about the life histories of the subject, and when compiled together, they can be used to help develop a detailed picture of the subject's routines and the personal meanings they attach to their own lives (Riley and Love 2000: 168). The decision to undertake several different research methods was also initiated by an attempt to reduce biased findings and to reduce the impact of anomalies which could lead to research methodological flaws and the distortion of the compiled data. The chances therefore of describing unrepresentative motivations for example, could be potentially reduced by utilising a variety of methods (see Park 2010: 118). Quantitative research techniques were overlooked because they were deemed to be ineffective for the purpose of this project. As Veal (2006: 193) suggests, while qualitative research is often deemed to be limited to small numbers of participants, it does have the potential to divulge a 'rich' seam of information which be unobtainable via a quantitative approach. Citing Kelly (1980), Veal (2006: 195) reveals that qualitative research methods potentially hold a series of advantages over quantitative techniques due to their ability to bring 'real people' in to play.

Due to the length of the research phase it was assumed that the potential weaknesses associated with qualitative approaches, namely that of low participant interaction, could be mitigated to some degree. Maanen (1995), and Brown (2007: 365) argue that the use of a variety of qualitative techniques such as observation may be a viable alternative to simply charting the opinions of guests using conventional qualitative practices. Here tourism is explored as an *ad hoc* and responsive 'discovering practice'

as opposed to simply detailing the opinions of guests and travellers post-event in interviews. Indeed Mason (2002: 148) suggests that data is frequently better acquired when divulged 'literally, interpretively and reflexively'. In essence, Brown (2007) argues that it is perhaps better to *observe* the tourist as opposed to simply *asking* the tourist.

Despite the relative strengths of a qualitative methodology, the researcher additionally accepted that many potential pitfalls and dangers, in terms of data collection were still apparent. The use of such a methodology required a certain understanding on the part of the researcher in terms of interpretation and adequately determining the key processes of the situations they found themselves in. As Riley and Love (2000: 168) maintain, both the natural surroundings and context of the methodology along with the investigator's role are crucial to the acquisition of useful, high quality information. The location is pivotal because it will effectively 'shape' the subject(s) being studied while the investigator is charged with an equally crucial role in the sense that they are acting as a 'human instrument' and are the only tangible means of understanding and interpreting the complex interactions that take place before them (Riley and Love, 2000: 168). The role of the setting of the location become a problematic issue in the context of typical backpacking trends and behaviour. Sørensen (2003: 850) suggests that the 'un-territorialization' of the backpacker community presents a particular problem for such a research methodology, largely because the constant movements of these traveller types potentially reduces the amount of contact time available to the researcher and because the normal behaviour of backpackers often isolates them from the contact of others. While the views of Sørensen (2002) were taken onboard, there was sufficient evidence contrary to these assertions to suggest that a flexible qualitative approach

could be undertaken with fragmented and highly mobile groups. Using the research methodology of White and White (2004: 202-203), who observed long duration tourists in the Australian outback as an example, it appeared that certain research dilemmas could be mitigated. The research methodology used in this scenario offered a valuable insight in terms of how to reduce the problematic issues which highly mobile tourists can create for the researcher. For example, White and White (2004) opted to undertake a similar study yet acknowledged that the typical approach of using a singular location would be unfeasible. Their response to this problem was to use a variety of different qualitative methods, such as participant observations and unstructured conversations, to support the ethnographic study. This consequently allowed them to travel to numerous camping sites and caravan parks throughout a region of considerable scale.

This research thesis therefore opted to utilise a similar methodology. The window of opportunity in terms of data collection equated to approximately 7 months in total, which offered the researcher a relative luxury in terms of time. An ethnographic approach was selected because of its apparent absence in the research of backpacking culture (Binder 2004: 92). The use of an ethnographic methodology, as Brown (2007: 368) asserts, presents ‘interesting challenges’ which are created by the high degree of mobility exhibited by the subjects and argues that the tourist is neither restricted to a particular location to engage in ‘tourism’ nor are they confined to a specific location where they stay. Brown (2007: 368) additionally argues that a further weakness of ethnography as a tool to understanding small groups is that it may be limited by the ‘temporarily bound nature of a holiday.’

These points may indeed be accurate, but it was still possible to encounter many subjects in a fixed location and for reasonable time duration. Indeed, the hostel was identified as the most likely destination for such opportunities to occur as many guests chose to stay in multi-bedded rooms and dormitories, eat breakfast, lunch or their evening meals together in communal kitchens, and socialise together in hostel lounges and TV rooms. Such possibilities to interact with tourists in a similar manner at attractions, resorts or even hotels were deemed to be far more inpracticle. Ethnographic methodologies had been previously identified as useful tools to study long-term travellers (see White and White 2004) because they simultaneously allowed overt and covert participation in the practices of subjects over a certain period of time by 'observing, listening and asking questions' (White and White 2004: 203). In addition, it was observed that ethnographic research projects could yield many interesting perspectives about how the backpacker experienced 'their world' (Binder 2004: 93). However, Binder (2004: 93) notes that such information is observed with a 'certain scepticism' because the information is derived from communications and performances. The validity of the research according to Girtler (1984) and Denzin (1997) must be strengthened by undertaking extensive research periods which include 'intensive contacts between researcher and actors' and the development of knowledge via 'active participation in the field'. Interviewees were assigned pseudonyms in an attempt to attain their confidentiality and anonymity. Using a concept similar to Mason's (2002: 148) approach all data was detailed 'literally, interpretively and reflexively'. The data acquired during the three research phases was then coded using a thematic analysis.

The use of such a tool was designed to identify emergent themes (Patton 1990), which related to those identified within the literature review.

5.4 Pilot Study

The initial pilot study investigation was undertaken between April 23rd and May 4th 2007. It had been determined in the winter of 2006/07 that that the research project would be based in Norway primarily because of a notable void of academic research regarding backpacking or hostels within the country. The secondary motives of the pilot study were to help establish contacts, attain a cultural foresight and to achieve familiarity with the geography of Norway.

A rough itinerary was drafted but no definite schedules or time frames were arranged with the exception of the actual visitation of the hostels themselves. This was done so that plans could be altered if and when the need arised in response to potentially unexpected observations. Sentrum Pensjonat, an independent establishment in central Oslo, was the first hostel to be visited. This particular hostel was located nearby to the city's most popular street – Karl Johan's Gate – which is famous because of the number of high street stores, bars, restaurants located along it. Although the Sentrum Pensjonat hostel was perhaps a relatively small establishment in comparison to many other European city hostels, it was busy and revealed a number of guests exhibiting a wide spectrum of nationalities. A group of college students from the United States were observed along with couples from Italy and Spain and independent travellers from the likes of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and the Korean Republic. The vast majority of guests

were relatively young and typically under the age of 30. At the second hostel - Haraldsheim Vandrerhjem, in the Sinsen suburb of Oslo - the guest dynamics were distinctly different. Here, the range of guest nationalities was much narrower in a geographical context, with all identified guests being from Europe, with the exception of one particular man from Somalia. A number of guests were from Norway, most notably families and couples, and this was a clear indication of the contrasting clientele of guests using hostels in Oslo. Guests from other parts of Scandinavia, such as Sweden and Denmark were also observed which again conflicted with guest profiles at the Sentrum Pensjonat. Other common nationalities were observed as being from Germany, the Netherlands and Italy, and this was confirmed by the license plates of cars in the hostel car park. In terms of age range, the guests witnessed were of a far greater difference than those observed at the other hostel and included everything from young children (as members of families and school excursions) to couples who were comfortably aged 50 or above.

At the Jacob's Hostel in Bergen, the final hostel location observed during the pilot study, guest profiles were perhaps more consistent with those witnessed at Sentrum Pensjonat as opposed to Haraldsheim Vandrerhjem. This was because age ranges were relatively narrow as guests were typically aged between 18 and 30 years of age. Although the spectrum of nationalities found at Jacob's was slightly narrower than those observed at Sentrum Pensjonat, they were much more expansive than those encountered at Haraldsheim Vandrerhjem. Here, guests were typically European but represented a much broader range of nationalities which included Czechs, Poles and

Latvians. Several guests from further a field were also identified and these included Australians, Americans and one man who had travelled from Nigeria. As with the findings observed at the Sentrum Pensjonat Hostel, a clear difference was that Jacob's Hostel was also devoid of guests from Norway, or indeed, the Scandinavian region.

Firstly, it was identified that the range of profiles using Norwegian hostels were much more diverse than those outlined in conventional typologies and that many were from regions which had not been identified as typical guest sources. Secondly, while several guests revealed that the notion of the hostel was nothing more than a cheap place to stay, other suggested that it was an intrinsic feature of their overall vacational experience and had the potential to significantly enhance the enjoyment levels of their holidays. Thirdly, the levels of mobility exhibited by guests varied greatly. While some guests were relatively 'immobile' in the destinations they had chosen, others exhibited a significant desire to move and travel and this was evident by the utilisation of their own personal vehicles. For these particular guests, mobility was a key ingredient in obtaining experiences in Norway and was paramount to the levels of enjoyment they could potentially extract from their journeys. Hostel users who revealed low desires to attain mobility appeared to more content with attaining superficial experiences in the cities they were temporarily staying. This observation ties in closely with another noticeable behavioural trend at Norwegian hostels – the desire to see practically nothing. Following a number of guest interactions during the pilot study, it appeared that several guests not only revealed low mobility levels but low experiential desires also. These guests were typically observed loitering in communal lounges and often cited a lack of funds, or even

interest as to why they could not enjoy themselves. Such observations contrasted those criteria which have been frequently used to define the contemporary backpacker and thus validated the objectives of the thesis.

5.5 Research Phase 1

The first research phase, which was completed between late April and August 2008, focused up upon acquiring an extensive array of qualitative data from 25 NV and independently run hostels. Although approximately 80 different hostels were identified, due to the extensive geographical region of Norway it was considered unviable in both time and financial resources to visit them all. In the interests of practicality, it was decided that the research focus region would centre on Southern and Western Norway and that no hostels would be visited further North than Trondheim. It was deemed that a sample size of around 25 hostels should be an accurate enough representation. To determine which hostels would be selected, the two most recommended 'classic routes' from *Lonely Planet's Norway* guide book were selected as the basis.

The first itinerary, which was titled 'Norway in microcosm', (see Fig. 1) involved a combination of some of Norway's largest cities such as Oslo, Bergen and Stavanger, popular tourist towns such as Flåm and Voss and several naturally attractive regions such as Lysefjord and Hardangerfjord to give a largely contrasting variety of experiences. The second itinerary, 'The Heart of Norway and the best of the Fjords', focused more upon the geographical beauty of Norway but at the same time

incorporated particular tourism hotspots such as Lillehammer and Ålesund. The choice of both itineraries was based upon the research of Zillinger (2006: 231) who observed the role of guidebooks in destination planning and their ability to control the journeys of many travellers who utilised them:

> 'Guidebooks provide tourists with spatial and social information and hence both identify and popularize places as tourist attractions. Thus, they determine the tourists' starting-points as well as provide vector points in advising and guiding them…In this way, the information directs the tourists' movements to and through the destination.'

Using these two routes as a rough guide, both itineraries were then plotted onto a road map. All of the major locations recommended by *Lonely Planet* were identified and a logical route to reach them was constructed using the most likely major roads or typical route recommendations. From this stage, all hostels which were passed via either route were then selected for the research phase. All stops *en route* would be made regardless of stopping distance, even if they were only a few kilometres apart. Similarly, if a particular town or city contained more than one hostel, each one was visited regardless of geographical proximity. Route 1, 'Norway in microcosm', logically passed 17 hostels using a conventional route which closely followed that identified in the *Lonely Planet* guidebook. Route 2, 'The Heart of Norway and the best of the Fjords', incorporated 15 different hostels using the LP's proposed route. However, as both itineraries included Oslo, it was decided that hostels in this location would be utilised only during the

commencement of Route 1. As a consequence a target number of 32 hostels were identified as potential locations for Research Phase 1 to take place (see Fig. 3).

Fig. 1. ‘Norway in Microcosm’, copyright *Lonely Planet* 2005 .

Fig. 2. 'Heart of Norway and the best of the Fjords', copyright *Lonely Planet* 2005

Route 1: ‘Norway in Microcosm’	Route 2: ‘The Heart of Norway and the best of the Fjords’
1. Oslo (Sentrum Pensjonat)	1. Gjøvik
2. Oslo (Anker Hostel)	2. Brummond
3. Oslo (Haraldsheim Vandrerhjem)	3. Hammar
4. Oslo (Holtekilen Vandrerhjem)	4. Lillehammer
5. Kongsberg	5. Sjoa
6. Uvdal	6. Dombås
7. Geilo	7. Trondheim (Rosenborg Vandrarhjem)
8. Flåm	8. Sunndalsøra
9. Voss	9. Åndalsnes
10. Bergen (YMCA)	10. Ålesund
11. Bergen (Jacob’s Hostel)	11. Hellesylt
12. Bergen (Montana)	12. Stryn
13. Karmøy	13. Bøverdalen
14. Stavanger	14. Solvorn
15. Preikestolen	15. Sogndal
16. Gullingen	
17. Hardanger	

Fig. 3. Identified hostels which would be passed for Routes 1 and 2

Both LP routes appeared to cover a large extent of the geographical area of Southern and Western Norway and were seemingly representative of the large number of hostels found in this particular area. The only exceptions in this representation appeared to be in the far South, as a cluster of hostels around the Skagerrak costal region and several others towards the Southern tip near Kristiansand were omitted from both of the *Lonely Planet’s* ‘classic route’ itineraries.

As the first research phase was proposed to begin in late April, further planning was conducted to identify which hostels were open at particular times. A comprehensive list of hostel opening and closing times for 2008 was compiled to ensure that all hostels would be open upon the proposed arrival time. It was quickly established that both routes could not be undertaken in chronological order as dictated by the *Lonely Planet* guide book as several had contradicting opening times throughout the season. Many hostels, such as Oslo Haraldsheim, Bergen Montana and Lillehammer were open all year round but several others such as Sogndal, Stavanger and Hardanger, had opening periods of no longer than 10 to 12 weeks. Based upon these restrictions, it was decided that each hostel would be treated as a separate entity and that neither route be followed literally as indicated by the guide book due to severe logistical constraints. Instead, hostels would be visited at the first opportunity available during their opening times. Attempts were frequently made to visit hostels in geographical clusters if possible in the interests of time and financial efficiency, although this was not always possible in more remote regions. Due to the complexity of hostel opening times, a time-scaled plan was created which would enable the majority of hostels to be visited without the repetition of journeys within the same region. As a consequence, hostels from either route could be visited in any sequence. Hostels with unrestricted opening times in the same vicinity such as Geilo, Oslo Haraldsheim, Gjøvik, Hammar and Lillehammer were visited in late April 2007 at a time when many other hostels had yet to open. In contrast, Åndalsnes, Ålesund and Stryn were not visited until mid-June due to the fact that Åndalsnes did not open until May 2007 and therefore it made logical sense to visit all three during the same journey.

Though Research Phase 1 was conducted during a period of several weeks, it was deemed impossible to visit all 32 previously identified hostels because of the conflicting opening times and relatively large geographical proximity of the research setting. However, a total of 24 hostels were visited during the research phase. Of the seventeen hostels identified for Route 1, twelve were visited. For Route 2, twelve of the fifteen identified hostels were visited, meaning that both routes were adequately covered. A total of 59 unstructured interviews were compiled and recorded, with at least 1 obtained from each hostel location. A number of *ad hoc* conversations were also held at the vast majority of hostels to supplement these interviews and these dialogues were recorded *ad verbatim*.

Participant observations were undertaken in several hostels, but in many cases, these opportunities were restricted to locations which boasted a significant number of guests. Several hostels were found to have only a handful of guests, which severely restricted the possibilities of engaging in activities with guests. However, several participant observations were successfully completed via day excursions, trips to cafes and restaurants and at local bars. Similarly, a number of non-participant observations were also undertaken in various hostel locations. Such observations were typically carried out in communal lounges, dormitories and in hostel kitchens and outdoor recreation grounds.

After the completion of the research phase, all interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed to identify the key themes which emerged in relation to the preconceived thesis objectives. As Peräkylä (2008: 352) suggests, the researcher is required to read the acquired empirical materials on a number of occasions before they feel that the key findings can be acquired. These 'textual specimens' therefore act as tools which can 'draw a picture of the presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world'. All participant and non-participant observations were recorded and detailed in situ for later reference.

5.6 Research Phase 2

Research Phase 2 was scheduled to take place between July and September 2009. The aim of this phase was to address any gaps which had become apparent from the analysis of data accumulated during Research Phase 1, while simultaneously allowing research to focus on hostels which had revealed some of the more pronounced and distinct trends.

Phase 2 therefore attempted to follow up and confirm any particular themes which had been indentified during the accumulation of qualitative date during the summer of 2008. This supplementary data would permit the researcher to adequately interpret whether such encounters from the previous year were anomalies or not. A total of seven hostels were chosen, largely because they appeared to be representative of the diverse spectrum of guests encountered at hostels visited during Research Phase 1. Selected

were: the Anker Hostel and Haraldsheim Vandrerhjem in Oslo; the YMCA and Montana hostels in Bergen; Voss; Flåm; and Sogndal. Two hostels were selected for each of Norway's largest two cities, Oslo and Bergen, because Research Phase 1 revealed that the trends encountered at one hostel were not necessarily representative of others found in the same location. For example, Bergen Montana and Haraldsheim Vandrerhjem (Oslo) had revealed a higher proportion of Norwegians, families, groups and older guests while Bergen YMCA and the Anker Hostel (Oslo) had revealed a wider range of nationalities, more independent travellers and backpackers and generally speaking, younger guests. The other selected hostels, were the only hostels in their respective towns, so naturally they were representative of the guests who visited these locations. Voss was selected because it was one of the few hostels which appeared to have no typical guest type. Here, groups, individuals, families, backpackers, adventure and adrenaline seekers, elderly guests, motorcyclists, teenagers, as well as Norwegians and foreigners were all encountered. Flåm was chosen because it was a rural destination which had just completed a purpose built dormitory (this was incomplete during Research Phase 1) and represented hostel users who had chosen a geographical setting in stark contrast to Norway's largest two cities. The guest dynamics here were representative of many rural hostels which had been encountered during Research Phase 1. Indeed the distinct advantage of Flåm was that it appeared to generate larger numbers of guests on a more frequent basis than many other hostels of a similar size. Finally, Sogndal was selected because it represented the typical small town Norwegian hostel, which operated on a narrow seasonal basis and was consequently used for other purposes outside of the holiday season. This hostel, like

many in rural locations, featured a higher ratio of Norwegians than in places like Oslo and Bergen, and as a general rule, guests here were more likely to be closer to retirement age as opposed to their teens.

The selected hostels were visited using a logical overland route with Oslo as the starting point. Bergen was the second stop, followed by Voss, Flåm and Sogndal respectively. Each stop typically lasted 2 to 3 nights, depending on how many subjects were interviewed. Data collection included participant and non-participant observations in hostel social areas, dormitory rooms, guest kitchens and in locations outside the hostel such as sightseeing walks, visits to shops, and also via many lively debates at cafes, restaurants and bars. A total of twenty-one unstructured interviews were also compiled, with at least two being successfully completed in each location. Although it was imperative that freedom was given to the interviewees to express their views and voluntarily divulge particular information, Research Phase 2 was required to be more focused on a narrower range of themes. As a consequence, unstructured interviews and spontaneous conversations were generally of a much lengthier nature than those acquired via Research Phase 1 in 2008. All results were then transcribed, coded and added to the body of research data compiled from the previous year. The combination of this data with that compiled in Research Phase 1 confirmed a number of findings and subsequently eliminated a small number of anomalous observations which had been encountered the previous year. These findings will now be discussed in great depth in the following chapter.

6. Findings Overview

6.1 Who Uses Norwegian Hostels?

Objective 1 of this thesis attempted to challenge the stereotypical profiles and typologies frequently used to define hostel users. This objective was designed to enable a more global picture of hostel users to be developed, as typologies had typically been centred upon 'exotic' locations in India, Southeast Asia and Oceania. As O'Regan (2000: 143) asserts, the hostel has been frequently identified as the most 'visible, material and symbolic part of backpacking culture', yet such views may potentially preclude other users. Researchers have attempted to develop precise typologies of this rapidly developing tourism sector, though many have often appeared to be guilty of overgeneralisations and typecasting with regards to the backpacker. In terms of demographics, the backpacker is often depicted as being young (or at least under the age of 30), tertiary educated, middle class, and typically from the Western world (see O'Reilly 2006; Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995; Sørensen 2003). While it could be said that such characteristics are indeed representative of backpackers on the whole, research has continued to challenge the applicability of these definitions as backpacking continues to be a rapidly evolving phenomenon which is now incorporating new destinations.

The findings obtained from this research project appear to concur with those who argue that contemporary backpacker typologies are no longer as applicable as they perhaps once were. Hostel users in Norway appeared to be from a much wider range of

backgrounds than many definitions would permit and this was particularly evident in several hostels located in Oslo and Bergen. Though a considerable number of guests were identified as originating from Western nations such as Germany, the UK, the United States, Australia, the Netherlands, and indeed from Norway itself, hostel users were also discovered to be from a range of countries frequently omitted from backpacker typologies. A large number of guests were discovered to have originated from Spain and Italy – countries within the Mediterranean region which Maoz (2007) suggested were seen to be 'underrepresented' in terms of supplying backpackers. Similarly, a number of guests from Eastern Europe were also frequently identified in Norwegian hostels. Typically, these guests had originated from the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania; or from former Eastern Bloc countries such Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. To a lesser extent, guests were also identified from Russia but these were often sporadic and only observed in Oslo. Such findings concur with the views of Maoz (2007) who argued that backpacker nationalities were continuing to diversify. From Asia, guests originating from Japan and the Korean Republic were encountered, and although rare in occurrence, other guests were identified as being from China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, India, and Israel which once again, to some degree, reveal the diversity of the hostel user in Norway. Muzaini's (2006) assertion that Asian hostel users are increasing in number was also relevant to the findings of this thesis. Despite these observations, it must be maintained that encounters of guests from the Asian continent were still considerably lower than those travelling from the more 'typical' source locations such as Europe, North America and Oceania. However, it appears that Maoz (2007: 124) and Westerhausen's (2002) contention that new

supplier regions are triggering the 'erosion' of the contention that backpacking is a predominantly European, North American and Australasian activity, appear correct in the context of Norwegian hostels.

The age range of the typical hostel user in Norway could also challenge contemporary typologies based upon the findings of the research and suggest that Sørensen's (2003) assertion that age groups are also diversifying may not be far too from the truth. While a number of observed guests complied with the assumption that backpackers or hostel users are of a 'young age', many failed to reside adequately within this category. These findings appear to contradict the notion that the hostel user would typical fall between the age ranges submitted by Loker-Murphy *et al.* (1995) (15 to 29 years) or even Sørensen's (2003) (18 to 33 years).. Indeed hostel guests of all ages were found and many, who were happy to concede that were beyond retirement age, were observed on several occasions. Moreover, with the exception of hostel users observed in urban locations such as Oslo or Bergen, guests were predominantly older than the typologies developed in recent times. The qualitative nature of the research methodology did not yield large quantities of demographic data which would be required to adequately prove or disprove the backpacker definitions categorically. However, the sample size of 59 interviewees and the countless observations recorded suggest that hostel users in Norway were significantly different from the majority of typologies used to identify them.

In terms of behaviour, contemporary endorsements have identified backpackers as travellers who engage in lengthy, multi-destination journeys (Sørensen 2003); budget-

minded (Murphy 2001; Firth and Hing 1999; Hampton 1998); keen to avoid other tourists and mainstream destinations (Riley 1998; Bradt 1995); are considered to be in search of more realistic experiences or the 'other' (Urry 1990; Maoz 2007; Muzaini 2006); risk takers and challenge seekers (Maoz 2007; Elsrud 2001; Desforges 2000); and of course, owners of a very specific form of luggage – the backpack (Timmermans 2002; Richards and Wilson 2004a). Perhaps rather controversially, backpackers have also been identified as being 'superior' (Sørensen 2006) and 'genuine' (Jacobsen 2000) travellers, who are the very antithesis of the common, mainstream or mass tourist (Brown 2007; McCabe and Stokoe 200; Muzaini 2006; Kontogeorgopolous 2003; Galani-Moutafi 2000). While the demographic-centred typologies may not be adequately challenged in this thesis, those which have focused upon behavioural patterns certainly can. Significantly, the research project revealed that many, perhaps even the majority, did not reveal the conventional behavioural characteristics associated with this mode of travel. Moreover, several guests were motivated by the *opposites* of these pre-prescribed motivational criteria. However, while these differences will be observed in detail later on in the findings section, it would be perhaps logical to firstly reveal the consistencies between the behavioural criteria-laden typologies and the findings of the research phases.

Murphy (2001), Firth and Hing (1999) and Hampton (1998) have suggested that backpackers are budget minded travellers and therefore select the hostel as an ideal base because of its low cost and its ability to prolong journeys. In the case of Norway, the vast majority of guests cited the financial benefits of using hostels as their primary

motivation which concur with these views. Indeed several guests concluded that hostels were their ‘only option’ while travelling around Scandinavia if they wished to maintain the originally proposed timeframes of their journeys. In such scenarios, those who failed to budget adequately would be left with no option but to curtail the length of their proposed vacations, and this on rare occasions, was evident via observations of the prudent financial behaviour they exhibited. Others implied that while they could afford to stay in hotels or other types of more expensive accommodation, this would severely restrict what they could do both in Norway and indeed other destinations in the future. These guests therefore identified hostels as a necessary means of maximising the levels of enjoyment they could attain at the various stops along their journeys. Hostels were frequently termed as ‘just a place to get some sleep’ or as ‘somewhere to leave your bags while you explore’, and were typically deemed as important options to make their journeys more financially viable, even though some did not necessarily enjoy such environments. Such comments appeared to be the most representative appraisals of the decision to utilise hostels. However, this mode of behaviour appeared to be the only common characteristic which was consistent with most typologies.

A particular key difference was the length of time prescribed by the hostel user for the overall duration of their vacation. Sørensen (2003) implied that most backpacker typologies suggested that they are engaged in lengthy, multi-destination journeys as part of their travel plans of which many took up to 1 year in total. Although it would be fair to say that more than half were undertaking multi-destination journeys, the majority were engaged in travel plans which were distinctly much shorter in duration and many

journeys did not even exceed 1 month. Naturally, the use of the term ‘lengthy’ is a subjective term, but while the likes of Riley (1988) have argued that many journeys may take up to a year to complete, it appears that the typical hostel user in Norway reveals a distinct behavioural difference in comparison to those found elsewhere. Most it seems were partaking in multi-destination journeys which focused upon travel plans that visited a number of popular European destinations such as the UK, Germany and Spain and these findings concur with the research of Wilson, Fisher and Moore (2007) who observed Australasian backpackers undertaking conventional ‘OE’ trips in Europe. Others followed a more localised travel itinerary which focused upon the sub-region of Scandinavia, or indeed just Norway itself. Although they crossed few borders, these guests still incorporated a number of different destinations over a relatively large geographical area. While such behavioural characteristics remain consistent with Sørensen’s (2003) assertion of them being multi-stop travellers it appears that few engaged in these journeys for considerable periods of time. Here a strong contradiction persists in terms of many conventional backpacker typologies. Indeed Sørensen (2003) had already observed the emergence of a group of travellers which travelled like backpackers yet travelled within the time constraints more usually associated with conventional tourists who partake in cyclical holiday patterns. Hannam and Ateljevic (2010) have termed those who engage in such travel patterns as ‘flashpackers’ due to their tendencies to travel like backpackers and evidence from Norwegian hostels suggest that similar traveller types were to be identified.

Although examples of interviewees travelling for periods beyond 3 months were observed, most were typically engaged in journeys of around 12 to 14 days in duration. Indeed, it could be argued that the average time length of many travellers' journeys usually lasted for approximately a fortnight, though it must also be noted that many hostel users were undertaking journeys which lasted for only 2 to 3 days. These journeys were typically undertaken during the weekend period and were typically focused in Oslo or Bergen and appear to concur with the views of Sørensen (2003) and Hannam and Diekmann (2010).

Other inconsistencies regarding hostel user behaviour were also discovered in Norway and centred upon the desires of tourists to seek out risk and challenges, the desire to avoid tourists and popular destinations and the desire to seek Urry's (1990) notion of the 'other'. It appears that a common assumption amongst many academics, has been that the backpacker will frequently seek locations 'off the beaten track' (see Buzzard 1993; Bradt 1995; Sørensen 2003) which are unfrequented by tourists and have yet to emerge as popular destinations for the mainstream. Oslo and Bergen, and most other major towns and cities, it could be speculated, would fail to meet the requirements of a destination which is neither off the beaten track or a destination which is not typically frequented by mainstream tourists. Indeed, even geographically remote regions were highly accessible and frequently entailed established tourist routes. Amenities and accommodation in urban locations particularly, were highly standardised, yet backpackers were commonly observed and appeared to be more than content to stay in such surroundings. A significant finding was that younger guests (*i.e.* those most likely

to be considered conventional backpackers) were the most common examples of hostel users who visited popular tourist destinations in Norway. These guests frequently revealed little desire to move on elsewhere within the country and were typically restricted to urban based hostels. Younger hostel users (those under 30 years) were usually discovered travelling between Oslo and Bergen, and indeed many visited only Oslo before moving onto another country altogether., In contrast, older guests (typically those who exceeded the age of 30 years), were far more likely to be identified in hostels in more remote surroundings which could be arguably defined as locations which offered a *genuine* possibility of encountering fewer tourists and the trappings associated with them. Thus, in the context of Norway, few it could be argued, appeared to be in search of the 'other' (Urry 1990; Maoz 2007; Muzaini 2008), a location which Sternberg (1997) associates with terms such as 'adventurous', 'foreign', 'ancient', or 'spectacular'. Instead of discovering new locations, many appeared to be satisfied with visiting and residing in places which were clearly populated by tourists and where most activities could be considered to be typical of those undertaken by mainstream tourists. As Riley (1998) and Bradt (1995) have previously asserted, a commonly cited prerequisite for the backpacker is that he or she will go to great lengths to avoid other tourists. Yet, many backpackers encountered in Norway were more than content to interact with tourists and partake in similar activities. While most of these engagements were temporary and restricted to particular activities, such as a tour of Bergen harbour or a visit to Oslo's Viking Ship Museum, encounters with their fellow backpackers were more substantial.

Backpackers were frequently identified congregating together in hostel lounges and common areas and while most interactions were of a conversational nature, others formed friendships and made arrangements to go out, attend attractions and even opted to move on to new locations as a group. Such behaviour appeared to closely match Mafesoli's (1995) notion of 'neo-tribes', in that these guests would often congregate in considerable numbers (anything up to 12 persons) and perform collectively in locations where they were abundant.

Perhaps one of the key motivations to congregate together was a need to eliminate feelings of risk and to reduce the challenges faced during their journeys. Such behaviour appears to heavily contradict the views of Maoz (2007), Elsrud (2001) and Desforges (2000) who have all implied that backpackers were typically motivated by a desire to take risks and to face challenges or hardships. The behaviour of many backpackers in Norwegian hostels appeared to resemble that of travellers found in enclaves around the world. Contemporary research which has focused upon such locations has revealed that many now reside in 'bubbles' for the majority of their journeys and are content to be detached from their real surroundings. Few interviewees it seemed were prepared to venture beyond a few superficial encounters with popular Norwegian tourist attractions. Indeed some were completely unaware as to what Norway offered as a destination in its own right.

The key motivational profiles of hostel users encountered during the research project will now be explored in further detail. While these different motivations have been

grouped for ease of interpretation it must be maintained that this thesis does not attempt to construct new typologies. The different motivational groups have been constructed to reflect the multifaceted nature of hostel users rather than to create a universal set of criteria to determine them.

6.2 Why Did Hostel Guests Choose Norway?

A whole gamut of motivations for contemporary travel trends have been explored in the literature review section. Crompton's (1979) push-pull model, which looks at the simultaneous forces which both propel the tourists away from home and attract them to a particular destination has been widely acknowledged as an accepted model. Norwegian hostels appear to be saturated with tourists who have been pushed, pulled, or to some degree, have been affected by both forces. A commonly cited theme or 'push' factor amongst many interviewed hostel users revealed a desire to escape home, or at the very least, the routines they encountered on a daily basis either at work or play. To a lesser extent, some guests also suggested that they were triggered to escape home in an attempt to negotiate personal problems such as job dissatisfaction or even the failure of relationships.

For those who were 'pulled' to Norway, it appeared that most were governed by a desire to experience the country's diverse landscapes, of which the fjords and the North Cape were the most commonly cited choices. Several of these guests revealed that Norway, and its landscapes, represented the realisation of an ambition or an opportunity to

engage in a ‘once in a lifetime experience’. Historical and cultural locations in Bergen and Oslo were frequently identified, of which the Viking Ship Museum, Vigeland Park, and the National Gallery, were all mentioned as motivational criteria. Genealogy and the search for heritage were also identified as reasons to visit Norway, with two hostel users in particular opting to travel to the country to develop or re-develop a sense of meaning or belonging. Norwegian interviewees occasionally cited their desire to attain a sense of national identify as an example of those who chose to visit Norway for purposes associated with heritage. However, while many guests were able to give destination specific motivations for the journeys, several others had opted to visit Norway because of the opportunities it presented in terms of cost, being able catch up with friends who were living or studying there, or simply because of the timing of windows of opportunity. These guests were highly opportunistic and frequently revealed little or indeed no motivation to visit the country. Several guests from Spain and Italy in particular, opted to take advantage of new routes offered by the budget airline carrier Ryanair, and identified Norway, or more precisely Oslo, as a genuine opportunity to visit somewhere new. ‘New’ in these scenarios however, could have been anywhere and several admitted that their knowledge of the destination was severely limited.

As aforementioned, others chose to visit Norway because it represented a chance to see friends and acquaintances. Here, the motivational aspect superseded the location as most suggested that the destination was irrelevant as they were only concerned with meeting friends. Time windows were also regularly cited as a reason to explain their arrivals in Norway. In this scenario, Norway acted as the first place they could escape

to, and the vast majority admitted that practically anywhere would have sufficed. The motivations of the interviewees will now be explored in depth in relationship to each theme. Each theme will now be observed in greater detail, outlining the key triggers and motivations behind each.

7. Norway-Motivated Hostel Users

7.1 Norway as a 'Dream' Travel Destination

Approximately one third of all interviewees encountered between May 2008 and August 2009 had chosen to visit the country for a specific reason related to Norway. For these guests, Norway represented a lifetime ambition; a playground for physical pursuits; a nostalgic trip to experience a journey of yesteryear; an opportunity to experience wonderful vistas; a chance to learn more about Norwegian culture and history, and for two particular subjects, it was a destination which would potentially shed further light onto their own lives and help them better define who they were. With regards to those in search of spectacular vistas and landscapes it is perhaps of little surprise that many chose to visit Norway. The country is synonymous with the 'famous fjords' as Brinchman and Huse (1991: 724) term them, and of course, Norway is additionally famous for its extensive coastline, temperate and glacial wildernesses, and majestic mountain ranges (Nilsson 2001: 55). Similarly, Lane and Waitt (2007: 111) argued that many tourists additionally seek out 'wilderness' or an 'unchanged ancient nature', triggered by life in suburbia and the continual urbanisation of many areas formerly associated with seclusion and emptiness. McCabe and Stokoe's (2004: 603) contention that a 'new geography of leisure' has emerged whereby visitors are increasingly on the look out for 'empty' or 'timeless' lands, appears to fit in with the motivations of this significant group of visitors in Norway. Moreover, such places offer the traveller the opportunity to experience feelings which may not be possible to achieve back in their

native lands. The reasons offered by many interviewees in Norwegian hostels appear to be consistent with Lane and Waitt's (2007: 118) contention that certain geographical locations can act as a platform to attain different moral and spiritual domains. Norway's rugged and often isolated landscape appeared to act as the perfect setting for those in search of 'intimacy', 'sensual intensity' and 'emotional and physical exchanges' (Trauer and Ryan 2005: 482) or 'freedom', 'anonymity' and 'distance' (White and White 2004: 212). Many interviewees cited similar phrases and words when asked to explain why they visited Norway and what, if anything, they expected to achieve during their stays. While it was deemed difficult to categorise the subjects into any clearly defined categories, broadly speaking, it was still possible to create a series of subcategories which should enable the reader to identify the most prominent motivations.

The first group represented those who had visited Norway primarily because of the landscapes, vistas and terrain it offered. While most were content to relax, gaze at their surroundings, and occasionally make brief sorties on foot into the wilderness, others emerged who wished to engage far more intensely with their physical surroundings. Despite the clear differences in activities performed at the location, the landscape acted as a common motivation between these visitors, and consequently these guests have been placed together as 'Landscape Seekers'. Landscape seekers, were not only motivated by a desire to see such vistas but also to experience them in solitude or in inherently small groups. Though many landscape seekers were satisfied to remain static in these particular locations, others were driven by a desire to experience them on the move. The latter types exhibited a high degree of mobility and were empowered to

tailor their experiences of these locations via the vehicles they possessed. Motorcyclists were common landscape seekers, and these visitors were often highly motivated by a quest for ‘paradise’, be it physical or metaphorical. Although the landscaper seeker may be contrastingly mobile or immobile, there was little doubt that the landscape itself was the key motivational driving force.

The second group, termed ‘Familiarity Seekers’, were motivated to visit Norway because of their familiarity with the country which had been developed over a series of trips to the same or similar locations within the country. While the majority of these visitors came from abroad, a number of Norwegian visitors also expressed that they enjoyed travelling within their own country and had conducted a series of repeat visits over several decades in some instances. Though the chosen destination of the landscape seeker was unsurprisingly limited to rural locations outside of Oslo and Bergen, the familiarity seeker could be located anywhere within the range of hostels chosen for the research project. The activities of the familiarity seeker ranged from city-based trips to Oslo to experience local culture to carefully reconstructed itineraries in rural locations to engage and reengage in walks and cycle tours.

The final group were termed ‘Heritage Seekers’, and were primarily motivated to visit Norway in an attempt to establish or re-establish a relationship which they perceived existed with or within Norway. The group largely consisted of Norwegians who were keen to confirm links to a perceived sense of community, or collective historical past in an attempt to help reaffirm what it *means* or possibly *meant* to be Norwegian. These

visitors were typically observed visiting nationally important sites such as the Slottet, the palace of the Norwegian royal family; historical museums such as the Vikingskiphusset (Viking Ship Museum); and cultural attractions such as Vigeland Park, or the Ibsen and Munch Museums. The other two members of this group had chosen to visit Norway in an attempt to establish or re-establish an imagined relationship with the country. Both had parents who born and raised in Norway, but they themselves had been raised in the United States. The decision to visit to Norway represented a spiritual journey whereby they could discover more about the home of their parents and to help them develop a link to their own sense of heritage.

Broadly speaking, Norwegian hostel users could be broadly segregated in terms of motivation using two broad classifications: 1) The internally motivated (i.e. those specifically motivated to visit Norway) and 2) The externally motivated (i.e. those who were motivated by factors which were unrelated to the destination). The model on page 189 (Fig. 4) reveals the Internally Motivated (Norway specific) categories and their various subcategories. A similar model has been constructed for Externally Motivated (Opportunistic) visitors (Fig. 5) and this will be observed later on in the findings section.

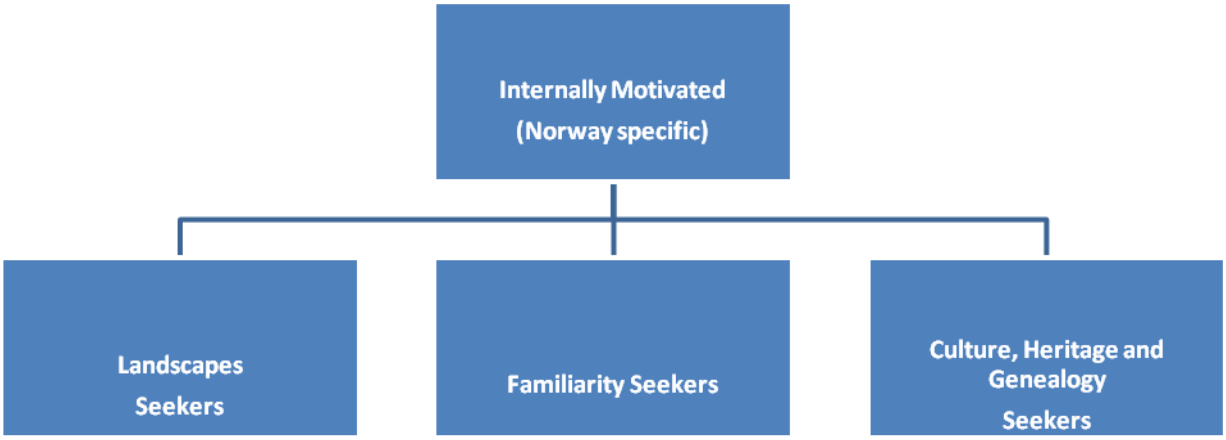

Fig. 4 Internally Motivated Hostel Users (Norway Specific)

7.2 The Search for Landscapes

Many hostel users displayed a clear set of reasons to explain their choice of vacation. For several visitors such as Sung, from South Korea, the motivations for arriving in Norway were highly destination specific, concentrating mostly on specific aspects of the Norwegian *landscape*: 'To see the fjords, countryside, nature and fresh air. Just something which is very different from Seoul'. Sung and his responses were representative of a clear subgroup of motivated travellers intent on experiencing vistas and distinct physical features which Norway, they believed, offered in abundance. Dieter, a German travelling solo around Southern Norway, revealed a similar range of

interests which included a desire to observe the fjords and the coastlines of the country. As Daugstad (2008: 403-404) has asserted the ‘core assets’ of Norwegian tourism, are most notably its fjords, mountains and spectacular coastlines, all of which as a key conduits to rural based tourism in Norway. Their ‘magnetic’ appeal was apparent in the responses of many hostel users who had been drawn to see these locations in person. It appeared that a recurring theme amongst many people who revealed a desire to experience Norway’s landscapes was the contrasting nature of such locations in comparison to their homes. These visitors types frequently came from, or lived in, large urban centres around the world and Norway, they suggested, acted as the perfect backdrop to a brief, but alternative world. Such alternatives worlds, for most, were the opposites of the urbanised locations they had travelled from and appear to concur with Lane and Waitt’s (2007) assertion that many travellers are in search of locations which represent notions of ‘wilderness’ of an ‘unchanged ancient nature’.

As Daugstad (2008: 403) implied, one of the distinct advantages of Norway as a tourist destination is that its late development by European standards delayed the processes of urbanisation and subsequently led to many areas remaining untouched by human influence. Visitors from places such as Seoul, London, Frankfurt-am-Main, Milan and Chicago, all cited that Norway represented an environmental setting which was in stark contrast to the sceneries they would encounter back in their homelands. Their cityscapes of origin were often identified as being ‘dull’, ‘boring’ or ‘normal’, and Norway represented a location whereby regular or mundane environmental sensations could be temporarily nullified due to an alternative geography. Even for those who did not live in

large cities or towns, Norway often represented a completely different geographical environment to home and therefore become a destination they desired to experience because of the contrast they believed they would be able to see and more importantly, *experience*. Visitors from Denmark, the UK and the Netherlands in particular, were keen to experience places which represented a geographical diversity, namely large topographical features, which were not necessarily available back in their countries of habitation. Dutch and Danish visitors often cited that Norway appealed to them because of the differing physical locations which Norway offered, and as one Dutch tourist aptly put it, 'somewhere which isn't flat'.

Many responses were often strongly related to the views of Lane and Waitt's (2007: 112 118) who argued that tourists were becoming increasingly motivated by a desire to attain experiences in physical settings they deem impossible to achieve in their normal surroundings. As a consequence, the 'real' landscape therefore becomes an object of desire due to its illusiveness in the urbanised environments and man-made naturescapes of home. As McCabe and Stokoe (2004: 603) have previously implied, the role of 'nature' has being an increasingly significant of the new geography of leisure. They argue that this role has become more pronounced due to the blurring of traditional notions between urban and rural locations. In such a scenario, Urry (1995) argues that nature is adjusted or modified, while Crouch and Ravenscroft (1995) suggest that nature is now effectively managed, becoming paradoxically unnatural. Crouch (2000: 270) therefore argues that the experiences of 'nature' are in indeed 'unreal' or settings of 'false geography'. Based upon the comments supplied by several interviewees, the

solution to such dilemmas were therefore centred on discovering an alternative to this *false* geography, and prompted them to search for a *real* one.

Although many were in search of experiential outcomes, it additionally appeared that many were happy to obtain superficial experiences of landscape, so long as it acted as an opposite to life elsewhere. Sung from South Korea, was inspired by a chance to observe landscapes which were essentially 'green' and contrasted his home - the urban metropolis of Seoul. Several other guests also cited colour-orientated visual criteria such as 'green landscapes', 'white, snow-tipped mountains' and 'turquoise fjords' as inspirational factors for visiting Norway. These constructed images appear to concur with Daugstad's (2008: 405) assertion that landscapes have been frequently 'romanticised' using 'nostalgic externalized views', which suggests that the tourist will frequently rank visual qualities as the most important feature of the journey. Others cited motivational criteria which revolved around feelings as opposed to imagery, such as 'emptiness', 'remoteness' and desires to 'be able to feel alone'. These motivational responses appear to link closely to the findings of White and White (2004: 212), Trauer and Ryan (2005: 482), and Lane and Waitt (2007) and reveal that the spectacle of the landscape was not always its most satisfying feature. Goode, Price and Zimmerman (2000) have implied that while many travellers appear to seek out remote and unchanged locations, they are also governed by a desire to attain deeper experiences. Daugstad (2008: 405) likewise suggests that landscapes have been identified by academic researchers as being a 'medium for expressing social and mental constructions', which also imply that the spectacle of the landscape is not necessarily

the key motivational aspect of the visit. The research of Nilsson (2001: 55) and Goode *et al.* (2000) revealed that tourists who were in search of mountainous landscapes were not always driven solely by the *views* on offer, but by the *sensations* they could offer also. They argued that such locations permitted tourists to attain a 'sense of renewal and spiritual well being' due to the perception that they were calm and serene locations. As a consequence, Jamal and Hollinshead (1999: 64) argue that many tourists are not content to only gaze, but must actively develop and 'interpret' their own sense of meaning to the places they visit.

While Norwegian cities were occasionally cited as being reasons to visit, most interviewees revealed little, or indeed no intention, of visiting urban locations. Dieter from Germany argued that urban locations were 'common' and places which merely hosted 'tourist attractions and souvenirs'. His views suggested that such loactions were manufactured or synthetic in comparison to the natural ones he sought to find. Sebastian, who was travelling home to Germany via car after spending a semester studying in Norway, typified the views of those who cared little for the towns and cities they visited and held a high degree of preference for the physical landscapes in between:

I don't really care too much about what I see. I have one or two places I'd like to visit but it's more about the scenery than the actually towns. I like the roads, such as the Trollstigen, and I apart from Ålesund I've made no other plans to stop anywhere specifically. (Sebastian, Germany)

Carsten, another German tourist travelling by car, openly admitted that he could not remember the names of several of the places he had stopped at, suggesting that they were ‘not so important’ in the grander scheme of his itinerary. Such comments appear to closely relate to Daugstad (2008) assertions that the Norwegian landscape supersedes its urban locations due to the lack of historic features and important built monuments in many of its cities. Perhaps more significantly however, Carsten’s journey was symbolic of several motorised travellers who yielded no clear itinerary other than the roads which they opted to travel along.

While it is clear that the term ‘landscape’ operated as the main motivational factor for many travellers in Norway, there were indeed many different interpretations of what this meant to individual travellers. Moreover, several interviewees suggested that they were motivated by certain distinct landscape formations and added that some were more important than others. As Daugstad (2008: 404-405) maintains, the concept of landscape is neither a universal one nor a simple one, as its interpretations reveal a distinctively wide spectrum of potential meanings. In addition, these different interpretations do not just consider the myriad forms of landscape but also the way in which it could be interacted with. Some visitors sought one particular type of landscape, while others were keen to experience a range of different features and created lengthy itineraries, both in terms of time and distance. Two subgroups appeared to emerge, with several travellers citing that were keen to visit only one or two key locations, while the other group represented those in search of a fluid and highly mobile journey. Typically, the latter hostel users were attempting to complete itineraries which covered several

thousands of miles (Oslo to the North Cape being a popularly cited journey – approximately 1,500km and typically over 24hrs in duration on the road), although others clearly travelled through the country *ad hoc* for large sections of the trip. The fjords, Preikestolen, the Lofoten Islands, Trollstiggen, and the North Cape, all represented places of wilderness, nature and in many cases, Lane and Waitt's (2007: 118) 'timeless' or 'empty' lands which were popular features on the itineraries of most. Unsurprisingly, the fjords were often the primary feature on the itineraries of those who offered landscapes as their key inspiration. Indeed, several suggested that these topographical features were the sole reason for their arrival in Norway. Alvina, a French student travelling during her summer break, was one of many interviewees who expressed the value and the magnetism of the Norwegian fjords:

Norway has always been a place which fascinated me and I really wanted to see the fjords and experience its fantastic scenery…For me, it is a combination of very nice scenery, and a calming place which is different to my home in France. I love wildlife and nature and the outdoors, it has always been an ambition of mine to come here…I think the fjords are amazing. (Alvina, France)

Although Alvina, and others like her, were motivated almost solely by a desire to experience the fjords, others required much more in terms of physical geography to be completely satisfied. Karl, an American tourist, practically constructed a checklist of 'cool stuff' such as glaciers, mountains, fjords, island archipelagos, dramatic coastlines and arctic tundra amongst the many things he wished to witness during his Norwegian

travels. Others also expressed that while the fjords were an important physical feature, and in many ways the ‘symbol’ of Norwegian landscapes, they still sought to see other features which were given equal significance along their journeys.

While many people cited the contrasting landscape of Norway as their chief motivational factor, the way in which they planned to interact with the environment varied significantly. Several visitors were content to merely observe and relax in their surroundings, while others were motivated by a desire to engage in sports or a wide range of outdoor pursuits, ranging from simple hikes to cycling journeys of considerable length and difficulty. The landscapes therefore were interpreted in a variety of different ways, depending upon how it was ‘used’ and consumed by the visitor. Goode *et al.* (2000) suggest that landscapes offer three main incentives or benefits to the traveller. Firstly, the traveller may use landscapes as platforms to permit experiences of ‘renewal’ or ‘spiritual well being’. Secondly, they argue that mountains perform as the setting whereby calmness or ‘serenity’ can be attained. Thirdly, landscapes offer sensations such as ‘romanticism’ or ‘adventure’, which again are seen as unobtainable at home. Examples of all of these concepts were encountered during the research phases of the project, although the importance of such experiences unsurprisingly varied from subject to subject and supported Goode *et al.*’s. (2000) notion that landscapes offered platforms for a variety of different experiences to be encountered.

Desired experiences or sensations were on most occasions linked to the familiarity levels of the traveller. Though many interviewees had visited on numerous occasions,

or were indeed Norwegian citizens, for others, coming to Norway represented the realisation of a dream. Daniel from Germany, suggested that 'it was always one of the places that I wanted to visit', and added that 'it was the one place in Europe I really wanted to go because of the landscapes'.

Daniel's story was one of planning misfortune and bad luck which paradoxically enabled one of his alternative ambitions to be achieved. After initially planning to visit Tibet, and then central China as an secondary option, a string of events consequently resulted in Daniel having to make alternative plans at short notice. His primary holiday plan was to take a 3 week tour of Tibet, but after the troubles of March 2008[2], he decided against travelling to the region. Despite this setback however, an alternative option was to travel to central China, with a specific intention to visit the provinces of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan. The earthquake of May 2008, which hit the latter province, resulted in Daniel opting to abandon his plans and make alternative arrangements in a different country. The fundamental problem faced by his decision to withdraw his plan however was that he had little time to make alternative arrangements. Therefore, due to severe time restrictions and the potential ease of making arrangements, Daniel chose to visit Norway instead.

Although, Norway represented a location which was not perhaps as 'exotic' as Daniel termed it, it become a viable option because he asserted that this was one of the few locations in Europe whereby he could attain a similar set of experiences. Due to a stressful position as a paediatric doctor, Daniel sought the wilderness of Norway as an

[2] Relates to the Machu Protests in Tibet, between March 10th and March 24th 2008.

opportunity to take a break from cities, suburban life and the gruelling schedule at work. Norway therefore represented a destination for Daniel where these experiences could be achieved because of the particular landscapes it offered. Daniel's behaviour appeared to tie in closely with that of Decrop and Snelders' (2005: 128) 'adaptable vacationer' due to his ability to change and modify travel plans in relation to the emergence of problematic situations. Norway was therefore not a whimsical plan to go merely anywhere, but a careful constructed one which met the specific requirements of remote landscapes for the subject. In consistence with Goode *et al.'s* (2000) notion of what the landscape may potentially offer the tourist, it appears that Daniel's journey appeared to meet all three criteria. Firstly, the Norwegian landscape acted as a place for 'renewal', where he could recharge batteries and reassess the progress of his life. Secondly, he sought landscapes because of the ability they possessed to enable him to fell remote and temporarily detached from his usual surroundings. In this scenario, the landscapes of Norway permitted Daniel to experience 'calmness' as well as a temporal transition from his stressful career to that of relaxation and reflection. Thirdly, Norway and its landscapes offered something as equally as important as the other two criteria; *adventure*. However, to fully extract these three experiences, Daniel required something else – a personal mode of transport, and like many others, this was a fundamental feature of the experience.

7.3 Accessing Landscapes: Machines of Mobility

Hostel users accessed landscapes via a variety of different methods. Those who closely tied in with contemporary backpacker typologies typically used public transportation such as buses and trains to get around. Families and older couples predominantly used the car as the main method of transport, although camper vans amongst guests from the Netherlands and Germany were also encountered at hostels which offered facilities to park such vehicles.

Many solo travellers who did not match the contemporary notion of the backpacker (typically aged in their mid to late 30s), opted for personal modes of transportation such as cars, motorcycles and on occasion, bicycles. The views of the latter group were particularly distinctive in terms of how they desired to interact and experience the landscapes of Norway. Javier from Spain, Marius from Germany and Simon from the United States, all explained that their preference of transportation was a key factor in how they attempted to maximise the enjoyment of the various landscapes they sought. All three were engaged in lengthy trips of approximately 8 to 12 weeks and cited Norway's landscapes as the perfect backdrop to their particular notion of 'dream holidays'. In these scenarios, the cycle acted as a catalyst to attaining a more complete experience of the environments they passed through. Firstly, they were in complete control of their journeys and could tailor their itineraries to suit whims and instincts on days when they opted to deviate from their original ideas. Secondly, the cycle acted as means of 'feeling' Norway and its landscapes, as they were exposed to a fuller range of sensations such as smells, sounds and the touch via the weather conditions their

bodies were exposed to. Marius discusses some of the advantages of travelling via cycle:

We were motivated by the scenery and we talked about it [travelling to Norway] for two or three years now…it's an amazing experience. We planned two routes but rarely stick to our plan. If we see something we like, we stop but most of the time we are just happy to ride and take everything in. (Marius, Germany)

Although opting to using motorised methods of transport, two motorcyclists named Jeroen and Michael, who had travelled from the Netherlands and Germany respectively, yielded similar expectations from their travel plans. Both suggested that Norway was a place they had always wanted to visit and again landscapes were dominant features of their holiday agendas. In both scenarios, Norway represented a place where 'freedom', 'being alone', and experiencing nature could be achieved. However, while the ocular opportunities their destination offered were highly important, the sensations that accompanied the vistas were also significant. Jeroen revealed that the decision to visit Norway was a highly motivated desire held for a number of years. After waiting for over 5 years, Jeroen was finally able to get the sufficient amount of leave from work so that he could pursue his 'dream' of travelling the North Cape to the maximum:

It's always been a lifelong ambition to go to the North Cape on my motorbike. I just always had this dream of riding through the mountains and fjords and being totally free from everything back home. I've waited five years for this trip and its going to take me

nearly three months to complete it all. It has taken a long time for me to be able to get this amount of time off from work, but so far it's been worth the wait. (Jeroen, Netherlands).

Michael from Germany also exhibited a similar range of motivations for his visit to Norway and returned on the basis of a previous experience. Although his journey involved a completely different itinerary to that of Jeroen - travelling from Oslo to Bergen via Kristiansand and Stavanger - the expected experiences were very much the same. For Michael, Norway also represented a location whereby 'special' feelings such as freedom, isolation and anonymity could be experienced and his views, like those of Jeroen, appeared to closely tie in with Jacobsen's (2001: 102) assertion that 'analogous mobile tourism' has proliferated greatly in Scandinavia because of its ability to offer 'untouched nature' and 'unique sights':

It's always been one of my favourite places. I came here a few years ago on a tour to the North Cape and was hooked. Everything is just so big and the roads are great for driving, not like in Germany with the jams. Here I'm alone or at least I feel like it. It's a really special feeling being on the road without anyone around. Just you and nature. (Michael, Germany)

A clear niche of travellers emerged for whom Norway represented a place where isolation and freedom could be achieved, namely by travelling via motorcycle or on rarer occasions, the motor car. While the motor car offered similar opportunities in terms of

flexibility and freedom, the motorcycle appeared to enhance the sensations of the landscapes. Interviewees who travelled via their own motorcycles discussed the 'chills' and 'gusts' of fresh air on their bodies, or talked about the refreshing smells radiating from pine tree forests. Such sensations appear to concur with Urry's (2002) suggestion that many are now in search of 'sensecapes' whereby the tourist can also 'taste', 'feel' and 'hear' places (Daugstad 2008: 413). For Michael and Jeroen, and many others like them, these feelings could only be realised *because* of their motorcycles, which represented liberty inducing machines of mobility. Similarly to Larsen's (2001: 81) assertion that motor vehicles do not just transport tourists to and from locations, the motor vehicle simultaneously allowed them to consume environments *en route* rather than just at particular destinations or stops. The motorcycle was pivotal in instigating and permitting mobile sightseeing, which allowed the participants to 'consume' locations (Jacobsen 1997; 2001), and additionally allowed them to experience 'virtual otherness' while being 'on the move' (Larsen 2001: 81). Indeed, as Jacobsen (1997; 2001: 100) has implied, motor-based tourism is a powerful motive because of its ability to enable the tourist to undertake the 'passing gaze'.

To be fully experienced and enjoyed, and to consequently transcend into one of Lane and Waitt's (2007: 118) new spiritual domains, motorcyclists in particular required their vehicles to fully maximise these desired feelings. The motorcycle appeared to allow the rider to experience Trauer and Ryan's notion of (2005: 482) *intimacy* or White and White's (2004: 212) perceptions of *freedom*, *anonymity* and *distance,* because they were ultimately in control of their own destinies during the duration of their vacations

(see Sachs 1992). Moreover, the travelling part of the journeys of Jeroen and Michael were cited as being more important than the locations where they stopped (as with other motorists mentioned earlier in this chapter) and coincided with the views of Mohktarian and Salomon (2001: 695) who suggested that the destination may indeed be secondary to the process of travel itself. Likewise, the experiences and views of many motorcyclists in Norway act as further evidence to support Page (1999b) and Lumsdon's (2006: 750) assertions that the mode of transport chosen by the traveller was not just a means of travel but an 'integral part' of the journey. Indeed, it is possible to go as far as to suggest that they match Jacobsen's (2001: 108) belief that being 'on the go' is perhaps the most pivotal aspect, or Bauman's (1998: 83) claim that being on the move is not a mundane process, but perhaps the very feeling of 'bliss itself'.

Norway acted as a unique setting for many contemporary tourists who, according to Jacobsen (2001:108), are in search of transience or ephemerality, and ultimately aim to achieve 'high-grade sensations of places and landscapes en route'. Even those on long distance journeys such as Jeroen, Michael or Andreas, felt compelled to travel as 'far as possible' each day in order to maximise their time on the road and see and feel as much as they could. In these instances the destination at the end of each day was merely a place to rest as opposed to a nodal point along a carefully constructed touring itinerary. Jeroen admitted that his stay in Trondheim was merely coincidental and that his stay was influenced due to rising fatigue rather than the opportunity to see a new place. His choice of stay, and the decision making processes behind them were clearly summarised by the following statement:

I've done no research into the places where I stop. To me they are insignificant really in comparison to what I'm going to see on the road. I only stopped here [Trondheim] because I'd been riding for over ten hours today…The only place I actually chose to stop was Bergen. I wasn't interested in anywhere else, not even Oslo.

Michael's stop at Stavanger was also motivated by respite, as opposed to the city itself, and conceded that he would spend little time exploring during his stay at the local hostel. Similarly, Andreas, a German motorcyclist interviewed in Sogndal suggested that he 'wasn't too concerned about seeing the town' and added that he 'loved countryside not cities'. In several scenarios, cities and towns acted as unplanned places of rest between lengthy road journeys through Norway's landscapes, and with the exception of several interviewed at Bergen, few revealed any motivation for choosing the actual places where they stopped. Indeed while Michael had suggested that he visited Norway before, he did not care about seeking alternatives towns to where he had gone before, but new roads and routes instead. As with Sebastian, a student from Germany who was travelling back home after studying in Germany, places became unimportant destinations, and remained nameless or forgotten places which merely permitted rest. Concurring with the views of Jacobsen (2004) it appeared that the act of moving throughout these landscapes superseded the desires of visiting or more accurately 'stopping' at particular places. Stopping was seen to be a literal postponement of the journey and was only found to occur when the traveller deemed it necessary (primarily for sustenance or sleep). Such cities and towns were occasionally

treated as ‘bonuses’, but the activity of being in transit from one place to the next was the key motivation of their journeys. Contrary to the belief of many, it appears that in the case of the mobile tourist, the journey or movement was indeed the most exciting part of the vacation, while the destinations and stops in between often appeared to be seen as obligated nodes which offered little more than mundane experiences. Felix, a German who was travelling with his son by car, chose Norway because it again offered a platform for mobility which could not be attained in his native Germany. Likewise with many motorcyclists, the car was imperative to their trip, particularly as it embodied the notion of freedom and being alone:

We thought Norway would be an interesting place for a road trip because we have peace and quiet and we can do all the things we want. It’s an easy place to get around as long as you have a car and it’s great that we feel like we are sometimes the only people on the road. (Felix, Germany)

Perhaps one of the key phrases made by Felix, was the term that implied that Norway was ‘easy place to get around’ - *if* the subject was in possession of a car. Such a statement therefore permits the assumption that Norway is potentially a difficult location to traverse if the traveller does not have access to personal transportation. While Norway possesses an efficient public transportation, there are indeed many inhibiting factors associated with its usage. Firstly, Norway’s bus routes are often limited to certain locations depending upon the season in question. For example, many services throughout the Sognefjord region in central Norway, terminate by the beginning of

Autumn until the following Spring. Likewise, the frequency of some services may also diminish depending upon the season also. It is therefore not uncommon to witness tourists who have unwittingly overlooked the need to check bus timetables in Norway, fully assuming bus journeys to remain consistent throughout the year. Although train routes operate consistently all year round, Norway's rail network is however largely restricted to major cities and towns. Popular tourist destinations such as Stryn and Sogndal are isolated from the Norges Statsbaner (NSB), the national state railway of Norway, making some journeys only accessible via bus or personal transportation. Add to this the relatively high cost of travelling via public transport in Norway, and the country as Felix suggested, may be more difficult to explore beyond the significant tourist locations of the country. Paradoxically however, such problematic issues according to Buzzard (1993) may indeed help attract tourists of a certain type, most notably those who are in search of locations *off the beaten track*. These tourists are prepared to travel further distances to help them avoid the masses that saturate more contemporary tourist locations. Many motorcyclists and car owners cited a preference for travel which fostered feelings of being alone and where they could feel like they were the 'only people on the road', as Felix explained. Concurring with the views of Lumsdon and Owen (2004: 157), it appears that the value and attractiveness of location is finely balanced along with the general accessibility of the location to other tourists. Lumsdon (2006), Kastenholz (2000), and Elby and Molnar (2001) have implied that this balance may be even more pronounced in rural settings, where the physical location is paramount to the enjoyment and experience inducing effects of the journey. It therefore appears that Sager's (2006: 467-9) notion of the 'freedom of mobility' is a substantial

feature in the experiences of many mobile tourists in Norway because cars and motorcycles permit and enhance the ‘dynamic culture of individualism’ (Jacobsen 2004: 7).

The escape of the ‘others’ was an important feature relating to the motivations of those wishing to travel through Norway using their own transportation. Here journeys enabled the subject to encounter ‘outstanding scenery’ and ‘tranquillity’ concurrently (Lumsdon 2006). The personal vehicle therefore becomes an intrinsic tool to these types of travellers and represents something that the bus or train cannot in the context of flexibility, and consequently restricts the number of travellers at particular destinations. *Less* it seems, was most definitely *more* in the case of many of these mobile tourists who also revealed a tendency to travel to places which were unfrequented by others. As Larsen (2001: 85) has previously asserted, the car’s ability to tailor personal itineraries has led to metaphorically ‘nomadic’ journeys whereby the passengers are able to personalise journeys which permit independent and unpredictable journeys away from established routes. These findings appear to match those of Lane and Waitt (2007: 110) who observed that many self-drive tourists were keen to visit locations associated with wilderness in a simultaneous search for ‘aesthetic, spiritual and adventurous experiences’. This it seems was largely enabled by the ability of the motor vehicle to take them off common or popular roads which had been established as bus routes. The car or motorcycle therefore allowed them to roam both independently and unpredictably as Larsen (2001: 85) has asserted as being key motivational features of many mobilised tourists.

Indeed, the personal motor vehicle was an integral part of the journeys of many hostel users, namely because it permitted them to be in full control of their holidays. Firstly, the use of their own vehicles meant that they could control *which* route(s) they undertook and the directions of their travels. Secondly, they could choose precisely *where* they wanted to go without having to make multiple stops which one would associate with buses and trains. Thirdly, the *speed* at which journeys were undertaken could be tailored to suit the scenery or landscapes they passed through, a feature inaccessible to rail or bus users. Fourthly and finally, personal vehicles allowed the subjects to stop, if indeed at all, *when* they wanted. Transportation therefore played a hugely influential role in the personal experiences of motorist largely because of the freedom and liberty this particular type of travel permitted, however not all travellers desired such experiences.

7.4 Transportation as a means of Avoidance and Attaining Safety

As Urry (2000: 61) has implied, the road has a unique ability to 'set people free' in a way which other modes of transportation cannot. Similarly, Jacobsen (2004:6) suggests that the notion of 'holiday mobility' is now effectively an 'essential feature of contemporary European life'. Clifford (1997) uses the term 'dwelling in travelling' to label those who opt to use mobile homes and caravans while touring on holiday, which is a highly common feature amongst many travellers in Norway, most notably from Germany and the Netherlands. Wilfred and his wife, an elderly couple from the Netherlands, suggested that they would no longer travel without their camper van, because they were

tired of previous coach-orientated journeys which included limitations on where they could stay and what they could do. Moreover, the camper van offered them a place to stay and nullified the stress associated with finding hotels to stay or even places to eat, thus empowering them with a far greater level of control over their vacation. While many visitors motivated to visit Norway acknowledged that their mobility levels were paramount to attaining a positive and fulfilled experience, others did not rely so heavily upon motorised vehicles to maximise the potential of their visit. Although Jacobsen's (2004: 7) contention that the desire for freedom amongst many tourists had led to the 'dynamic culture' of individualism, others did not appear to be quite so independent. Several were content to be transported in buses, trains and ferries between locations despite the contention that these modes of transport are frequently identified as 'inflexible' or 'rigid' in comparison to the car or motorcycle (Sachs 1992: 155).

In many scenarios, this was not always via choice but due to the specific circumstances of the individual traveller. Understandably, many travellers who had travelled from beyond Northern or Western Europe were more likely to rely upon public transportation as they could not afford the luxury of bringing their own vehicles. Others, as predicted by the contention that hostel users are typically budget travellers, did not have the financial means to hire cars or use personal methods of transportation. Nonetheless, many of those who were keen to experience landscapes and vistas were content to do so from the vantage point of bus and train windows. Though it was apparent that several interviewees would have preferred the use of personal or hired transportation but for financial implications, many others had made a conscious decision to utilise

Norway's public transportation facilities. For some, the decision was taken because it reduced the need 'to think', as one interviewee termed it. Others suggested that public transport negotiated the 'stresses' associated with attempting to use maps and vehicles in unfamiliar surroundings. Many of these viewpoints resemble the findings of Lumsdon (2006: 755) who suggested these particular modes of travel were often utilised because they were perceived as being 'secure' or 'convenient' or because they removed feelings of 'worry'. Zhi and his wife, who had travelled from China, opted to use public transport because it mitigated the problems he associated with trying to find his way around a country he held a low geographical knowledge of. Buses and trains allowed Zhi and his wife to relax and take in Norway's myriad views and spectacular sceneries in relative comfort. However, for Zhi and his wife, the option of travelling via bus was not as rewarding or as easy as he had initially anticipated:

I think Norway is very nice but sometimes we don't really know what to do here. If the weather is bad we end up having to stay inside. The mountains and hills are very beautiful to look at but we've had so much rain that we've only seen parts outside of the bus…It is sometimes very confusing to get around. The bus driver didn't tell us that we had passed our stop so we missed the fjord boat trip. We are now stuck here and have to try and catch the boat tomorrow instead.

(Zhi, China)

The trade-offs of public transport become apparent in Zhi's account. Firstly, the restrictions of bus travel become apparent as they could only make scheduled stops

and their experiences at each location were highly reliant on the weather upon arrival. Even the visual spectacle inside the bus was often impaired by the spray of rain on the windows and low lying clouds obscuring many panoramic views. Secondly, it seemed that even buses do not act as the safety blankets many propose them to be, and may create further issues which would not arise should one be in control of one's own journey. Two pertinent examples centre upon confusion which arose due to language barriers and a misunderstanding of stopping procedures during bus journeys in Norway. It is a fairly common oversight amongst many tourists in Norway that bus journeys stop at each location stated on the timetable itinerary. While the bus will pass through every location at the specific time listed on the schedule, the driver will only stop unless a request is made or if passengers are waiting to embark at the bus stop. On several occasions, tourists gave accounts of missed stops because they were unaware of the correct protocols and procedures. Zhi and his wife missed their stop to take a fjord boat trip which consequently left them isolated in Flåm. An Australian traveller named Peter additionally spoke of a number misunderstandings which had blighted his first week in Norway. His account revealed a severe dislike of a particular Norwegian bus operator as he failed to correctly change buses on more than one occasion. Consequently, Peter arrived in a completely different destination as to where he had intended. His overall experiences were summarised aptly by the following account:

It's been difficult to get around at times and people haven't always been too friendly. I've been lost and stuck in places where I had no intention of going…I actually dread

catching buses… I'm looking forward to just going to where I originally set out to go and staying there for a while now.

(Peter, Australia)

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In the cases of Zhi and Peter, and a handful of others like them, buses no longer acted as vehicles which mitigated worry but paradoxically increased feelings of tension before and during the journey. Zhi told of how he and his wife would take turns to rest to make sure that they would not miss their stop again, while Peter said that he did not feel confident using buses and felt unable to relax unless he had notified and reminded the bus driver (sometimes on two or three occasions) that he wished to stop at a particular location. During these scenarios in particular, Lumsdon's (2006) view that the bus results in the removal of 'worry', appears to be a conflicting one. Lumsdon (2006: 755) suggests that buses were often used by tourists because they enabled feelings of security and convenience which prompted by the mitigation of having to drive in unfamiliar surroundings and the other difficulties associated with travelling by road in a foreign country. Indeed, Edensor (2007: 203-10) has argued that such methods of transport are frequently selected because they enable 'comfortable mobility' and may also, suggest White and White (2007: 90-93), permit the continuation of everyday routines and activities via the 'insulation' within the confines of the bus or train. This collective behaviour may be interpreted as 'enclavic mobility' (Edensor 2007: 208) which ultimately permit the tourist to see places while in transit without the fear of problems arising. However, it appears that many of these sensations had been nullified by the negative experiences they had attained while using public transport in Norway.

7.5 Searching for Heritage and Culture

For those who were not primarily motivated to seek Norway because of its aesthetic beauty, an alternative motivated group of hostel users were identified. This group were identified as *heritage and culture seekers* and were typically distinguishable by their decidedly narrow preference to visit attractions such as museums, galleries and historical sites. While the majority of these guests were not necessarily concerned with acquiring a sense of meaning at the attractions they visited, a number of culture and heritage seekers were primarily motivated to Norway because they were keen to discover *how* or *where* Norway fitted into their lives.

This behaviour closely ties in with Jamal and Hollinshead's (1999: 64) 5th Dynamic of their '5 Dynamics model' which was constructed to identify the key motivations of contemporary travellers. The 5th Dynamic, which suggests that tourism act as an 'agent of knowing', asserts that many tourists will travel to attain a sense of understanding or 'reunderstanding' via the use of culture and heritage attractions. Palmer (1998: 313) has implied that tourism may act as a source of answers for those struggling to identify their roles in fluid societies and rapidly changing worlds. These desires, suggest Jamal and Hollinshead (1999: 63) have been intensified by notions of 'cultural diffusion' and 'hybridity' which have consequently led to a 'crisis of representation' (Marcus and Fischer 1986). McCabe and Stokoe (2004: 601-2) claim that such developments have led to the erosion of identities and have therefore mobilised a particular niche of tourists who are keen to re-assert their personal identities using culture and heritage attractions.

Heritage tourism in particular, say Halewood and Hannam (2001: 566-72) has emerged as a particularly useful tool because it offers 'landscapes of nostalgia' (Hewison 1987; Wright 1985) which enable the tourist to attain feelings of 'security' and 'stability' in highly destabilised societies.

While cultural and heritage attractions have been identified as vehicles for social development, they also appear to have the power to give meaning on a much more personal level, most notably in terms of *national and cultural identity*. This concept was particularly salient for two Norwegians whose journey within Norway entailed a trip to discover more about their own heritage as Norwegians via a number differing cultural venues. Such behaviour was consistent with the views of Hetherington (1998), Edensor (2002), Franklin (2003) and Palmer (1999) who suggested that domestic tourism played an active role in helping citizens develop a greater sense of identity. For these Norwegian tourists, it appeared that the vacation represented a fact finding trip to help them reassert themselves as Norwegians and to help them understand what their own country represented and meant to them. According to White and White (2004) and Galani-Moutafi (2000) tourism may act as trigger to develop 'nostalgic references' or a motivator to find 'ideal, integral communities'. Several Norwegian visitors, particularly those of middling age or above, suggested that they were revisiting locations they travelled to as children or young adults which appear to concur with White and White's (2004) notion of tourists seeking out feelings of nostalgia during their vacations. These subjects appeared to be creating or re-creating national identities and were seemingly influenced by acquiring a sense of Anderson's (1991), 'imagined community'.

Conduits of this sense of community included the Viking artefacts and exhibits at Bygdøy in Western Oslo and the Norwegian Maritime Museum which lists Roald Amundsen's polar expedition ship *The Gjøa* amongst its most famous exhibits. Other Oslo-based cultural and heritage attractions include the National Gallery; the Munch Museum; the Norwegian Folk Museum which includes a reproduction of typical 1900s town and traditional handicraft exhibitions; Vigeland Park; and the Ibsen Museum. These attractions were confirmed as being popular attractions to Norwegians who sought to discover what it meant to be Norwegian as one of the significant reasons behind their journey. As one interviewee from Hammerfest in Northern Norway explained, Oslo's heritage attractions acted as opportunities to 'learn a little bit more about Norway', particularly as he implied that Norwegians were still learning as to what this precisely meant (in reference to Norway's relatively new-found independence in 1814). The attractions they visited appeared to concur with the notion that heritage has become a chief instrument for patriotism (see Lowenthal 1998 and Pretes. 2003); particularly as heritage tourism has emerged as a means of communicating the notion of the past as being representative of nation as a whole. The language used by hostel users often suggested that Norway's heritage attractions were 'hegemonic' or 'official' communicators for nationalism (Pretes 2003). Indeed, this 'language of heritage tourism', suggests Palmer (1998), uses a range of materials to create a distinctive sense of nationhood for tourists and acts as reminders as to who they are and where they belong. In a similar context, a number of families and school groups were also encountered in Oslo and Bergen who were also engaging in tours of the cities' most

prominent culture and heritage attractions. As one interviewee, a Norwegian father of three young children asserted, heritage attractions acted as educational instruments to help convey the message of 'being Norwegian' to his children. Such locations performed as 'material testimonies of identity' (Macdonald 2006), which Franklin (2003) implies permits them to develop a clearer sense of what it means to be from a particular country. These journeys appear to confirm the views of Franklin, (2003), Edensor (2002) and Palmer (1999) who suggested that domestic tourism now plays a crucial role in terms of 'nation building' which subsequently allows its citizens to attain a stronger sense of identity. As Palmer (1999) asserts, such notions help create images of a unified people, who behave, communicate and think as a collective unit. It appeared that such images were important pull factors to those Norwegians who were interviewed.

While several Norwegian visitors were seeking to attain or enhance their Norwegian identity as their main motivation, two non-Norwegian visitors made revealed a similar motivation to visit Norway despite being raised in a largely contrasting culture. For these guests, Norway represented an opportunity to partake in a journey to discover self identities and develop bonds with a country which was simultaneously familiar and foreign. Here they attempted to discover whether the 'communities' in Norway were perhaps more representative of themselves than their homes in the United States. Both appeared to express a 'crisis of representation' (Marcus and Fischer 1986) to some degree, and they also appeared to be unsure as to what it meant to be a Norwegian, an American or indeed, both. The cultures of America and Norway, to varying extents had

been blurred during their lifetimes, and in both cases the journey to Norway represented an opportunity to clarify and distinguish those differences. Bansal and Eiselt (2004) and Timothy (1997) have implied that one of the key themes behind the growth of culture and heritage tourism has been the increasing significance of genealogy and the search for family history and for these two particular guests, this certainly appeared to be the case. Their decisions to travel to Norway were centred on personal journeys of self-discovery which transcended the behaviour of most tourists who were keen to see rather than experience the country's heritage and culture. These desires concur with Sternberg's (1997) views that suggested tourists may attempt to create both 'physical' and 'experiential' links to a particular nation and its people. Yeoman *et al.*, (2007: 1135) have suggested that many tourists are on the trail of authenticity and are seeking a 'connection' with a destination which hypothetically provides both roots and something that is perceived to be 'real'. An American hostel user named Karl was on a self proclaimed 'journey' to establish severed ties with his Norwegian family. Both parents were Norwegian and Karl himself was born and temporarily raised in Oslo before his parents divorced and had moved with his mother and brother in the US. The journey to Norway appeared to be a simultaneous obligation to meet ageing relatives and an opportunity to engage in an adventure in an unknown place which was paradoxically home. However, there was also a clear sense of importance regarding the acquisition of meaning during the journey itself:

> *Well, I was actually born here and raised in the US. My parents are both Norwegian but separated when I was young. My dad stayed here and I moved to the US with my Mom. I've never been here since I was 3 and I don't remember*

anything. I guess I wanted to get a sense of what 'home' is. It's strange to be from a country you don't know, I guess it's like a journey of discovery and to find out more about my family and where they're from. I suppose I just took the opportunity to take a break and travel but at the same time to learn something about who I am. (Karl, USA)

The reasons for Karl's journey appear to strongly relate to the work of Coles and Timothy (2004) who discussed the increasing importance of the diaspora in social movements. In this instance it was suggested that greater numbers of people were increasingly on the search for links to a particular identity. In the case of Karl, the journey to Norway was seen as an opportunity to re-establish the links to this community, where his family and albeit briefly, he had also originated from. Coles and Timothy (2004: 3) reveal the movements of the diasporas and the notion that they are 'drawn together' by imagined common bonds of ethnicity and national identity in an attempt to reaffirm close. Karl admitted that Norway represented an opportunity to confirm or develop a Norwegian identity which had eroded since his family's move to the United States although he was unsure of what the eventual outcome of his vacation would yield. However, despite the journey being far from complete, the rewards were evidently clear from his personal perspective and it appeared that subject, to some degree, had been successful in enhancing his personal understanding of what it meant to be Norwegian. Karl had managed to meet up and stay with distant relatives, see the Oslo suburb where he was briefly raised, and he had also visited the small town where his mother had hailed from. While such locations had initially triggered feelings of

foreignness as an outsider, they had now been transformed into places which represented a degree of familiarity and even ‘a second home’ as he termed it. Via experiential and physical learning the subject had acquired a sense of meaning which transcended the boundaries of merely seeing or gazing at Norway. Indeed Lanfrant’s (1995) assertion that tourists will visit places to discover identities which they cannot obtain in their daily lives back home appears to be true in this case of Karl and several other interviewees who had travelled internally.

Although Karl appeared to exhibit a range of highly motivated reasons and expected outcomes for his journey, another respondent, Melissa, who was also from the United States, appeared unsure about where she was going or even why she was going to most places on her Norwegian itinerary. Despite her apparent confusion, Melissa implied that her central motivation was to discover more about her Norwegian mother’s heritage. In this instance it could argued that she was drawn by the ‘perceived’ or ‘imagined’ common bonds associated with Norway but still failed to adequately justify her expectations of the vacation:

> *My mother is from Norway so I decided to finally come and visit a few weeks ago. I’m living in Barcelona for a year now and I’m going back to Chicago soon to study. I’ve been all over; Prague, London, Paris, Rome…but I guess I had to come here too. It was like now or never. I didn’t really know anything about the place so I chose the three largest cities in Norway, and that was the basis for me coming here [to Trondheim].* (Melissa, USA)

Melissa further commented that ‘I guess I had to come’ and revealed the degree of obligation in her motivations for her arrival in Norway. Her statement relates to the findings of Poria *et al.*, (2003: 250) who revealed that many people who are in search of their own backgrounds are at least partly motivated by a ‘feeling of obligation’. Additionally, she appears to place pressure on herself by creating a ‘now on never’ scenario, whereby if the opportunity was missed, she would perhaps never have an opportunity to undertake such a journey again. In this situation, the respondent appeared to reveal a lack of understanding about *who* she was and had consequently questioned her own ‘self-identity’ (Desforges 2000). In effect, Melissa felt drawn to Norway via the perception of an imagined community, whereby she would encounter people of the same culture, ethnicity and nationality as her mother. This, she believed, would then in turn tell her more about herself and potentially answer questions as to who she was and to help her understand where she had originally come from. Despite her mother’s Norwegian heritage however, Melissa still appeared to feel isolated and revealed the disappointment of her inability to establish any hidden insights in to her journey:

> *I just guess I wanted to learn a little bit about my mom, and maybe even me too. However, I don’t really feel close to this place. I don’t feel any form of belonging and I’m pretty disappointed about that. I thought it would maybe feel like belonging or something, but it just doesn’t. I feel nothing.* (Melissa, USA)

Thus the search for ties in Norway appeared to result in two very different outcomes for the two North American travellers in question. Karl spoke of his rewarding experiences

which consisted of acquiring visual aids, images and sensations of what 'home', in the Norwegian sense, was actually like. In addition, Karl also managed to re-establish contacts with cousins and elderly relatives who had not been encountered for over twenty years which permitted a further and deeper understanding of the destination. These encounters gave further meaning to the images, which Melissa could not attain. Although both confirmed that they were still, and always would be Americans first, Karl had managed to construct a dual identity of what it meant to be American *and* Norwegian. Melissa on the other hand, had failed in her quest to develop a Norwegian identity and as a consequence, unwittingly became more American. Her journey confirmed that her own cultural upbringing, despite having a Norwegian mother, was firmly American and thus Norway represented another country which represented nothing like a second home after all. As Palmer (2005) explains, the notion of 'identity' is a personal construct, which is developed and adapted to the surroundings on an individual level. Park (2010), similarly asserts that national identities can be both 'fluid' and 'interchangeable' and it appears that Karl responded to his surroundings to develop a dual-identity which could be utilised depending upon the environment he was in. Melissa evidently failed to adapt and as a consequence reaffirmed her singular identity as an American.

As Poria *et al.*, (2003: 249) suggest, an attraction or destination is space which allows those in search of heritage, an opportunity in which they can relate to. Although this desire differentiates from those simply in search of the 'gaze' it appears that this does not necessarily guarantee that they will attain any greater enjoyment or meaning from

the experience. The use of tourism as a means of discovering identity or establishing a ‘collective belonging’ (Palmer 2005) therefore can be either a highly rewarding or disappointing experience and is highly subjective to the participant. Although Melissa encountered a similar arrangement of vistas and landscapes to Karl, she failed to give them meaning due to the lack of personal contact with any blood-relations in Norway. As a result, Melissa failed to give any further meaning to the concept of her Norwegian heritage and realised that she had in fact, little in common with her ‘own‘ people after all. Although McIntosh and Prentice (1999: 609) suggest many insights can be obtained from visiting heritage sights which consequently allow many tourists to produce their own ``meaningful environments'' and their own experiences of authenticity, it must be also highlighted that these ‘authentic’ experiences may not always be positive ones. In the case of Melissa, Galani-Moutafi’s (2000: 220) ‘ideal, integral communities’ and Anderson’s (1991) ‘imagined communities’ were inaccessible as she failed to find a sense of acceptance or belonging with Norwegians. While Maoz (2007: 126) argues that tourism has the potential to help travellers form new identities based upon their ‘personal experiences of the world’, in the case of Melissa, it appears that it also has the potential to reconfirm older ones.

Although a small niche of guests appeared to be using Norway’s heritage attractions as conduits to affirming or reaffirming notions of identity, the majority of hostel users who cited culture and heritage attractions as their chief motivation appeared to be contented to engage in more superficial encounters. Consistent with Jamal and Hollinshead’s (1999) 1st Dynamic - *tourism as an agent of seeing* – most hostel users were simply

satisfied with opportunities to view cultural and heritage attractions without delving any deeper as to attach personal meaning or to help develop identities. These hostel users were only concerned with visiting popular attractions which were identified using tourist maps or popular tourist guides such as *Lonely Planet* or to a lesser extent, *Let's Go*. Indeed several admitted that they were unaware of most of Norway's most popular attractions and conceded that they often remained focused on seeing the 'main' or 'most popular' attractions, typically in either Oslo or Bergen. John, a Canadian travelling with his wife, suggested that while they were keen to observe Viking heritage attractions and explore the famous landmarks and history of the country, they would do so at a quick pace and openly admitted that they actually knew very little about Norway or its historical background. While they attempted to learn something, the knowledge they acquired had been 'the basics' and their opinions implied that observing and taking photos were equal, if not more important, than understanding what they were seeing.

The motives to visit cultural attractions were often discussed amongst interviewees as being things that they assumed 'should be done'. Such a notion appears to coincide with those offered by Muny (1994), Desforges (2000) and Lane and Waitt (2007) who suggested that travel may be an important informal qualification which simultaneously acts as a record of achievement. Stokowski (2002) and Trauer and Ryan (2005) have suggested that this is in part due to the tourists desire to formulate narratives about the self which give depth to otherwise banal journeys. This behaviour also ties in closely with Jamal and Hollinshead's (1999) 4th Dynamic, which suggests that tourism may act as an agent of cultural intervention and permits a range of performances which help the

subject define who they are using cultural experiences. Timothy (1997: 751) argues that these motivations are often apparent in many heritage-orientated vacations, despite the obvious lack of ties and connections that many tourists have with the places or countries they visit. In such a scenario, travel and the types of vacations chosen by the traveller, are identified as mechanisms which can lead to answers about self identity, which may not be specifically related to the country itself. Cantrill and Senecah (2001) imply that this occurs because new experiences can led to new identities and that these can help establish self-narratives which can in turn help define the self. This is seen to particularly pivotal as many are viewed to exist in 'uncertain' and 'fragmented' worlds (Richards and Wilson 2006: 1214) which have resulted in a blurring of cultural distinctions. Likewise, Desforges (2000) has suggested that these narratives or 'biographies', as he terms them, may also be used to construct identities which are seen to be more 'educated', 'fulfilled' or 'mature' as the subject attempts to elevate their status to that of a refined, savvy and experienced traveller. Similar endorsements include the creation of identities which are 'cosmopolitan' (Gonzalez 2008), 'more rounded' (Crompton 1979; Bansal and Eiselt 2004), or indeed, closer to the 'goal of perfection' of moral development (Jenks 1993; McIntosh and Prentice 1999).

To conclude, it appears that heritage and culture were important motivations for hostel users visiting Norway, although the expectations they anticipated from visiting these locations varied considerably. For some Norwegians, heritage and culture attractions acted as mediators in terms of helping them define who they were. However, others

were content to merely ‘gaze’ rather than ‘feel’, and often visited locations which they frequently knew little about to attain superficial experiences.

7.6 Familiarity Seekers

While many of those who were motivated to Norway were keen to experience ‘otherness’ and unique or challenging landscapes for the first time, for others it represented a place which was familiar and deeply ingrained into their travel careers. Such findings clearly contradicted Jamal and Hollinshead’s (1999: 64) third dynamic - *the agent of experience* - which implied that many tourists travel as part of a mechanism which enables a temporary escape from the mundane and banal routines of home. For Hanne, a Danish visitor travelling with two female companions, Norway offered important criteria such as ‘familiarity’ and ‘safety’ while simultaneously being an ‘incredible place’ with ‘amazing scenery’.

Per, a Norwegian interviewed at the Oslo Haraldsheim hostel exhibited similar motivations for opting to stay in Norway. While he implied that he was motivated to experience Norwegian culture and heritage, a supplementary motivation was based upon notions of familiarity and risk avoidance. Both Per and his friend had visited Oslo on many occasions, and while they believed it was a ‘little different’ to their home city of Hammerfest in Northern Norway, it was simultaneously a place they could navigate around with ease due to a lack of cultural barriers. Oslo therefore posed few risks in terms of potential disappointment or the likelihood of problematic scenarios occurring. As a consequence, Per was enabled with a sense of power which permitted him to ‘let go’ and ‘relax’ as Edensor (2007) has previously asserted. For Per, Southern Norway

represented a destination which offered ‘guarantees’ other places could not. Although he conceded that many of the activities he and his friend sought to do could be achieved in many alternative settings, the familiarity of travelling in Norway negotiated risks such as unpredictability and on ‘wasting time’ familiarising themselves at a new location:

We come every few years because we know the area and we know what to expect…it saves us a lot of time because you don’t have to waste time becoming familiar with a new place and finding your way around…even once you do that, you have no guarantee that you will like it. (Per, Norway)

Hanne and her friends also suggested that one of the key motivational factors for their decision to visit Norway derived from the knowledge that their expectation levels would be achieved. Her views appear to mirror MacKay and Fesenmaier’s (1997) concept which suggested that the more familiar an attraction is, the more attractive it is. Edensor (2007) argues that this is the case because new environments and unfamiliarity restrict the tourists’ ability to relax and ‘let go’ and consequently eliminate the fear of disappointment. This was perfectly illustrated by her admission that they had been repeat visitors for almost 30 years and had no desire to find alternatives:

We come to Norway every two to three years. It’s a place we’ve been visiting since the early 70s and we often travel with the same group of friends. For us it is a place to retrace old steps and reminisce…We come back so often because we know the area

very well and we know we will not be disappointed. We can see amazing scenery and at the same time it feels safe and peaceful. (Hanne, Denmark)

The theme of safety, familiarity and reliability were common amongst older guests who were keen to avoid disappointments which many said they had experienced by trying alternative places in the past. In addition, Norway also represented a location whereby old memories could be relived via nostalgic travels of a bygone era and older guests frequently suggested that they were motivated to visit Norway once again because of the previous experiences they had enjoyed. In several scenarios, Norway acted as place which was finely balanced between difference and familiarity, and although many conceded that they were perhaps less adventuress in their older age, they acknowledged that the differing landscapes which contrasted those from home were sufficient to make them feel like they were still experiencing something different. Per and his friend were content to fish in Southern Norway because the surroundings differed from their home in Hammerfest, while for Hanne and her friends, the landscapes surrounding Flåm were sufficiently different from those in Denmark, even if the activities they performed there were not so contrasting. Hanne explained her typical Norwegian holiday:

Typically we like to walk and cycle. It's a nice place to do both. We are very content to exercise in the day and then eat and relax in the evening…perhaps it is very similar to our lives back home, but of course the scenery is quite the opposite to that in Denmark. (Hanne, Denmark)

Likewise, Wilfred from the Netherlands, suggested that while he and his wife did 'nothing too special' in Norway they were content to experience everything they enjoyed doing back home in the Netherlands but with a 'different picture' in the background. Sigrid, a Norwegian woman travelling with her husband, implied that they had chosen the familiarity of Norway because they enjoyed the duality of being able go somewhere different from their home in Norway but still permitted them to converse in Norwegian:

Although Norway is where we are from this region is still very different from where we are from…it is still a place which holds a little adventure for us even if the people and the language are the same…it's nice to have both in some ways.
(Sigrid, Norway)

Sigrid and her husband were also in part motivated by varying satisfaction levels they had experienced in foreign holiday destinations. Although they had enjoyed many 'amazing' experiences in Europe, they also revealed encounters which had resulted in disappointment and dissatisfaction. As a result they had decided to mitigate feelings of risk by travelling to the Sognefjord region, which although represented a location they had never visited, still exposed them to their fellow Norwegians, and a familiar language and culture. While they suggested that Norway may not be as 'exciting' as alternative destinations abroad, they were willing to tone down their expectation levels in order to reduce the possibility of a dissatisfactory experience. In effect, it appeared that Sigrid

and her husband would rather accept a problem-free but relatively mundane holiday experience in favour of taking a risk on a destination which could significantly better or worse. Even though some, such as a Norwegian named Tora, craved adventure and excitement, Norway was still selected as the vacation destination. Tora was travelling with her boyfriend from Oslo and opted to visit Voss because of the adventure activities which could be find out at the location. While she and her boyfriend sought excitement and a degree of novelty, they also desired a sense of reliability at the chosen location also. Tora's following statement aptly summarises this point:

We decided to come away for a long weekend and do some outdoor sports. We'd been to Voss before and we knew what to expect…I think it's far enough from Oslo to feel like we're away [from home]. (Tora, Norway)

Norway therefore represented a place which posed little threat to the satisfaction levels they sought from a typical holiday. The behaviour of these guests appeared to concur with the findings of Nordstrom (2004) who implied that tourists often revisit destinations because it reduces the risk and uncertainty associated with holiday making. Likewise, the research of Gibson and Yiannakis (2002) was also salient to these findings as they argued that the desire for familiarity and standardisation increases with age, while the requirement for novelty will often decrease. While these people were clearly not backpackers, they still were hostel users.

As discussed in the literature review section of this thesis, the hostel has become synonymous with backpacker travellers and such an association appears to neglect the appearance of other guests who yield very different characteristics from the typical backpack typologies. These findings appear to concur with the research of Cave *et al.* (2007), of youth hostels in Scotland which catered primarily for young travellers at the expense of a clear second segment – the over 50s. As Cave *et al.* (2007) have asserted, contemporary backpacker literature has failed to observe the growing diversity of age groups using hostel accommodation, and the findings of this research appear to add weight to the argument that hostels attract a wider age spectrum than has previously been acknowledged.

7.7 Myth or reality? Dispelling Backpacker Heroism

We've done what we'd normally do in Edinburgh; drink, eat kebabs and have a laugh. Nothing different at all really…we're easily pleased I suppose. (Hamish, UK)

Although the older hostel users interviewed during the research phases of the project appeared to seek familiarity and perhaps banal experiences to some degree, many younger hostel users who closely matched the typical backpacker typologies also exhibited similar behavioural patterns. The quote at the beginning of this section was surprisingly typical of the attitudes observed amongst many backpackers in Norway. Many academics have argued that backpackers and travellers who are frequently associated with hostel usage are often governed by a distinct desire to attain 'whole'

(Sørensen 2003) or more 'realistic' (Muzaini 2006; Bell 2002; Noy 2004) travel experiences. Others have discussed their recognition or portrayal as being 'brave' or 'courageous' (Elsrud 2001), 'superior' (Sørensen 2006), 'genuine' (Jacobsen 2000), travellers who seek out adventure, challenges or risks (Maoz 2007) and avoid tourist traps by undertaking journeys off the beaten track (Bradt 1995). Indeed Fussell (1982) argued that many authors who exhibited similar travelling trends to backpackers in the 1970s and 80s often constructed the 'myth of the hero', a term which bears many similarities with the ways in which backpackers have been portrayed in contemporary literature.

Research obtained from hostels users in Norway suggests that these assumptions may indeed be inaccurate and even unwarranted after all. While research has additionally asserted that the backpacker will often reject 'familiarity' and 'modernity' (Dann 1999) those encountered in Norway frequently acted in an opposite manner. Interviewees who most accurately resembled the backpacker typologies cited by the likes of Murphy (2001), Sørensen (2006) and O'Reilly (2006), were found in significant quantities in only two locations – Oslo and Bergen. Interestingly, hostels which one would consider to be 'off the beaten track' such as in Åndalsnes, Bøverdalen or Sjoa, rarely hosted the conventional backpacker and were more likely to be frequented by guests revealing very different profiles. In Åndalsnes the majority of guests were assumed to be beyond the age of 50; Bøverdalen appeared to host mainly middle-aged couples and families; while the only guests identified at Sjoa were Norwegian schoolchildren embarking upon a rafting holiday. Both in Bergen and Oslo's centrally located hostels, backpackers

could be considered as the most common guest type. Although the vast majority of Norwegian hostels had some form of common room or lounge, few were populated by guests. In Oslo and Bergen however, common areas were frequently populated by backpackers who performed and behaved in a similar fashion to the researcher's experiences in Asia, Australasia and indeed other parts of Europe. Groups would congregate and often discuss the places they had visited or were planning to visit, shared tips and advice on the experiences and made arrangements to meet up for drinks or move on together to new destinations. Most it seemed were engaged in 2 to 3 month long journeys of Europe via rail, although a reasonable number of hostel guests were undertaking much shorter journeys. Backpackers who were engaged in worldwide trips were seldom identified, but it was one particular group of backpackers who were engaged in a 6 month round-the-world trip that caught the attention of the researcher at the Bergen YMCA hostel in July 2009.

The group consisted of three American males aged roughly in their mid to late twenties. While sat in the communal lounge they instigated a discussion about the perils and obstacles faced during their travels with a number of other backpackers. The three subjects had originally travelled around Europe for the first 2 months of their journey before embarking onto India and then Southeast Asia. However, after spending one month in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, the group had opted to return to Europe for the remainder of their trip before returning to the United States. Richard, the most vocal of the group, explained that they had set off from California in the Spring of 2009 with an objective of escaping the regularity and routines of home. While their journey had

certainly fulfilled this requirement, approximately half way through their vacation, these desires were often exceeded and their choices stranded them in locations which they believed were *too different* from home. After spending several weeks in Southeast Asia, Richard and his friends began to crave for the very things that they had rejected three months earlier such as technology, regular contact with friends, and most important of all, reliability. Although Kontogeorgopolous (2003) and Muzaini (2006) assert that backpackers will often go to great length to avoid being seen as acting 'touristy' and attempt to encounter discomfort, this group evidently abandoned such views. The following statement by Richard perfectly sums up their frustrations and the pivotal moments which influenced them to turn back on their journey in Asia and return back to the comfort zone of Western Europe:

We came back to Europe because we tired of all the hassle in Asia. We missed the regularity of the internet and just knowing what was going on…nothing seems reliable over there and after a while you just feel isolated and want something which feels familiar…I missed being in regular contact with my friends and family so I ended up buying a laptop in Vietnam. It was far more expensive than the price of a similar model in the US but I just needed to feel like I had the opportunity to contact people when I wanted. (Richard, USA)

For Richard and his friends, Asia posed too many differences to the regularity of their lives back in the United States. At the very moment they achieved their objectives of escaping the trappings of home they simultaneously rejected them and alternatively

began to seek the comforts of home. Such behaviour appears to reflect the research of Muzaini (2006) who argued that exposure to foreign cultures for a lengthy period of time may result in 'counterlocalization', whereby tourists distance themselves from, or even abandon, foreign culture and seek out their own once more. Thus, Richard and his friends appeared to reflect the behavioural patterns observed by Muzaini (2006) as their initial desires to encounter authentic cultures were rapidly abandoned due to the onset of discomfort and difficulties associated with travel and reliability. Their 'adaptability skills' (Desforges 2000) were severely tested and they seemingly failed to embrace such experiences. The desperation to re-establish contacts and to reduce the feeling of isolation was made apparent by Richard's decision to purchase a laptop which he conceded was overpriced compared to what they could have obtained back home. The short term solution to their issues of isolation and lack of contact were temporarily fixed by the purchase of technology which could improve the speed and efficiency of communication with home. However, the feelings of irregularity, a lack of reliability and cultural alienation required far more dramatic steps to be taken if they were to be adequately solved. Perhaps, it could be argued, that the ability to 'keep in touch' has now become an expected feature of long distance travel as the distinct differences associated between being 'home' and 'away' continue to blur (Sørensen 2003: 861). White and White (2007: 88-9) and Gergen (2002: 227) have asserted that communication developments have now enabled travellers to overcome geographical boundaries and essentially permit them to be 'socially present while physically absent'. However, such opportunities not only act as an easier means of staying in touch, but also as constant reminders of who and what they are missing. White and White (2007:

94) term such feelings as the ‘psychological’ and ‘emotional dimensions of distance’, whereby the better communication opportunities actually intensify the sensations associated with distance and absence from home. For Richard and his friends, the solution was to return to the ‘reliable’ setting of Western Europe:

We spent 3 months travelling through India, China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand but after a while we just annoyed by all the hassle…we decided to cut the journey short and heard over to Europe for an extended stay…you know what you’re getting here even though it’s more costly in the long run of course… In Asia the food not always great and you don’t even know what you’re ordering occasionally too. Sometimes it’s good, sometimes it’s bad but you never seem to get that consistency that you get in the West…People and buses also aren’t as reliable too, you feel like you can never organize anything without a hitch or problem or something just going wrong. (Richard, USA)

While the issue of spending money is raised as a negative side effect of their decision, it appears that the benefits, namely a reduction in unreliable outcomes and an increase in consistency, were far more valuable in the long term. Norway was a location which allowed these social and cultural norms to be once again restored, even though originally it was seen as place which was too similar to home at the outset of their journey. This group however, were not the only hostel users who exhibited traits which are deemed to be uncommon when measured against contemporary backpacker typologies. A number of interviewees who were predominantly from either the United

Kingdom or the United States, also revealed a number of views which were not consistent with the positive behavioural associations with the backpacker. Martina, who was travelling as part of a group of young Czech backpackers suggested that her time in Norway had not met the expectations she had originally anticipated. The following statement reveals her frustrations:

It's been ok I suppose [the vacation] but we haven't really been able to do what we like to do back home. Normally we'd like to go to bars and cafes during the evening but here it is just too expensive. We're quite bored in the evenings so we just end up going to bed early. (Martina, Czech Republic)

In contrast to the assertions that backpackers seek out activities which contradict the norms of home, Martina and her friends actively sought the continuation of the routines of home, such as frequenting cafés in the afternoon and bars in the evening. Her behaviour was reflective of McCabe (2002) assertion that tourists bring 'home with them' and attempt to re-establish the routines of everyday home life while they travel. Due to the financial implications of travelling in Norway, Martina could not achieve these outcomes and thus became deeply disappointed with her choice of destination. However, she accepted this disappointment rather than to attempt to find new activities to do which were cheaper or even free. Her behaviour revealed a distinct feeling of resignation, and Martina and her friends appeared to avoid the challenges associated with Norway rather then face them. Patrick, a German travelling alone, exhibited a

similar behavioural trend and also conceded defeat in his attempt to enjoy his stay in Bergen:

I've been really disappointed with Norway although this place is quite nice…I thought it would be an interesting place to meet people and just relax a little but I'm looking forward to going back now. It's really expensive here, a beer is double the price back home so why would I go out here? (Patrick, Germany)

Though Patrick could afford to go out by his own admission, he opted to stay in on evenings because he believed it was a 'waste of money'. His failure to find activities which were affordable as the ones he enjoyed at home therefore triggered Patrick to simply kill time rather than use it constructively. Amanda, a New Yorker who was travelling with friends as part of a 3 month journey around Europe, also revealed similar disappointments. Amanda embarked upon her journey attempting to be 'original' as she termed it, and additionally desired to find locations which were different and permitted her to temporarily leave behind the routines and hardships associated with her tertiary studies. While she originally sought feelings which contrasted her hectic life back home, the lack of 'life' she encountered in Norway proved to be too great a contrast. Her accumulation of experiences in smaller, quieter locations around Europe eventually led her to desire the opposite – the sensations she initially left behind in the United States. The following statement reveals her disappointment and her increasing desire to experience livelier places more similar to home:

It's not really lived up to my expectations here…there's just not so much to do apart from eat and drink. We've done some of the sightseeing stuff but actually we want to go out in the evenings and have a good time…We miss all that. I'm looking forward to heading to Stockholm now, I've heard that's a much more happening place. (Amanda, United States)

Like Martina or Richard, Amanda appeared to seek out the regular activities she would normally engage in at home and actively sought to attain similar experiences once more. Stephen, a hostel user from the UK travelling with his friends, also implied that they had been 'hanging out and going drinking' during their stays, which was in response to their assertion that there was little to do in Bergen. Again it could be argued that such behaviour is clearly the opposite of contemporary backpacker endorsements which suggests they are looking to escape the banal rather than continue to practice mundane routines. Bansal and Eiselt (2004), Dann (1999) and Buzzard (1993) have all previously asserted that tourists are often triggered to embark on vacations because of their perceived ability to facilitate new experiences and simultaneously mitigate the everyday routines and obligations they face at home. Similarly, Sørensen's (2003) suggestion that backpackers are constantly in search of acquiring 'road status' and attempt to distance themselves from modes of travel more typically associated with mass tourists (Sørensen 2003; Kontogeorgopolous 2003; Muzaini 2006) were not applicable in the case of many backpackers encountered in Norway.

Other guests also exhibited similar behavioural characteristics, and a common complaint was that Norway' high cost of living restricted the continuation of their typical lives. Many appeared to reveal a desire to continue the mundane routines of home, with the only exception being that they were maintained in a different environment or setting to where they had travelled from. The findings related to hostel users in Norway appear to agree with Haug, Dann and Mehmetoglu's (2007) suggestion that tourists will surround themselves with 'familiar paraphernalia' and 'relocate' their daily lives in new settings. Indeed, the assertion that backpackers attempt to travel to avoid routines is severely challenged by the findings derived from backpackers encountered in Norway. Edensor (2007) argues that while backpackers attempt to avoid the routines associated with tourists, they will often engage in a range of alternative routines. Similarly, Trauer and Ryan (2005) reveal how tourists engage in 'ritualistic behaviours' and in the case of many backpackers it appears that they are no different. Common observations revealed them to follow similar behaviour in most locations where they were encountered; they would congregate in common areas; frequently discuss stories and pass on travel tips; and they would often make plans to meet up for social gatherings in evenings.

The frequent observations of backpackers congregating together appears to concur with Wilson and Richards' (2004b) assertion that they will join together in times of uncertainty and disembeddedness. While such a notion may typically be attributed to the experiences of risk or even danger, they also appeared to group together when they were uncertain of how to spend their time or when their usual interests could not be pursued due to self-imposed financial restrictions. On more than one occasion

backpackers were seen ‘pooling’ resources such as alcohol or internet-ready laptops so that they all could participate in nights out or email home without paying for pay-as-you-go internet facilities. Other examples included the preparation of communal meals and the passing on of week-passes for trams and trains which not yet expired.

The findings from Norwegian hostels reveal that the backpackers encountered in such establishments were therefore not consistent with the majority of contemporary typologies. While a significant body of literature has been assumed to distinguish the difference between the tourist and the backpacker, the findings from Norway reveal few differences. Indeed, it could be argued that backpackers actually were tourists as far as most definitions would suggest. Many interviewees and subjects observed appeared to be content to engage in banal environments to permit the routines of home to continue (Edensor 2007) and as Jacobsen (2000) implies, comfortable and accommodation and reliable transportation acted as ‘protection against the experiences of foreignness’. The decision by Richard and his counterparts to return to Europe appear to back up this point considerably. Indeed, Rojek (1995) has argued that tourists seek out ‘purified tourist spaces’ in order to remove ‘extraneous, chaotic elements’ and many backpackers appeared to do the same. The evidence from Norway reveals remarkably similar behaviour.

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8. Opportunistic Hostel Users

8.1 Anywhere Will Do

Opportunistic hostel users were those guests who had decided to visit Norway for reasons other than to experience the country specifically. While those specifically motivated to visit Norway revealed only a narrow range of reasons for their stays, opportunistic hostel users gave many in comparison. Some had visited Norway because of friends (either to visit them or to travel with them), several had visited because they had found cheap deals with budget airlines, and the majority had arrived in Norway simply because they wanted to temporarily 'get away' from wherever they had been residing or working. In all three instances, the location of their holidays or reunions became a secondary objective.

Many conceded that while they had a passing interest in the country, they could have easily chosen somewhere else should the circumstances have permitted it. Others revealed no knowledge of the destination and admitted that the destination location was practically irrelevant during the decision making phase of their journey. Such behaviour appeared to be consistent with Bansal and Eiselt's (2004: 388) contention that in the scenarios where push factors override pull factors, the subject will be driven by a desire to go practically anywhere and will not be destination-specific when making vacation plans. Chan-Sook, a Korean woman travelling alone, implied that her decision to visit Oslo was largely influenced by its geographical proximity to Stockholm. Though she was keen to visit the Swedish capital, she admitted that she had decided to pay a brief

visit to Oslo because she felt she may never be as close again. .Eric, who was travelling with a group of friends, was an American who was based in London due to employment commitments. Eric saw his geographical location as an opportunity to see lots of different places during his weekends and holidays, and thus an opportunity which would be unfeasible when he eventually returned home. As a result, Eric and his companions often selected cities at random and conceded that in many cases they knew little about the destination they had chosen. Although they had originally devised a ranked list of the places they wanted to visit, such as Paris, Rome and Barcelona, Eric had now exhausted this list and instead tried anywhere which was simultaneously cheap in terms of air travel and relatively close to London. The following passage reveals Eric's planning techniques and the lack of awareness he held regarding the destination he had selected:

I live in London so we're pretty lucky that we can just book cheap flights for many of our spare weekends…we've tried Paris, Rome, Barcelona and a few of the Eastern European cities so now we've decided to try Oslo…sure, it wasn't a place on the top of our list but we're trying to maximise the number of places we visit while we're in London…in the states this wouldn't be possible without travelling long distances and spending a lot of money …most of the time it's just a case of looking on the web [for cheap flights], choosing the dates and then selecting the place which appeals the most…sometimes it's gut instinct, other times like when went to Barcelona or Berlin we kind of had that historical knowledge to back up our decision. We knew very little about Oslo. (Eric, United States)

Helen, a Canadian woman travelling with her husband, also revealed that a temporary shift in geographical location enabled her to visit locations which would normally have been difficult to achieve from her actual home. Helen's visit to the UK to see family had opened up a number of opportunities to travel elsewhere in Europe, particularly as she had visited the UK several times before. She suggested that the cost of flying to European destinations on a yearly basis would have been too expensive and therefore opted to make the most of her time outside of the UK during her 3 week long vacation. As a consequence, Helen and her partner travelled to Scandinavia to visit a places which they would never have considered visiting directly from Canada. Helen reveals the opportunism involved with her vacation.

We decided to visit Norway as we were scheduled to be in the UK for 3 weeks. We thought it'd be nice to go somewhere else also, particularly as it's difficult to come all this way from Canada. It's a place I'd always wanted to visit but I thought it made sense to visit from the UK. We normally don't travel outside of North America for a holiday if it is under two weeks…but we wouldn't need two weeks here, so it made sense to combine this with a holiday at home. (Helen, Canada)

A further example of such behaviour was exhibited by an Australian freelance designer named Greg. Greg had recently finished his most recent contract in the UK and had chosen to explore parts of Northern Europe before his next offer of employment came along. As with the aforementioned Eric and Helen, Greg had chosen to visit Norway

because it was nearby, and he suggested that such a destination would not have interested him if he were to travel from his original home in Melbourne. After visiting Copenhagen, Greg had assessed his options and decided that this was perhaps his best opportunity to visit Norway as he was set to return to Australia the following month.

I'm just travelling around Europe until I pick up my next contract. I thought being in between jobs would be an excellent opportunity to see some places and visit some cities I didn't know too much about. (Greg, Australia)

For those who wished to visit friends, Norway represented an opportunity to simultaneously meet up with an acquaintance and to embark upon a holiday in a foreign country. Leo from the Netherlands, admitted that he was a little selfish when he chose to visit a friend in Oslo and was partly motivated to come to Norway to have a holiday. Chris, an American backpacker revealed that he had little interest in visiting Norway and instead was only there because the stay allowed them some free accommodation and the opportunity to see some familiar faces. Chris suggested that while visiting his friends was the primary motivation, it was also an opportunity to relax and not worry about the hassles of being lost in an unfamiliar location. As Chris' journey had progressed, he suggested that his desires to 'take a break from the hassles' had grown stronger by each passing week. Others chose to travel with friends rather than face the prospect of travelling alone elsewhere. While members of these parties would often include one member who was motivated to visit Norway, the others would follow even if the place resembled nothing of interest to them.

A reoccurring theme which was frequently encountered in Oslo and Bergen, revolved around travellers who had chosen to visit because of value for money flights. The majority of these visitors appeared to come from Spain and Italy, with many utilising cheap airfares offered by Ryanair. Most conceded that Norway would not have been their primary destination if they had a number of choices, but cheap prices coupled with a sense of novelty enticed many of these opportunistic travellers to visit the country. Though the opportunities to meet up or travel with friends or to take advantage of cheap airfares were commonly cited reasons, the desire to simply 'escape' or 'get away' was the most popular answer to why many had arrived in Norway. For these people, it was simply a case of being the *right time* rather than the *right place*. Several of those who were interviewed, expressed a desire to briefly escape the surroundings of home or work. To these guests, the destination of their escape was irrelevant so long as it was deemed to be far enough away and for a reasonable length of time. Weekend breaks to Norway, and Oslo in particular, appeared to satisfy both of these criteria for the majority. While opportunistic hostel users who had travelled to visit friends or to take advantage of cheap flights travelled mainly with companions, those in search of escapism were far more likely to travel solo. These guests were frequently recorded as making last minute decisions about travel, and most had booked flights loosely based on value but also on the best timing to travel also. Many interviewees revealed that Norway was not a place they particularly cared about visiting but suggested that it posed as different setting, which in turn allowed them to escape problems and boredom which they had recently experienced at home. David, a Spanish man who lived in the UK, suggested that he

would have gone practically anywhere to experience a brief respite from home. The matter of getting away was so important that he booked flight tickets to several different locations on different weekends and waited for the first weekend he could actually travel. Such a rationale clearly emphasises the importance of going away *anywhere*. For David, Oslo became the right opportunity at the right time, yet he openly conceded that it was a city he knew little about and had previously shown little interest in visiting before. His desire to escape is clearly emphasized in the following passage of conversation:

For me it was one of the cheapest places to go for a short break. I just went on the Ryanair website and looked for the loWest prices, I didn't really care where. I actually booked the flights before I knew I could get the time off from work. The flights were that cheap that I could afford to lose the tickets if I couldn't go. Oslo has never been that high on my list of priorities, but I thought why not? I just needed a break, anywhere would have probably done… I just wanted to get away in the end. Germany, Italy, France, wherever was cheapest and wherever I had never been before. (David, Spain)

Others chose to travel to escape personal problems and again utilised the opportunity which opened up to them. Patrick from Germany had recently split with a girlfriend and additionally found it difficult to get time off at weekends due to his job as a police officer. Again. Norway presented itself as an opportunity to get away, even if it was not the first choice destination of the traveller.

I just wanted a cheap and quick break away from home…anywhere really. I broke up with my girlfriend and because I'm a policeman the shifts are sometimes quite awkward. I just waited for the first weekend I was free and booked to go somewhere new…Bergen interested me more than the Mediterranean, I thought it would be a better place to go alone. (Patrick, Germany)

These interviewees appeared to be consistent with the views of Decrop and Snelders (2005: 127-8) who implied that opportunistic vacationers were more 'preoccupied' with external factors such as time and money as opposed to the chosen destination. In such scenarios it is argued that these tourists will wait for opportunities to arise rather than make detailed plans, and as consequence, may frequently find themselves located in unpredictable locations of which they know little about. The three main subcategories of the opportunistic traveller will now be discussed in greater length (see Fig. 5).

Fig. 5 Externally Motivated Hostel Users (Opportunistic)

8.2 Followers

Lue, Crompton and Stewart (1996) argue that many travellers exhibit a range of 'multidimensional interests'. However, in the case of the majority of Norwegian hostel users, these interests appeared to be relatively restricted and in several instances, similar, or the same, activities were undertaken in a variety of different locations. Many suggested that at each location, regardless of the country they were visiting, that they would visit the most popular or recommended attractions, followed by more 'typical' activities such as bar-hopping and nights out.

More significantly however, it is suggested by Lue *et al.* (1996) that there are a number of decision-makers involved in the planning stage of the trip who reflect different motivations and interests. Here, a clear contradiction was found based upon the views and statements offered by the vast majority of hostel users in Norway. Several groups people travelling together were identified, of which most where composed in groups of two or three. In most of these parties, it appeared that one particular character was dominant in the decision making processes and that the others, in many cases, were content to follow. The reasons for such behaviour were largely two-fold. Firstly, these 'followers' lacked the necessary knowledge about the destinations to make decisions and while they frequently offered their opinions and views, it appeared that one particular member typically made decisions and took control. Secondly, followers also appeared to be content to follow the lead of others because it mitigated the stresses

involved with the decision making process and also eliminated them from being blamed if things did not go to plan. Followers openly conceded that they had little motivation to visit the place their friend or friends were visiting, but still opted to go because of the opportunities to relax and enjoy themselves. In several instances, these guest types even held negative perceptions of the destinations they were visiting but still opted to visit because of companionship. Hamish, a student from the UK who was on vacation in Bergen, perfectly summarises the attitude of the follower in the following statement:

No, I really had no interest in visiting Norway…My friends were the ones who decided to come and I just decided to come along with them. It sounded a bit boring to me because I prefer somewhere that has an abundance of life and I suppose Norway didn't really meet that in my own opinion…given the choice of going nowhere or going to a place which didn't really interest me, then I guess the latter was still always going to be the better option. (Hamish, UK)

Hamish not only conceded that Norway was not a place he had been previously interested in visiting, but also that he held negative perceptions of the destination by assuming it to be 'boring'. Despite holding such an opinion, Hamish however still chose to follow friends rather than choose to visit somewhere else alone. Indeed, what also appeared significant in the case of this particular visitor was that although Hamish actually wanted to visit somewhere 'warmer and more happening', he opted to visit Norway because he could not entice any of his friends to visit destinations in the Mediterranean – his preferred vacation. In this scenario, it appears that the destination was ancillary to *who* was accompanying the subject. As far as Hamish was concerned,

it was better to go to a place which he held negative preconceptions of because of the people he could go with, rather than visit his ideal location alone.

For Sarah, an American student travelling in Bergen, Norway emerged as an opportunity to catch up and travel with a friend, rather than pose as a destination to explore in itself. Like Hamish, Sarah chose to visit Norway because of a desire to be with her friends rather than to travel somewhere else alone. She admitted that Norway was not a destination she would have necessarily chosen if she had a choice, but because of her friend's decision, she was left with no alternative. The following statement perfectly summarises her desire to not travel alone and simultaneously the level of apathy she shows towards travelling in Norway:

I'm just following my friend really…I like to try new places but I wanted to travel with somebody and not alone. My friend chose Norway so I thought 'sure why not?'…I don't really know too much about the place…just that it'd be quaint and quiet I guess, it's not the most famous country back in the US. (Sarah, USA)

A final example was that of Alfonso, a Spanish traveller who was travelling with his girlfriend in Southern Norway. He revealed a similar attitude to both Hamish and Sarah as to explain why he ended up in Norway, but revealed that to a degree, Norway represented two different types of vacation when viewed individually:

Norway wasn't my choice. It was my girlfriends. She wanted to see mountains and lakes and stuff whereas I didn't care so much as long as we left Spain. It's nice here and I think the people are quite friendly but this is a place I probably wouldn't have visited myself. I think it's ok for a few days but I need more life and bigger cities…I'm open minded about where I go, I'm very easy going when it comes to choosing places. I'm happy to follow… (Alfonso, Spain)

As with many others like him, Alfonso reveals that Norway holds little inspiration with regards to his own travel motivations but was instead governed by a desire to travel with friends, or in this case, a partner. Though Alfonso clearly does not share the same motivations for travelling to Norway, both he and his partner develop the opportunity to use the country as a platform for differing needs. While Alfonso's girlfriend reveals a desire to see landscapes, he himself uses the vacation as a means of temporarily escaping the trappings and mundane daily processes he associates with life in Spain. Although, Lue *et al.* (1999) reveal that many itineraries are developed to accommodate 'multidimensional interests', it appears that while the likes of Alfonso and his partner could attain their differing needs, others like Hamish, could not.

Other opportunistic travellers opted to 'follow' friends who were temporarily residing in Norway and chose to use the opportunity to simultaneously renew old acquaintances and enjoy a brief holiday. Both Leo from the Netherlands and Amanda from the United States, utilised such a scenario and opted to visit their friends in Oslo. While both admitted that they would not have normally considered Norway as a destination they

would have chosen, they conceded that the opportunity of knowing someone at the location provided a large incentive to travel there. Their levels of adventure however, were quite different as Leo decided to fully utilise his time in Norway and undertake a solo, multi-destination itinerary. while Amanda only chose to visit Bergen, along with her friend who was based in Norway. The movements of Amanda appeared to be typical of the opportunistic follower, while Leo was a rarer exception. Followers, due to their low motivational levels, rarely chose to travel beyond the main location their friends had chosen to visit, and as a consequence, often failed to meet their own personal desires and needs from the particular destination. These desires were often seen to be secondary or even irrelevant if it meant that alternative, potentially more fulfilling journeys had to be undertaken alone. Once again, the themes of ‘safety’ and a lack of adventure were most frequently exhibited by those one would most typically identify as backpackers.

8.3 Escapers, Novelty Seekers and Bargain Hunters

For many opportunistic hostel users, Norway represented a location which offered an affordable yet brief vacation. The opportunity to see a new country coupled with the opportunity to travel inexpensively led to many travelling to Norway for the first time. Many of these travellers came from either Spain or Italy, but several others did come from alternative destinations which included a number of Eastern European countries. Most bargain hunters appeared to come from countries and cities which had recently developed airport links with budget airlines such as Jet2, Norwegian and Ryanair. Links instigated by Ryanair between Oslo Torp and European airports such as Pisa/Florence,

Rome Cimpiano and Barcelona/Girona appeared to have been a major supplier of the bargain hunter in the Norwegian Hostel context. These types of tourists were motivated primarily by cheap air tickets, and to a lesser extent, by the fragile existence of such routes which were often susceptible to closure (for example both Jet2 and Ryanair cancelled their routes to Newcastle from Bergen and Oslo Torp respectively, in recent years). It appeared that Oslo and Bergen represented unstable windows of opportunity and consequently prompted several guests to visit while airfares remained affordable, or indeed available. Damiano, a student from Italy, cited that his primary reason for visiting Oslo was the option to visit at a much lower cost than he had observed before:

I love to travel and I thought about Norway after it became a new destination for Ryanair…before it was always too expensive but now we have an opportunity to come over for a few days…ok it's too expensive to travel here for very long but at least we can see what it looks like here…it's always good to see something new. (Damiano, Oslo)

Olivia, who was also from Italy and travelling with her boyfriend revealed a similar motivation for travelling to Oslo. Although Norway was not her first choice, it represented the cheapest option at the time she wanted to travel:

I came with my boyfriend because we wanted a cheap break away. Oslo seemed like a very good price at the time so we decided to come here…Norway wasn't our first choice but it was the cost of the flights which helped us make our decision…it seemed quite different from our usual holidays so we though it was a good choice. We don't know

much about Norway, just that is a safe and peaceful country and somewhere which is much colder than Italy. (Olivia, Italy)

Two groups of British hostel users also implied that they had arrived in Norway because of the 'value' the vacation represented. In both instances, they suggested that they would have preferred to have gone to an alternative place but after observing a number of budget carriers, they opted for Oslo and Bergen respectively as their choices of destination. For Stephen and his former university friends, Norway was a destination of circumstance as opposed to a destination-specific motivation:

Meeting up was the priority over everything else. We needed to find a time we could all meet up and then we just searched for the cheapest deals for this weekend. It could have easily anywhere else for that matter….We got some cheap flights from Stansted and a chance to do something away from home. It wasn't anything more than that really. It's the first time we've met up since our university days so it was really just a location to meet up rather than picking a specific place. (Stephen, UK)

James and his friends from the UK, were also on the search for something a 'little different' but simultaneously were unsure of what that difference should be. As a result, they were undecided on their actual destination until the final moments, before cheap travel opportunities presented them with the option of Norway:

*Me and my friends decided to have a long-weekend away. We wanted to do something a little different to the bars and clubs and stuff back home, so we decided to get some cheap flights and go away…just to get away and break the routines of home. We've all just finished our A-levels and been working in part-time jobs. I think we just wanted to reward ourselves but we couldn't really afford two weeks in Ibiza or Magaluf so that's why we ended up here…we'd have gone anywhere to be honest. (*James, UK)

Both accounts revealed that the destination was a secondary motivational factor in the planning of the vacation. For Stephen and his friends, the timing of the visit was far more crucial than the specific location of their post-university rendez-vous, while James and his co-travellers suggested that escapism from the stresses of exams was a superior motive to that of visiting particular locations. As James concedes, 'we'd have gone anywhere' perfectly summarises the lack of importance the actual destination was in this scenario. Many others also exhibited similar statements which emphasised that the location of their journeys was in many cases irrelevant. Carl, an Australian freelancer, suggested that travel acted as a counterbalance to busy periods working. Europe acted as a place to 'recharge batteries' and 'reflect', which he felt was difficult to do when he was immersed in the familiarity of home and being surrounded by friends and family. Like James beforehand, Carl similarly conceded that coming to Norway was a 'spur of the moment choice' and additionally suggested that 'it [his break] could have been anywhere in Europe'.

A European-based American diaspora also appeared to be a significant contributor to the large group of opportunistic hostel users who had come primarily because of low airfares to Norway. Eric and Melissa, who have mentioned in earlier sections of the findings section, both revealed tendencies to use their temporary European homes as opportunities to see other cities and countries. Similarly, Jessica and a fellow student, were two American students studying in Germany for a summer who had decided to use their semester break as the ideal opportunity to explore other parts of Europe. Due to financial restrictions however, few opportunities existed until they were recommended to use Ryanair's website. Thus. Norway was selected because it represented the cheapest option available for the dates they were looking to fly on. Jessica explains her decision:

I guess the flights were the decisive factor. I though about anywhere in Scandinavia or Eastern Europe but Norway was the cheapest so that made up my mind in the end. We couldn't really afford many of the other options available, even those on the [Ryanair] website.(Jessica, USA)

Although Jessica suggested that she was motivated primarily by the cost of the vacation, she was also motivated, to a lesser extent, by desires to attain novelty. She had already explored Germany, France, Italy and the Czech Republic, and therefore attempted to find a new location which she new little about. After searching for cheap deals to coincide with the time she had off, Bergen appeared to offer the best opportunity in that it could be easily reached, was new, and was affordable to travel

there using a budget airline carrier. It must be additionally noted however, that while many were in search of cheap options, an additional motivational factor in several scenarios, such as that of Jessica and her friend, was the lack of knowledge they held about Norway.

For many guests, Norway represented an opportunity to escape from routines.. While these were considered to be common 'push' factors in the case of many escapers, they were also governed by experiential desires such as 'novelty' and 'adventure'. These 'pull' factors were evident in the case of many interviewees and were identified as being rather ambiguous due to the notion that these guests would have selected a variety of destinations as long as they were perceived to be 'new' or 'different'. A Russian backpacker named Anna, revealed little specificity in terms of why she chose to visit Norway but suggested that she was motivated by some degree by the novelty levels she associated with the destination.

I don't know exactly why I came but I thought why not? I'm interested in travel…I don't always have reasons for why I go to places but as long as they're new places then I'm willing to try…I guess I wanted to see something a little different. I don't know many people who have visited here, I think that pushed me a little…but there isn't a proper reason as to why I visited…Maybe I was just a little bored with home. (Anna, Russia)

Anna's behaviour may be closely linked to the notions of 'one-upmanship' (Lundberg 1971) on her fellow friends who she also suggested were keen travellers. Similarly it could be implied that she desired to attain 'road status' by travelling to a place, she

perceived, few Russians travelled to. Consistent with Bradt (1995) and Sørensen's (2003) assertions, Anna appeared to combine her desires for escapism by additionally further developing her experiences outside of a region she considered to be mainstream destinations. However, while novelty was an intrinsic feature of her motivations, the quest to temporarily escape the routines of home were also clearly evident as a significant reason to travel. Yeoman, Brass and McMahon-Beattie (2007: 1135), Dann (1999: 183), and Buzzard (1993: 108-109) all imply that many vacations have become a means of escaping from everyday life, while Wang (1999: 351) and Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002: 524) have suggested that tourists can attain feelings of self-expression and energy restoration because they are participating in 'nonordinary activities', which help remove the constraints of daily life. It is therefore argued that these journeys subsequently open 'liminal touristic spaces' whereby social norms can be temporarily placed on hold as the subject, to some degree, become anonymous and free from 'community scrutiny' (Kim and Jamal 2007: 184).

The motivations which led to a desire to attain notions of escapism were plentiful and ranged from boredom in the surroundings of home, work related problems, relationship breakdowns and to desires to experience spontaneity and adventure. For those that selected Norway as the backdrop to their escape plans, many were typically in search of the perception of quiet, sedate or even empty landscapes which would permit moments of reflection away from the masses the frequently associated with home. Such desires were typically held by older hostels users, of which the majority were solo travellers. These guests suggested that Norway appeared to be an ideal location to

escape to because of the preconceptions they held regarding wide open spaces with few, if indeed any, other tourists around. Many views were consistent with Jacobsen (2000: 287) who implied that attaining authentic experiences were usually inversely proportional to the number of tourists in the area.

Alternatively, a smaller number of guests also selected Norway because of its perceived ability to offer a sense of adventure and excitement which was not so readily available at home. Indeed several guests attempted to obtain both criteria during their vacations to varying degrees. Alia, an Israeli woman who was travelling alone, was drawn to Norway because a belief that the country would be calm and peaceful and thus allow her to take a little time off from her busy life in Haifa. While Alia still craved feelings of novelty and excitement, she conceded that long distance travel was becoming increasingly unappealing due to her age. Norway it appeared offered a closer location which would still potentially offer the feelings of escapism that she desired:

As I get older I don't always wish to travel as far…when I was younger I liked the big cities more but as I lose my youth I prefer places which are not too busy and not too stressful. Norway and Sweden seem to be like that so that was one of the reasons which attracted me. (Alia, Israel)

Katherine, a young backpacker from Germany, also implied that Norway was a 'great place to visit' because it represented a clear contrast to suburban life back home and thus enabled her to relax in unfamiliar surroundings. Originally, Katherine had sought to

travel to Asia for a month long trip, but quickly realised that her budget would not permit such a journey. Ideally she wanted to visit Northern China and Mongolia because of stories she had heard from other travellers who suggested that region was ‘amazing’, ‘inspiring’ and most importantly, ‘empty’, in terms of other tourists. She therefore attempted to discover cheaper alternatives which would be more affordable to visit and ultimately decided that she would be unable to visit her first choice destination. After carefully assessing her limited travel options, Katherine was particularly attracted to Norway because she felt that it had remained relatively untouched and was not as ‘popular’ as many other similar locations in Europe. Although she was aware that Norway was an expensive country, she believed that by utilising low-cost carriers, hostels, and her student card to reduce internal transportation costs, she could to some degree, attain a similar experience to the one that she originally sought in Mongolia and China, albeit for a briefer period. Her views appeared to coincide with those offered by Go, Lee and Russo (2003) who suggest that many journeys are often borne from a continuing dissatisfaction among several travellers who feel that tourism many destinations have become ‘commercialized’ or ‘commodified’. Katherine, was ‘tired’ of visiting places where she felt that attractions were crowded, particularly as this detracted the value of her own experiences.

From a different perspective, Jana, a solo traveller from the Czech Republic, suggested that Norway represented an opportunity to meet new people in a different setting. Norway was a destination that she knew little about, but she felt it was an ideal setting

to attain a sense of novelty both in terms of the locations she would see and the people she would meet. The following statement by Jana highlights some of these key points:

I don't really know why I'm here apart from the fact that it was a new place and somewhere where many people I know hadn't been…the destination isn't always the main thing for me. Sometimes it is the people you encounter and meet, sometimes it's the surroundings which are not the same as home…I've met some great people travelling...people from Russia and Brazil and from America…back home you don't really get to meet people from outside the place where you live or work. (Jana, Czech Republic)

Jana expressed that her notion of escapism was being able to detach herself for a brief period of time from friends, family and even work colleagues, and added that although she loved to travel, her friends did not. Jana believed that her contrasting opinions with friends back home were frequently tiring due to their 'differing mentalities' as she termed it. Norway, therefore acted as a platform to establish new ties with people she considered to be similar to her in terms of the way they travelled, and because she believed them to be more open-minded like herself. For others, Norway represented a place which offered excitement, adventure as well as an opportunity to temporarily break the routines of home. It was for these precise reasons that Tobias and friend had opted to visit Norway from Germany. He suggested that Norway was a 'perfect choice' because it allowed them to partake in hiking and walking which allowed them to feel something which was different to their home in Munich. Both Tobias and his friend

implied that Norway represented an opportunity to allow them to leave work behind and visit a place which was both new and exciting. Although many natural features near Munich permitted similar activities to be undertaken, they argued that novelty would not be possible due to their familiarity with the Bavarian region. Their views closely tied in with those of Sternberg (1997: 954), who suggested that tourists were essentially tourists because they wish to 'compensate for their secular, disenchanted, mundane lives through a temporary exposure to the other-to the adventurous, foreign, ancient, or spectacular'. Similarly, Emily who was travelling with a friend from the UK exhibited similar motivations. Her stay at Voss was motivated was a desire to engage in outdoor adventure activities such as kayaking and hiking. For Emily and her co-traveller, Norway represented a chance to 'forget' about the stresses of study and to temporarily delay the need to choose where they would study at university. While Voss and the surrounding region was very similar to their home near the Lake District, the location offered a temporary escape from the environment which they closely associated with exams and important decisions to be made. In effect, while they could engage in similar activities within 20 miles of home, it simply was too close to feel like they had completely escaped.

It appeared that for both Tobias, Emily, and the friends which accompanied them, Norway represented a genuine opportunity to experience adventure which was simultaneously an 'alternative rhythm' and 'free from the constraints of the daily tempo' of life back home (Wang 2000: 216; Gilbert and Abdullah *2*004: 104). Their experiences were also reflective of Cole (2007: 946) and Wang's (1999: 350) assertions that many

tourist experiences have the power to act as portals to escaping daily routines because they trigger ‘authentic’ sensations such as difference, simplicity, freedom and spontaneity. According to Wang (1999: 361), authenticity is derived from the tourist’s ability to avoid the ‘mainstream institutions of modernity’ which are quintessentially inauthentic. By deferring these institutions, these travellers are then able to cross ‘cultural and symbolic boundaries’ (Graburn 1989), which allow the subject to eliminate feelings of responsibility and obligation as they come into contact with their ‘authentic self’. By doing so, inauthentic public roles and commitments and ‘social norms’ and ‘regulations’ can be temporarily left behind as the traveller is liberated to experience ‘new social worlds’ (Kim and Jamal 2007: 184), of which Norway offered in abundance.

8.4 Norway as a Platform for Transitions

Though novelty and adventure were prevailing themes, others had attempted to escape from home for deeper and more personal reasons. Despite Trauer and Ryan (2005: 84) suggesting that the home represents a ‘safe haven’ they also argue that it represents a world of obligations, expectations and mundane lives, which are intensified by ever decreasing challenges and opportunities. Indeed, in the case of the following interviewees, home represented a place which served as a constant reminder of the difficult problems and experience they were facing.

Javier, who had travelled to Norway from Spain, suggested that Norway was selected so he could relax and ‘clear’ his mind because he believed the country would be an

ideal place to do so because of the ‘fresh air’ and ‘beautiful views’, he associated with it. Javier had recently retired and was entering the twilight of his life. Norway therefore represented an opportunity to put this transition into perspective, particularly as it represented a location which was completely detached from the friends, family and familiar setting of home. In essence, Javier was in a transitional period in his life and openly admitted that he was transferring from his old way of life to something new. According to Trauer and Ryan (2005: 484) and Muller and O’Cass (2001), many places have the ability to act as ‘places of escape’, while White and White (2004: 216-217) argue that locations associated with feelings of isolation have the potential to act as ‘uncluttered psychological spaces’, which can help mediate the change from one life phase to another. White and White (2004: 206) add that these places may also act as ‘neutral zones’, which help subjects prepare for the potential impacts they may face during these periods of transition. This is because they are frequently perceived to be more manageable away from their usual surroundings. Javier had originally planned to travel to Andalucía, which was a relative distance from his home in Valencia. However, he quickly opted to look for alternatives because he believed that remaining in Spain would still place him in a world which was all too familiar. Indeed, Javier joked that by being in Norway, few friends would now call him unlike in Spain where his phone would ‘never stop’. This situation therefore enabled Javier to attain a much more isolated experience and, as he termed it, ‘time to think’.

For Daniel, who was discussed in depth earlier in the findings section, Norway represented a place which offered the ‘opposites’ to the stressful encounters of home.

Daniel explains the purpose of Norway in helping him temporarily leave behind the problems of home:

Norway offered a release from the pressures I face in Germany…it is the opposite to that world in that I am free without worry and I can leave behind those problems for a moment…the scenery and the openness is very different to that of Germany and it certainly helps me [feel more relaxed]. (Daniel, Germany)

Daniels's decision to visit Norway permitted his temporal existence in a world 'away' and thus enabled him to create a physical boundary for a set period of time, a concept which White and White (2007: 90) witnessed while researching the motivations of guests visiting remote locations. For other interviewees, Norway represented an opportunity to escape emotional issues such as the breakdown of relationships and coming to terms with retrenchment. While both issues were initially deemed to be negative by these respondents, Norway was seen as an opportunity to attain a 'fresh start' or a new beginning. Patrick who had travelled from Germany, saw his brief stay in Bergen as a small 'step in the right direction' after separating from his long term girlfriend. The change of scenery, suggested Patrick, allowed him to forget about the past few months, albeit for only a brief moment in time. Patrick's predicament was reflective of Trauer and Ryan's (2005: 84) belief that many vacationers will often travel in an attempt to attain new experiences and stimuli which subsequently help leave 'bad' experiences firmly in the past. Although, Patrick invariably ended up talking about his girlfriend in separate conversations, he maintained that the experience was a positive

one because the surrounding did not supply him with constant reminders of what or *who* he was missing.

Simon from the United States, saw his 2 month vacation in Norway simultaneously as a time to forget about the hardships and disappointments he had recently faced, but also for a time for reflection about the development and progress of his career. While these two objectives appear to contradict to some degree, Simon appeared to be trying to bring closure to the negative experiences associated with becoming unemployed and looking opportunistically at his future direction. The essential feature to these processes was the neutral territory in which these reflections took place. As a consequence, distance permitted Simon to completely detach from 'reminders' and 'influences' which would not enable him to reflect and think clearly or impartially. His requirement for a new geographical location was evident in the following passage of conversation:

I decided that this was a great opportunity to do something positive with my time. I was down a lot when I found out I was out of work, but it's also turned out to be an awesome chance to do something I couldn't do if I was stuck in my job…Norway seemed the right place and it's a long way from Chicago. I could have easily done the same type of holiday in Canada or out in the NorthWest [United States], but I needed a complete change of scenery if I was to going to make this work positively. (Simon, United States)

The findings of Riley (1988) revealed many similar stories which echoed those found in Norwegian hostels. It was discovered that many travellers had reached 'crossroads' in

their lives which ranged from being in between jobs to becoming newly divorced and that the process of travel therefore played a ‘powerful role’ in helping them deal with their anxieties and move forward (Desforges 2000: 935). Once again, Norway acted as a platform to escape rather than as a specific destination to engage in specific activities.

There have been many theories which have contested why people travel, many of which involve rejecting or moving away from something for a brief period of time. Kontogeorgopoulos (2003:177), for example has argued that many people travel now to effectively reject the conventional tourist industry. Desforges (2000:935) suggests that travel can occasionally act as an important transitional period opportunity to reflect on ones own life and may additionally become opportunity to reflect on ones own life. Others such as Dann (1999: 183), Buzzard (1993: 108-109), Muller and O’Cass (2001), and Uriely *et al.* (2002: 524) contest that people are not only attempting to escape from conventional tourism trends. but also from the mundane practices of home and work which are saturated with routines and a distinct lack of freedom and flexibility. Trauer and Ryan (2005:484), Ryan (1997:194-195), Gilbert and Abdullah (2004: 103), and Wang (2000: 216) signify that the journey represents an opportunity to search for paradise, or indeed as Opaschowski (2001) suggests, a metaphorical one. Though the search for paradise may or may not be a tangible obsession, it nonetheless represents a very real goal for many travellers. These journeys often seek out ‘ultimate’ or ‘fantasy’ trips (Gilbert and Abdullah 2004: 103) or as Wang (2000: 216) suggests, become ‘dream’ destinations because they enable the subject to transcend boundaries and essentially offer them an ‘alternative experience of time’ which deeply contrasts that of

their normal daily tempo at home. Such journeys afford the traveller the opportunity to take ‘time out’ or ‘restore energy’, while Gilbert and Abdullah (2004: 104) imply that tourism offers the tourist a sense of ‘escape’ or ‘freedom’. Similarly, Yeoman et al. (2007: 1135) argue that the travel journey acts as a means of escaping from everyday life’ or an opportunity to become ‘in touch with one’s true self’ which is not too distant from MacCannell’s (1976) accounts of the travellers’ ‘spiritual search’. Both Giddens (1991: 77) Desforges (2000: 935) term this opportunity as a method of attaining ‘self actualization’, while White and White (2004:201) suggest that travel, particularly that of greater duration, enables a range of transitions to occur.

Though these periods of transition naturally vary depending upon the specific demographic profile of the subject, their potential significance to the individual is not to be overlooked as they frequently involved a great deal of ‘personal investment’ (Desforges 2000: 943). For younger travellers, these journeys were found to represent opportunities to defer responsibilities and to potential delay the restrictions associated with leaving university and attempting to begin a career path. According to Desforges (2000: 935), these younger travellers will use these transitional times to enable a new or modified ‘self-identity’ to be constructed. Groups which consisted of people who were considered to be middle-aged used travel opportunities to help reflect upon their lives and to help deal with potentially problematic issues associated with chosen career paths, the fear of retrenchment or due changes in lifestyle associated with their children moving on, thus leaving an ‘empty’ space in their lives. Those who were rapidly approaching retirement age, or had indeed reached retirement, used travel in an

attempt to negotiate the 'endings' (White and White 2004: 206), they were facing. In all scenarios, it was hypothesised that these issues, problems and changes in life phase, could be better negotiated in 'inalienable' locations (Lane and Waitt 2007), whereby the 'resetting of boundaries' (Minh-ha 1994:9; Galani-Moutafi 2000:204-5) could begin. Similarly, Lanfrant (1995) argues that tourists choose to undertake particular journeys in attempt to discover identities which they cannot facilitate in their daily lives back home. As Edensor (2007:199) has recently suggested, escaping from the mundane world is now a popular and well researched theme, which has attempted to give reason to why people travel and effectively measures the relationships between travel and Giddens' (1991: 59) idea of 'personhood' which prompts the traveller to answer questions such as 'what sort of a person am I', 'who I am' and 'how am I to live'.

While escaping the banal conditions of home were frequent motivations to travel, others appeared to be escaping something else. Indeed, it was not just home which was seen to be mundane, but mainstream holiday destinations also. The rejection of contemporary travel destinations, and to a lesser extent, other tourists, were popularly mentioned themes amongst several hostel users. Such attitudes were particularly salient amongst younger hostel users, although a distinct group, typically middle aged independent travellers were amongst the greatest adheres of such attitudes. Norway, they suggested, was a place which 'others don't think about' and North American travellers in particular, cited that Norway was an alternative to the 'usual stuff' like London, Paris and Rome. Several guests who had travelled from Spain and Italy also implied that Norway as a destination appeared to be 'something different' or a 'place

tourists [from Italy] don't usually go'. For these guests, Norway represented the rejection of popular tourist destinations in favour of somewhere not so routinely frequented by tourists originating from their homelands (as mentioned by Anna from Russia who was identified in an earlier section). For others, Norway represented a location whereby a large number of different activities, namely outdoor ones, could be undertaken. Unsurprisingly, these guest types were typically interviewed in hostel locations which were not centred in urban localities.

It appears that Norway had unwittingly emerged as a location for many potential outcomes to opportunistic guests. Although many of these guests revealed greater priorities in terms of where they would have liked to have gone, Norway appeared to be a suitable 'Plan B' which permitted most to attain the experiences they desired.

8.5 The Non-Recreational Experiences of Hostel Users

It is often asserted that the hostel, like any other form of accommodation aimed at attracting visitors to a region, is a place chosen by guests to use as a base or stopping point for recreational activities and journeys. Larsen (2006: 307) has suggested that while the backpacker hostel does not necessarily need to consist of similar people, they do however need to share a similar set of values. These 'values' include the patterns of movement users engage in, the symbolic routes they choose to take, and a series of physical, face-to-face interactions during these journeys. This suggestion appears to concur with the majority of hostel users in Norway, but may not be representative of all *per se*. While the values identified by Larsen (2006), mirror many of those submitted by

the backpackers, flashpackers or indeed other tourist types encountered in Norwegian hostels, one particular group revealed some deeply contrasting values and reasons for their useage of Norwegian hostels.

A number of Norwegian hostels revealed a compliment of non-recreational visitors who were *obliged* to stay at hostels because of a number of commitments which ranged from the need for a place to stay; to attend job interviews; or as a temporary base while more permanent modes of accommodation were identified. These guests suggested that the hostel was in many cases not a choice, but the *only* choice available to them. Allon *et al.* (2008: 73) has asserted that backpackers, who are usually identified as the primary hostel user, do not always perform in the same ways. They suggest that while many are indeed holidaymakers, others are skilled professional workers and may even be 'long-term semi-permanent residents', of which a particularly salient example is the countless working holiday makers based in Australia. However, Norwegian hostels appeared to reveal a range of visitors which were far more restricted in terms of their choice of accommodation, and it could be argued that the key contrasting feature was that a small number of these guests were not empowered with the opportunity to stay anywhere else.

Though motivated and opportunistic hostel users exhibited similar characteristics in terms of acting or performing like tourists, a third group emerged during the research of the thesis. While it appears to be a truism that the vast majority of visitors encountered at Norwegian hostels shared a common similarity in that they were in Norway for some

form of recreation, regardless of whether they were motivated or opportunistic, the third group was identified as revealing no motivation for either recreation or relaxation. Although the first two groups frequently travelled on similar itineraries, sought pleasure and entertainment and interacted seamlessly with one another, the third group appeared to show very little in common with these behavioural characteristics. The first two groups could be observed plotting tours from Oslo to Bergen or vice versa; taking bus journeys to see the fjords and other geographical features; joining harbour cruises; visiting museums and galleries; and eating and drinking in restaurants and bars. These visitors, including those who exhibited low ambition levels at the destination, all shared a commonality in that had the opportunity to be mobile in and when the opportunity arose.

Those with clear destination objectives were highly mobile and were typically observed leaving the hostel early and returning late. These guests would often engage in all-day long journeys either on foot or using local transportation in an attempt to see and do as much as possible. Similarly, visitors who exhibited a preference for banal and mundane activities would often spend significant periods of the day or evening moving around their locations, even if it was only from bar to bar or for a brief exploratory walk. In terms of social interaction, the two groups were frequently observed spending parts of their days socialising in lounges and public areas, reading in libraries or eating together in communal kitchens. Debates would range from advice about activities, where to find the most affordable cafes, and several hours were spent engaging in the general types of conversation about travel experiences and anecdotes which could be experienced in

any hostel throughout the world. Indeed, it was quite difficult to distinguish the differences between motivated and opportunistic visitors in such scenarios.

The third group however, which were labelled as obliged hostel users, exhibited characteristics which were in clear contrast to those of the first two groups. This group exhibited distinctly low levels of mobility and seldom interacted with others outside of their own collective groups. Members of these groups were almost completely exclusive to urban-located hostels in the likes of Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim or Stavanger. The nature of their stays were centred around non-recreational orientated commitments such as attending job or university interviews, searching for work, and using hostels as temporary abodes until permanent places of stay were discovered. Andrea from Sweden and Nils from Norway, were two of many prospective students identified in Trondheim who were using the hostel as a temporary and affordable place to stay while they attended interviews at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in May 2008. In September 2007 and 2008, new university students who were waiting to find accommodation were also identified in hostels in Oslo and Bergen. In each scenario, the hostel acted as the best place to stay due to the cheap cost and the indefinite time period of their stays. Others utilised Norwegian hostels as convenient places to stay during job interviews. One such example was Trude, a Norwegian woman who had travelled from Finnmark in Northern Norway to attend an interview for a seasonal position in the summer. Due to the distance between Oslo and her home, Trude had opted to bring her family along with her and had arrived on Saturday evening, two days before the interview on Monday. The weekend was therefore an opportunity for her

family to use the time to have a little fun and relaxation in Oslo even if she could not. While her husband and two children spent the day sightseeing, Trude opted to remain in the hostel to prepare for the interview process and therefore became immobilised and detached socially within the hostel. Indeed for Birgit from Estonia, the hostel actually was her place of work. Birgit had worked in the Stryn Vandrerhjem several times before for the summer season and therefore was well acquainted with the region and saw little motivation to travel outside. As a consequence she would often spend her evenings relaxing in the hostel lounge as opposed to venturing out after work. Birgit explained her actions:

I'm here for work and I've been coming for many seasons…I don't travel around the country , I work as much as I can and try to save as much as I can. I prefer to take holidays with my family back home…not here by myself. (Birgit, Estonia)

While Birgit used the hostel as base for relaxation after work, others used the hostel as a base to find work. Laila, a Norwegian interviewed in Stavanger, suggested that the hostel was a cheap and affordable place which she could use a temporary place to stay while she sought work. The affordability of the hostel meant that the pressures associated with finding work were reduced as she could stay almost as twice as long in the city before deeming it necessary, in financial terms, to abandon her search. However, while the hostel alleviated some of the financial constraints, she still opted to reside within the hostel for the majority of afternoons and evenings where she would prepare her meals in an attempt to reduce costs. Due to the indefinite waiting period

she faced, Laila opted to conserve her money by not venturing out during the evenings because she believed there were too many ‘temptations’ which could ultimately part her and her remaining money. Once more, mobility levels were severely reduced because of the predicament the hostel user faced. Andrew, an Australian independent salesman based in Bergen, also used the hostel as a base to find work and make contacts. Andrew had used the Oslo Haraldsheim Vandrerhjem several times before due to its affordable rates and close proximity to Oslo city centre. During the day, Andrew would visit the harbour to find prospective clients and then return in the early evening where he would purchase food from one of a handful of fast food restaurants nearby. His stay in Oslo was purely based upon business alone and therefore he had absolutely no interest in the recreational activities. Indeed, even on his first visit to Oslo, Andrew had insisted that he had absolutely no interest in ‘taking photos or buying postcards’ and had actually never visited any of the popular attractions or ‘touristy places’ as he termed them.

Other guests observed in hostels in Oslo and Trondheim, revealed similar behavioural activity during their stays. At the Sentrum Pensjonat hostel in Oslo, several men with Eastern European accents were frequently identified arriving and leaving at regular times in clothes which were consistent with some form of manual labour. Similarly, at Rosenborg Vandrarhjem in Trondheim, a middle-aged man in one of the dormitories was regularly identified sleeping throughout the day before leaving for some form of employment in the evenings. Nick from the UK, was interviewed at the Voss Vandrerhjem and explained that his sudden employment at a nearby hotel had left him

with no alternative but to find temporary accommodation. Working evening shifts, Nick would frequently sleep until the mid afternoons after returning to the hostel in the early hours of the morning. As a result, Nick therefore spent little time exploring Voss and opted to simply use his time in the hostel to rest and surf the internet.

While obligated hostel users did utilise social areas such as TV rooms, and lounges to some degree, few attempted to interact with conventional guests in search of leisure or recreation. It was often observed that these guests often positioned themselves in isolated locations within communal areas in an attempt to avoid conversation and interaction with others. Most indeed, would stay in their dormitories and therefore it was frequently down to fortune that these guests were identified during the research phase. The behaviour of obligated guests clearly contrasted other hostel users who would frequently make excuses to talk and engage in conversations with other guests. Moreover, even hostel users who appeared to be shy and reserved could be identified positioning themselves in locations which would enable others to notice their presence. These guests would then in turn anticipate that someone would attempt to engage in conversation with them. With the clear exception of Birgit, obligated hostel users were rarely observed interacting with guests who were staying for recreational purposes. Perhaps the difference for Birgit was that her workplace and abode were the same location and that she perhaps identified relationships with other hostel users as being easier to facilitate due to regular and obliged contact as an employee. Birgit was also unique in terms of the location where she was observed. While other obligated hostel users were observed in large cities such as Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim, Birgit was

based in Stryn – a small town with a handful of shops and a population of less than 2,500 people. It could be argued that Birgit's isolation in a town which was outside of the main tourism season, was more motivated to engage with other hostel users due to the limited range of opportunities to meet people. Indeed, the hostel itself only employed 4 staff and thus restricted the number of people she could encounter on a professional basis at work.

The vast majority of obligated guests however, would frequently spend their time alone after the completion of work, interviews, or the end of their daily search for accommodation. Andrew explained that this was the case because he was 'here for work and not to make friends', while Nick claimed that he was too tired to interact with others after a 10 hour shift at work. Moreover, Andrew saw other hostel users as a distraction or even as a nuisance due to the different motivations he and they exhibited. His frustrations are clear to observe in the following passage of conversation:

I often get tired of the same questions when I come here. It's always like, 'why you here or where you going next?' They think I'm staying here on holiday and that we must become mates or something…I don't go to the TV room or anything, I just can't be bothered with it all. (Andrew, Australia)

While Andrew's opinions may have been on the more extreme side, his comments were generally reflective of many who had evidently become tired or weary of the trappings of staying in a form of accommodation associated with play rather than work and

obligations. Andrew had become tired of the regular occurrence of new guests introducing themselves to him, while Nick and the observed guest from the Rosenborg hostel, both expressed frustrations that their sleeping patterns were regularly impaired by the coming and going of guests throughout the day.

In terms of mobility, virtually all obligated hostel users revealed low levels of movement aside from attending the routines of work or job interviews. Employed hostel users engaged in the repetition of journeys which were typically within 5 to 10kms of the hostel location for a set period each day. Those in search of jobs and accommodation also travelled within short distances. In both scenarios, obliged hostel users appeared to restrict their movements due to a clear focus of attaining particular objectives from their journeys. As a consequence deviations to these journeys were seldom made, and even those who had resided in hostels for a number of days, revealed little motivation to explore at the same time. The causes for this lack of mobility, in part, could have been attributed to the discovery that almost all obligated users were staying in hostels without personal modes of transportation. In many cases, such as Oslo Haraldsheim, Bergen Montana and Rosenborg Trondheim; Norwegian city hostels were often located in suburban locations as opposed to the CBD. Thus, for those that preferred to travel predominantly on foot, or did not have the sufficient means to regularly use public transport, Norwegian hostel locations could have been interpreted as being restrictive in terms of mobility. Indeed the vast majority of hostel users who stayed in these hostels appeared to have their own personal modes of transport or had travelled as members of coach tours.

8.6 Long-Term Obligated Hostel Users

To illustrate the behavioural differences between hostel users focused upon on achieving leisure, and those who were obligated, one particular subgroup emerged who were observed in reasonably large numbers in Oslo. These visitors were of African origin and were a mixture of employed casual workers, those who were unemployed and in search of work and a small group who were in search of asylum in Norway.

This group of hostel users were typically located in Oslo, although they were sporadically identified at urban hostels elsewhere. Most revealed highly distinctive behavioural patterns which were not consistent with other hostel users both in terms of how they interacted and the limited levels of mobility they exhibited. While observing their interactions, the conversations of these particular hostel users were definably different from other groups. The motivated and opportunistic visitors would often talk enthusiastically about the contents of their days or what they planned to do at their next stop, and it was evident that most conversations were *ad hoc* and frequently superficial in nature. This was perhaps unsurprising due to the observation that the majority of these guests had become acquainted in a matter of days, or even hours, and evidently knew little about each other. Such scenarios regularly occurred in areas such as the breakfast hall, or the TV lounge but while prolonged guest interaction on occasion did take place, the majority of conversations would last barely minutes with the names of those involved remaining untold.

In deep contrast to these conversational scenarios, obligated hostel users appeared to be well acquainted and would often address each other by their first names or friendly terms such as ‘friend’, ‘brother’, or indeed any other synonym associated with a cordial greeting. Similarly, though it was clear that not everyone was on first name terms, it was equally apparent that they had interacted amongst each other before as they often referenced previous encounters, or talked about people that they shared a common knowledge of. Although the participants of this group behaved in a friendly manner, there was often a melancholic tone within their conversations. While many hostel users would frequently exhibit enthusiasm and excitement, this subgroup would often engage in more mundane conversations. They would discuss frequently with a mood of disappointment, their days at work, their failure at a recent job interview, or the lack of opportunities they faced to entertain themselves for the forthcoming evening. They would discuss the TV shows they had seen the previous night or would identify the TV shows they would like to see that particular evening. There knowledge of Norwegian television schedules alone suggested that this was perhaps a regular occurrence and something which had clearly become a well established routine. At Oslo Haraldsheim in particular, the TV room functioned as social area where many could meet and catch up during the evening and appeared to act as an unwritten, informal gathering place. In alternative communal areas such as kitchens and receptions areas, others would talk about what they should purchase from the supermarket.

At the Anker hostel in central Oslo, the reception area was an obvious location for many Africans to meet, most of which appeared to be non-staying friends of particular guests. The location of the Anker Hostel made it an obvious rendez-vous point as it was located nearby to the city's main bus and train terminals. The hostel was also located outside one of the city's main tram routes and was the nearest hostel to the East side of Oslo (particularly Grønland) – an area which has become synonymous with immigrants and refugees in recent years. As a consequence, the Anker Hostel therefore appeared to act as a hub for obligated hostel guests and their acquaintances to meet up. On more than one occasion, Africans were witnessed sleeping in the hostel reception area, while others sat around for several hours and only stirred when they occasionally received calls on their mobile telephones. Conversations between those waiting in the lobby were limited in both number and length despite sitting together for long periods of time. Indeed, it appeared that most were at ease with each other in silence and were largely uninterested in the conversations and interactions facilitated by the conventional hostel users around them. The lack of mobility these particular guests exhibited was also apparent after a number of observations at both the Oslo Haraldsheim and Anker Hostels. The former, which is located in a relatively quiet suburb called Sinsen, was frequently populated by similar guests for lengthy periods of time either in the communal garden or the TV lounge. In many cases, the same guests could be seen hanging around for hours and appeared to show no motivation to leave, be it day or night. At the Anker Hostel, African hostel users were observed spending entire weekends within the hostel complex, though several were observed leaving late in the evenings and return in the early hours of the morning. Other hostel guests often speculated as to their activities

which included their involvement in drugs, or prostitution due to the nature of their times of movement. While some accusations appeared to be driven by racial stereotyping, one particular African hostel user named Samuel, was heard making arrangements for his several of his ‘girls’ during a particular evening in a hostel dormitory. After eventually earning the trust of this particular subject, it emerged that he and a group of friends were involved in a small prostitution ring although he maintained that the girls involved were happy and making good money. When asked why he opted to use hostels, he implied that he still did not make enough money to move on. Moreover, even with money he claimed that it would better to stay in the centre of Oslo to keep track of his business as his only alternative would leave him living in a the Eastern part of the city which would necessitate regular commuting. Samuel’s plight appeared to echo that of many obligated hostel users in Oslo’s hostel network. The Norwegian hostel, was therefore a location for hardship and struggles as well as fun and recreation.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Overview

This research project has yielded many significant outcomes regarding hostel users in Norway and has helped identify some of the many different groups which travel throughout the country every year. At the beginning of this thesis, four key aims were identified. The first attempted to challenge the stereotypical profiles and typologies frequently used to define hostel users. The second aim attempted to identify the key motivations of why hostel users choose to visit Norway. The third, assessed the methods of transportation used and examined the levels of mobility exerted by hostel guests. Finally, the fourth aim assessed the contention that hostel users were now exhibiting similar behavioural patterns to more mainstream and conventional tourist types.

The success of attaining answers to these four aims certainly varies to some degree, yet the thesis sheds light onto a geographical region which has frequently been neglected from the perspective of backpacker travel. However, it must be also noted that the broad depth of visitors encountered at Norwegian hostels suggests that hostel users and backpackers are not interchangeable terms, and have therefore been used separately and accordingly. A summary related to each aim will now follow to highlight the key findings observed between 2007 and 2009.

9.2 Hostel User Motivations

Unsurprisingly, one of the most commonly cited reasons for visiting Norway related to the landscapes and topographical features associated with the country. Indeed, it could be argued that the search for landscapes was the most significant motive and that Norway's diverse geography appeared to have the power to attract visitors from all over the world. Concurring with the views of Trauer and Ryan (2005), Ryan (1997), Gilbert and Abdullah (2004), and Wang (2000), Norway represented a physical location which offered a series of aesthetic features which had been desired by several guests for many years. For many guests, Norway also embodied both a metaphorical paradise – places where freedom and isolation could be obtained (see Opaschowski 2001).

While landscapes were undoubtedly common motivational desires, these desires were fulfilled in a range of different ways. Several, were content with Urry's (1990) notion of the gaze. These guests would often partake in coach or train journeys and were satisfied with strategic stops at popular sightseeing locations. Guests who followed these behavioural patterns closely tied in with the views of Jacobsen (2001: 110), who asserted that many guests who participate in organised, multi-destination tours are often prepared to compromise with fleeting experiences which offer them a range of restricted 'visual impressions'. While these guests were enabled to view a number of different scenic locations, Jacobsen (2001) however, argued that this would prohibit them from attaining deeper relations with the places they visited.

A smaller but distinct number of guests appeared to contrast this behaviour, as they complied with Urry's (1990) suggestion that not all travellers are satisfied to merely gaze, but would rather 'feel' these locations also. Consistent with the views of Trauer and Ryan (2005: 483-4) it had been argued that destinations were no longer merely locations in time and space but simultaneously places which allowed travellers to fulfil their physical and emotional desires. These guests interacted with Norwegian landscapes via a variety of different methods. Several opted to hike and walk through these locations at their own pace. Some interacted with the land in the form of adventure tourism, such as kayaking in Voss or white-water rafting in Sjoa. Others attempted to stimulate their senses by cycling or riding though landscapes using personal vehicles. This finding was of particular significance as vehicles were identified to play empowering roles which enabled a range of sensations to be encountered.

In terms of the motives or desires hostel users attempted to extract from Norway's myriad landscapes; a considerable range of objectives were observed. As aforementioned, some were keen to interact via sports and adventure in an attempt to achieve excitement while others were keen to attain feelings of solitude and difference from the places they had travelled from. Several guests used landscapes and wildernesses as transitional canvasses to temporarily escape from the banal practices of home, the stresses associated with work. These locations also acted as 'neutral zones' (White and White 2004), which were used to escape problems associated with retrenchment and retirement. Landscapes were therefore powerful vehicles for a variety of different motives and could be interacted with and 'mined' in a variety of different

ways to extract the sensations, desires or feelings, guests attempted to obtain at the beginning of their journeys.

Culture and heritage attractions were also important motivational factors to a number of guests visiting Norway. Sternberg (1997) and Palmer (1998) have argued that heritage attractions have the power to develop 'physical and experiential' links to a particular nation and its people, while Gonzalez (2008) has suggested that many guests will aim to 'incorporate' different cultures in an attempt to develop 'cosmopolitan identities'. It appeared that few hostel guests in Norway attempted to attain experiential links but many were frequently keen to develop the notion of cosmopolitan identities. The acquisition of cultural capital was deemed an important feature, although many revealed in private that they were frequently unaware of the locations or attraction they were visiting. These performances it could be argued, were undertaken because they were seen to be in good 'taste' as Munt (1994: 115) has previously claimed and because such locations could be added to Lane and Waitt's (2007) notion of developing 'records of achievement'.

It additionally appears that Edensor's (2007) claim that backpackers 'sustain collective performances' due to a 'concretisation' of cultural assumptions is particularly salient in this context. Though many of these encounters were superficial in nature it was apparent that many visited popular attractions because they believed that this was what they *should* be doing while on holiday.

While most appeared to be content with superficial culture and heritage attraction experiences, a further group attempted to use these locations to attain a much deeper sense of meaning. In this scenario, a number of Norwegian guests attempted to extract personal meanings of nationhood and to help them further develop a sense of what it meant to be Norwegian. Jamal and Hollinshead's (1999) assertion that many in the contemporary age are experiencing 'a crisis of representation' (Marcus and Fischer 1986), was a relevant theme amongst a clear subcategory of hostel users in Norway. It has been argued by the likes of Featherstone (1995) and Jamal and Hollinshead (1999) that the 'complexity' and 'fluidity' of life in the postmodern world had subsequently led to a loss of personal identity. These guests appeared to visit heritage attractions in an attempt to attain Halewood and Hannam's (2001) concepts of 'security' and 'stability' which they argue are ever-increasingly sought after in rapidly changing worlds. This niche of hostels users attempted to obtain these feelings by visiting Norwegian culture and heritage attractions as they believed, as Palmer (1998) and Park (2010) have maintained, that particular attractions have the power to answer a range of questions in relation to the 'material testimony of identity' (Macdonald 2006). Indeed, Pretes has argued that tourism attractions are commonly seen as transmitters of nationalism or patriotism and it appeared that a number of Norwegian hostel users attempted to visit such locations because they were deemed to be representative of what it meant to be Norwegian. Similarly, Palmer (1998) Timothy (1997) and Dann (1996) have suggested that nostalgia tourism have gained momentum as particular modes of tourism because of their perceived ability to strengthen identities and answer questions such as 'who am

I?' or in the case of two American interviews in search of re-establishing genealogical ties, 'who was I?'.

9.3 The Significance of the Role of Mobility

The theme of scenery and landscapes appeared to be a common motivational factor amongst those highly motivated to visit Norway. With the exception of all but a few interviewees those who expressed a desire to view the vistas of Norway travelled throughout the country via either their own cars or motorcycles and revealed a high degree of mobility.

The requirement to experience the mountains, fjords and wildernesses appeared to coincide with Jacobsen's (2001) notion of 'sightseeing at a swift pace' in the majority of cases. However, it must also be asserted that mobility levels were identified as being *intrinsic* to the overall experience levels of most subjects. As Jacobsen (2004) has previously implied, 'holiday mobility' has now become an 'essential feature of contemporary European life' and it appears that Norway frequently exemplified this trend. Cars, motorbikes and campervans were seen in abundance and were a regular feature in many hostels throughout the country. The owners of these vehicles frequently argued that satisfaction and experience levels were considerably enhanced due to the feelings of liberty personal transportation afforded them. These views supported those of Page (1999b) and Lumsdon (2006) who suggested that the correct method of transport has the ability to act as an integral part of the vacation experience. Similarly,

Urry (2000) has argued that the road has the potential to 'set people free', and this was evident in the multitude of *ad hoc* journeys which were taking place. These journeys were consistent with Jacobsen's (2001) assertion that many motorists are in search of notions such as 'transience' and 'ephemerality' which were intensified by the levels of freedom they exhibited. Moreover, Sager (2006) has argued that this freedom has been developed by man's relationship to automobility and in the case of many mobile tourists in Norway, the motor vehicle was the key to unlocking this freedom.

The experiences of many guests appeared to be heavily reliant upon the use of vehicles in an attempt to experience Norway on a more personal level. Viewing or feeling 'real' landscapes were perhaps the most commonly sought after sensations. Experiences were frequently identified by motorists via a range of terms which were consistent with the consumption of geographical regions as 'soul food' (Lane and Waitt 2007). Being on the road meant that these guests were additionally able to experience physical sensations which transcended beyond merely observing such locations. Buses or trains were dismissed as being rigid and inflexible and ultimately denied perhaps the most important desire of their journeys – *control*. Moreover, it appeared that many of these guests identified the travel aspect of their vacations as more important than the actual locations they visited. Indeed, several guests admitted that they had forgotten the names of places where they had stayed, while others created itineraries based upon road routes as opposed to networks of destinations they would like to visit. Stopping was seen to be at literal postponement of the journey and appeared to justify Mohktarian and Salomon's (2001) claims that destinations may perhaps by ancillary to

the process of travel. Most guests appeared to be primarily motivated to *travel* rather than to visit. In these scenarios, hostel guests ended up in hostels due to fatigue as opposed to the particular attractions on offer at the location. Moreover, several guests barely ventured around the towns and cities where they stopped and instead preferred to leave early and return back to the road as soon as possible. It appeared that Bauman's (1998) assertion may also be correct in the context of mobile travellers in Norway. After all, being on the move was not an unpleasant experience for the guests, but the promise of 'bliss' many anticipated it to be.

Mobility therefore appeared to be a crucial feature for many guests who were motivated to visit Norway. Motorists were able to personalise their own routes and travel itineraries, and more importantly, they could exert full control of when and where they stopped. The car and motorcycle thus enabled the subject to experience unpredictability and adventure which many suggested had been nullified during previous experiences via package tours which included coach or rail travel.

While the notion of mobility played an important role for some, others were distinctly *immobile* in the locations they chose to visit in Norway. Paradoxically, it appeared that those who best fit the descriptions of backpackers, were the least likely to be on the move – either at the location or between locations. Backpackers were noticeably static hostel users and this was often exhibited by behaviour frequently observed at hostels. Though other guests would rise early and return late in the evening, many backpackers would stay within the confines of the hostel, or at the very most, within the vicinity of the

establishment. Although some did travel on foot for brief sorties, most were content to 'hang out' in communal lounges, where they could engage in conversations with their fellow guests, surf the internet, or sleep off the hangovers they had obtained from the previous evening. Moreover, backpackers often displayed relatively low levels of mobility within Norway in comparison to many other guests who were interviewed. While many had obviously travelled long distances and visited a number of countries either in Europe or even further afield, when in Norway, they were almost exclusively restricted to visiting urban locations such as Oslo and Bergen. After lengthy discussions with several backpacker-type guests, it quickly became established that their behaviour was often repeated from location to location and that most, when travelling through Europe, only opted to visit the 'most important' cities. It could be argued that this behaviour was in part due to financial or time restrictions, but the majority it seemed were content to visit a restricted range of destinations despite having the necessary funds to travel elsewhere. Mobility, it appeared, was a clear indicator in several scenarios for those who were truly motivated to visit Norway. Although a minority of backpackers were identified in more remote locations, the congregation of the visitor types in a narrow range of hostels revealed distinctly low levels of movement, and perhaps to some extent, the thirst for adventure and novelty also.

9.4 Challenging the Backpacker Typology in the Norwegian Context

Hostel users in Norway appeared to reveal many differences from the normal hostel user typologies found in other 'mainstream' destinations around the world. A multitude

of different guest types were observed and the geographical location of the hostel frequently played an important role in determining which types of guests would be found, Most notably the hostel location would often determine the motivations and expectations of the guest and clear divisions were observed.
Backpackers, in the conventional sense, were increasingly difficult to locate outside of Oslo or Bergen and were predominantly found in urban settings.

In inner-city hostels, many guests revealed a number unrelated reasons for their visits to Norway, with several revealing that they actually held no specific desire to visit. These visitors were governed by external motivations such as escapism and the need to temporarily leave home, which eventually resulted in Norway being selected as the destination where these alternative ambitions could be realised. Guests interviewed in rural destinations however, were mainly motivated by a desire to encounter the Norwegian landscape and were often highly aware of the purpose of their journeys. Moreover, most of the guests shared little in common with conventional backpacker typologies.

Perhaps one of the most significant findings were the behavioural characteristics exhibited by backpackers observed in Norway in comparison to these typologies. Many contemporary definitions of the backpacker have portrayed them as being highly mobile and adventurous travellers, who exhibited a strong desire for otherness, uncommon locations and an urge to gain experiences away from tourists, and indeed, their own culture and societies. Ultimately, these motivations enable the backpacker to escape

the banal and mundane facets of daily life back home and as a consequence, have been identified as being ‘superior’ travellers.

The findings from Norwegian hostels however, appear to strongly contrast this notion due the behavioural characteristics many, or even most, exhibited. A growing body of academics (see Jacobsen 2000; Trauer and Ryan 2005; Ateljevic and Doorne 2007) have argued that backpackers are continuing to follow the behaviour more commonly associated with mass tourists, and that perhaps backpacking itself, is now nothing more than mass tourism performed on a low budget (Spreitzhofer 1998). Instead of visiting remote locations or places one would associate with otherness, backpackers were normally identified in places which were firmly *on* the beaten track. The majority of backpackers in Norway were only identified in major tourist destinations such as Oslo, Bergen and to a lesser extent, Ålesund and Voss. Although many were engaged in multi-destination stops within Europe, mobility levels within Norway, and indeed, other European countries were seen to be highly limited. Few it seemed, were genuinely motivated to visit locations which could be classified as uncommon or different and preferred to stay predominantly in popular and well known locations. While in these settings, backpackers were also identified engaging in mainstream activities, such as organised sightseeing tours or visits to popular attractions which were highly frequented by more conventional tourist types. As Jacobsen (2000) has asserted, the difference between both groups now appear to ‘indistinguishable’, appears to be with some merit in the context of Norwegian hostels.

Although Wilson and Richards (2004b) have argued that backpackers can be characterised by a desire to reject 'conventional society', it appears that those identified in Norway, frequently did precisely the opposite. This was witnessed on several occasions, as backpackers were often identified congregating together in communal lounges and arranging to engage in activities as a group. Others also revealed strong desires to remain attached to conventional society via the medium of technology, and this was most apparent in situations were subjects had become temporarily detached.

A number of backpackers had suggested that maintaining contact with home was an essential requirement of their journeys, and in the rare situations where the contact was lost, backpackers were identified immediately rejecting their foreign surroundings to return to more reliable settings. As White and White (2007) have suggested, keeping in touch, regardless of geographical proximity, has become a normalised feature of contemporary travel. However, while they maintain that such developments were initially aimed at reducing the feelings associated with isolation, they additionally acted as pertinent reminders as to *who* and *what* they were missing.

Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002) have implied that one of the key draws of tourism as an activity is its ability to temporarily remove the subject from the mundane routines associated with daily life. Such a feature has frequently been identified as an intrinsic feature to backpacker journeys worldwide, yet in Norway, backpackers were frequently observed doing precisely the opposite. While guests who did not fit the contemporary backpacker typology were frequently characterised by their highly motivated and mobile nature, backpackers would typically be observed doing very little in comparison. Many

failed to leave the confines of the hostel for any noticeable period of time,and even those that did revealed a tendency to engage in activities were consistent with those which performed back at home. Eating habits and the activities they participated in remained largely consistent and the people they engaged with were usually of the same nationality or from a similar cultural background. It therefore seemed that the backpacker's 'experience hunger' (Richards and Wilson 2005) has seriously diminished in the case of hostel users in Norway.

Based upon the views of many backpacker interviewees, it appeared that this particular type of tourist, had in essence, fallen 'victim' to the continuous development and mainstreaming of backpacker tourism. The quality and abundance of backpacker establishments and tours operators have helped erode the novelty associated with this form of travel and have essentially made this form of travel *easy*. As Sternberg (1997) has implied, those who have attempted to temporarily negotiate the mundane have become increasingly exposed to a range of amenities which have packaged and standardised the way they travel. Indeed, this paradox may have ironically led to many backpackers accepting such facilities, despite their lack of differentiation from contemporary life back home. Moreover, as Sørensen (2003) suggests, the institutionalisation of backpacker facilities have inevitably left many expecting the same, and it appeared that in the Norwegian context, many backpackers already held clearly defined preconceptions of what a hostel should entail. It could be therefore argued that the contemporary backpacker in many ways has been spoilt by the development of such facilities and amenities. Similarly, it appeared that Steiner and Reisinger's (2006)

contention that many tourists now attempt to insulate themselves from ‘tourism hassles’ (which many hostels now provide) may indeed be a correct assertion.

It could also be argued that one of the key reasons for the contrasting observations between backpackers and the typologies which have been used to identify them link closely to Wilson and Richards’ (2007) suggestion that many typologies have failed to include ‘newcomers’ to conventional backpacker products. A number of academics (Poon 1993; Urry 1995; Perez and Sampol 2000; Aguilo and Juaneda 2000; Aguilio, Alegre and Sard 2005; Claver-Cortes *et al*. 2007; Chambers 2009) have documented the changes exhibited by conventional or mass tourists in recent years, which have revealed an emerging behavioural pattern in terms of destination selection and the motivations which drive them. These subjects have now become synonymous with terms such as ‘flexibility’, ‘independence’, ‘spontaneity’ and as a consequence have begun to seek out places which are associated with ‘difference’, ‘unpredictability’ and ‘remoteness’ due to the rejection of previous vacation experiences which have involved little product differentiation and high standardisation (Aguilo and Juaneda 2000).

Indeed, Claver-Cortes *et al.* (2007: 728) have argued that the tastes of tourists have now been considerably modified due to a higher desire to experience ‘something else’, while Chambers (2009) has suggest that tourists are now also aiming to attain ‘individualised experiences’ which include notions of self improvement. As discussed in the literature review of this thesis, it appears that the perceived ‘chasm’ between mainstream tourism and backpacker tourism has considerably narrowed in the

contemporary era and that observing the differences between both sectors may be an increasingly difficult challenge.

Indeed, it appears that Ateljevic and Hannam's (2007) assertion that the 'obsession' which developing typologies has compounded the modern issues associated with defining the contemporary backpacker, as few have failed to look beyond ethnocentrism and generalising criteria. As Sørensen (2003) has suggested that backpacker is now more multifaceted than ever and that the fragmentation involved has rendered the creation of uniformed category practically impossible. While the archetypical backpacker was perhaps difficult to distinguish because of the variety of guests encountered, the flashpacker however, was clearly evident to some degree using the contemporary typologies which have been used to define them. These guests were identified, like most backpackers, in urban locations and were identifiable because they were seen to be travelling 'backpacker-like' but had opted to do so within the time limits of cyclical holiday patterns (Sørensen 2003). The flashpacker was typically limited to short duration journeys and although many suggested that they had the means to stay in much more expensive establishments, the flashpacker was motivated to utilise hostels because of the opportunities they presented. Typical motivations behind this behaviour included opportunities to meet other guests, and to a lesser extent, an opportunity to engage in nostalgic journeys of a freer time, where stress and commitments were considerably less significant.

9.5 Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

While the research project attempted to observe the overall hostel user market in Norway, due to time and financial constraints, the research project was limited exclusively to the Southern and Western regions of the country. Although it could be argued that this region provided a more than adequate sample size of hostels, a network of more than thirty hostels beyond Trondheim were unfortunately neglected from this research project. The geographical diversity in the South permits a range of different hostels in both rural and urban settings to be investigated, however, those beyond Trondheim could have offered further insights or indeed completely different ones from those forwarded via this thesis. Indeed, hostels in this region of Norway are inherently more remote than those observed elsewhere, and therefore have the potential to reveal other guest types additionally. As a consequence, an extension of the same methodology incorporating Trøndelag, Nordland and the Northern counties of Troms and Finnmark could be an interesting avenue to further pursue in the future.

A similar project could also be carried out in either Sweden, Denmark or Finland, to reveal to what extent the findings obtained from Norway, represent the Scandinavian region as a whole. The role of obligated hostel users appears to be an interesting avenue for further research. This group was encountered purely by accident during the final phase of the research project and therefore could not be explored to the depth the researcher desired. Additional research could attempt to observe the interactions between obligated and non-obligated guests and the perceptions the latter held with regards to the former. Similarly, future research could also observe the long-term

mobilities of obligated hostel users, providing narratives of their experiences over a considerable length of time.

9.6 Final Thoughts

This thesis has revealed a number findings which were neither anticipated or expected. Due to time and logistical restrictions, many of these unexpected findings unfortunately could not be observed in sufficient depth. It remains to be seen whether many hostels will continue to attain increasing visitor numbers, particularly during the global economic crisis which affected many regions around the world in 2009. Norway, is a sensitive destination due to the high costs involved with travel within the country and one would assume that backpackers and independent travellers would be the most obvious types of visitors to decline in number as a result. The loss of the regular ferry crossing between Newcastle and Bergen is also a significant blow to many mobile tourists wishing to bring personal vehicles from the UK and Ireland also. This problem is compounded by the loss of a number of budget air carrier routes between Oslo and Bergen and several European cities.

It appears that the nature of tourism looks set to change in Norway, and as consequence one assumes, so will the types of hostel users also. Therefore, rather than being the end of the research project, this thesis merely marks the beginning of a range of further opportunities for research on hostels and indeed, other accommodation types within the Norwegian and Scandinavian regions.

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