

Master's Thesis

MSc EBA Brand and Communications Management

Department of Marketing



HOW TO BRAND **Comundu** WITHIN THE BACKPACKING CULTURE

An investigation of the smartphone's impact on backpackers' social interactions

15 September 2016

Author: Dina Kirstine Nielsen

Supervisor: Zvi Goldstein

Characters: 181.853/80 pages

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The increasing digitalisation within the backpacking industry is revolutionising many aspects of backpacking. The present study seeks to investigate how Comundu, a digital app that enhances communication among the hostel and the backpackers, becomes an integrated part of the backpacking culture through branding.

It is still an uncovered area of backpacker literature how the increasing digitalisation, especially use of smartphones, impact the social interactions of the backpacking culture. Through qualitative interviews with seven experienced backpackers of varying degree, the significance of the backpacking culture for every aspect of the travel became evident. Especially the sociability of backpacking showed to be an important element. In addition, the interview findings suggest that the digitalisation has a negative impact on the social aspects of backpacking as well as the concept of freedom in relation to the flexible travel itinerary.

Thus, the study proposes that there are paradoxes in the backpacking community, where the largest currently is the emerging digitalisation that threatens to disrupt the sociability of the backpacking culture. The dualism of the backpackers' despise of commercialism and corporate companies is also an issue for companies like Comundu who strives to infiltrate the community.

Because of the culture's significance, the cultural brand approach (Holt, 2004) is chosen to embrace the cultural aspect of the backpackers instead of targeting the individual backpacker. The creation of identity value in aspiring to become a brand icon within the culture is analysed in relation to establish a strong myth for Comundu through storytelling.

The recommendations for Comundu emphasise the need to make a holistic storytelling in both content and touchpoints to strengthen its myth. Furthermore, Comundu needs to ensure that their app is inspiring and interesting, to encourage WOM among the backpackers. Finally, the paradoxes of the culture can be addressed through respectively expressing the bridge-building between the online and offline community explicitly and prove Comundu's fidelity to the backpacking community and industry as a whole.

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1 INTRODUCTION

“We will become the new Lonely Planet.

We will be the one thing that you cannot do without when you are travelling with your backpack”

– Mia Grosen, co-founder of Comundu (Jysk Rejsebureau, 2015)

Backpackers travel to the far corners of the world, only carrying their backpack and a Lonely Planet guidebook. The backpackers stay at simple hostels, but only for a few nights at a time before they spontaneously move on to the next adventure. Nothing is planned as much as it cannot be changed if exiting opportunities emerge. Last but not least, the backpackers love to meet new people, both locals and other travellers. Especially encounters with fellow backpackers are an important aspect of the journey, because the backpacker is a social bread. The backpacking community and the culture that dominates it, highly shape the travel experience.

This definition is describing how the backpackers have always been known to be: social, adventurous, spontaneous and perhaps most of all, free to go wherever they please with the few aids they carry on their shoulders. However, a new era might be emerging for the backpackers as they enter the digital age. The digital revolution, which has consumed the rest of the world for more than a decade now, is also revolutionising the world of backpacking as all backpackers now carry their smartphones with them on their travels. This not only eases travel planning and staying away from home, but it also carries the risk of erupting the social atmosphere in hostels because the guests increasingly are on their smartphones instead of interacting in the common rooms (Berger & Paris, 2013). This is becoming a concern for the hostel industry who observes the community feeling, and their selling point, fade away (Pearce, et al., 2009).

In their nature, hostels themselves are fairly primitive and has not encountered any part of the digitalisation, apart from obligatorily providing internet for their guest and perhaps online booking or at most an active social media page. Communication between the hostel and the guests is however still primarily through a blackboard in the reception, where they can announce their social activities.

Comundu is a small start-up company who wishes to facilitate the communication between the hostel and the backpacker as well as work the digital aspect into the backpacking community without neither disrupting the culture or neglecting the digital advances. The people behind Comundu are a team of passionate travellers themselves who are dedicated to improve the travel experience for backpackers visiting hostels around the world. They have developed a social platform for backpackers and hostels who

via the Comundu app can interact and share information about events, must-sees and practicalities. Thus, the online community encourages physical get-togethers so backpackers can meet more people and arrange activities themselves as well as provide information about hostel activities and events. As the quote that initiated the chapter implies, their mission is to be the backpackers' primary tool for planning of the trip, finding information and in addition, meeting other travellers, by claiming the role that *the backpacker's bible*, the Lonely Planet, has been sitting on for decades.

However, the backpackers can for businesses like Comundu be rather complicated to target. Nonetheless, do backpackers to some degree oppose the digital revolution (Pearce, et al., 2009), they also despise mainstream commercialism and corporatism (Richards & Wilson, 2004) making it very complicated for brands to integrate with the culture. The present study seeks to address these paradoxes that are very central to the essence of the backpacking culture.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

The described paradoxes of the backpacking community and the dominance of the culture make it complicated for Comundu to be branded as a digital company towards the backpackers. This complexity has led to the following research question:

How can Comundu be branded to become an integrated part of the backpacking culture?

The sub questions will contribute to provide a thorough answer to the research question:

1. *What defines the backpacking culture and how has it developed through the years?*
2. *How is the digitalisation influencing the backpackers' travel?*
3. *Which elements are important for Comundu to be included into the behaviour of the backpackers?*
4. *How can Comundu make use of touchpoints in their brand creation?*
5. *How can Comundu encourage word of mouth between the backpackers?*
6. *How can Comundu resolve the paradoxes of the backpacking community so Comundu can become part of the culture without disrupting it?*

1.2 DELIMITATIONS

Working towards answering the aforementioned research question, the present study will be focused only on the sub segment of backpackers rather than the whole youth travel market. Since Comundu, as the studied case company, primarily offers their mobile application for use on the hostels, this will be the focal point of the analysis. Though many types of travellers visit hostels around the globe, a choice has been made to only focus the analysis around the backpackers. What will later become evident from the target group analysis in chapter 5, is that the backpacker as a traveller is rather unique compared to other sub segments also within youth travels because of its culture.

As the study progressed, the role of the culture in targeting backpackers became evident and the cultural brand approach was chosen to accommodate this significance for Comundu's branding strategy. The selected theoretical foundation that the study is based on will thus be viewed in relation to a cultural approach to branding. Even though the remaining theory elements: acceptance theory, success criteria for online communities, brand touchpoints and word of mouth theory, are not particularly grounded in the cultural branding approach, it has been turned towards this understanding for the purpose of the chosen target group, because the culture plays a significant role in every aspect of the backpackers' choices, behaviour and community. In fact, the individual backpackers are embedded in the culture to such a degree that the backpackers become the culture while travelling, which the analysis will show later on. Thus, the culture aspect cannot be overlooked in any part of the following analyses.

It was chosen to conduct qualitative in-depth interviews to complement the knowledge from the existing backpacker research literature. Several researchers have expressed that the theme of the digitalisation's effect on the social aspects is an unexplored subject so far in backpacking studies (Pearce et al., 2009; Berger & Paris, 2013). The interview findings of the present study will aim to contribute to the inadequate knowledge about the digitalisation's role in the backpacking culture because this is an important part of Comundu's operations and their branding strategy as well.

The study will furthermore only be considering the B2C aspect of the Comundu business, where Comundu and the hostel collaborate on encouraging the backpackers to download and use the app. For Comundu, the B2B aspect is naturally just as important for their business because the hostels are their most important distribution channel in reaching the backpackers, but this angle is beyond the scope of the study.

2 METHODS

In the following chapter, the empirical setting of the present study will be reviewed in terms of philosophy of the research and methods behind the conducted interviews.

2.1 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

The research philosophy helps to understand how the researcher interprets the world and the present study will be based on Guba's (1990) view on the scientific paradigms. The study will be founded in the constructivist paradigm, where the reality is a continuous interpretation of the world we live in. The ontology of this perspective is thereby understood as no true reality is to be found, but it is constructed through the researcher's aim to understand it. In other words, when researching backpackers' culture, the findings will only be one interpretation of how the truth can be constructed.

The epistemology defines how the knowledge is acquired and through which point of view the truth is obtained. The researcher's point of view will be affected of pre-existent knowledge which is formed by society, culture and experiences and form presumptions from which the construction of the reality is viewed. Thus, the findings of this study from which the reality about the backpackers' culture is constructed, will be influenced by the researcher's knowledge and interpretations. The context and subjectivity of the research process is a means that neither can be or should be eliminated (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). Consequently, the foundation of this study's findings is influenced by the author's subjective interpretation of the reality.

In relation to this understanding, the author's positioning on the subject should be considered as a prerequisite for the research rather than bias. In relation to the specific research context, preconceptions and presumptions refer to the theoretical foundation that has provided the researcher with a specific horizon of understanding.

The reflexivity criterion of the constructivist perspective encourages the author to reflect on which significance her positioning reflects upon the conducted research (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). No first-hand experience with the backpacking culture has influenced the research. Nevertheless, the author's personal relationship with one of the co-founders of Comundu will certainly have a significance for the outcome of the research.

Lastly, the knowledge of backpackers, that this study seeks to produce is dependent on the context of Comundu and thus can only be characterized as a constructed view of the truth in accordance with the

constructivist perspective. As a consequence of the choice of research philosophy, the aim of this study is not to bring forward any absolute, objective or representative result.

2.2 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW DESIGN

The qualitative in-depth interviews are performed to understand the backpackers, their culture and their behaviour. A qualitative interview design was chosen based on semi-structured in-depth interviews with seven experienced backpackers. The interviews are conducted on the foundation of inference, where the study attempts to draw conclusions countable for backpackers as a whole on the basis of a small sample (Andersen, 2010).

2.2.1 PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Although most recent studies accept the presence of digital aids during backpacking travels, the theme of the research is rarely how the digital aids actually influence the social interactions (Pearce et al., 2009; Berger & Paris, 2013). Therefore, the interviews conducted for the present study has had this theme as primary goal in relation to how Comundu can be integrated in their trip.

The individual in-depth interviews will use as a source to fill in the gaps where the current research literature lacks knowledge, in particularly in relation to backpackers' use of digital devices on the trip. The purpose of the interviews is to map the backpacker's behaviour at the hostel and in particularly their use of smartphones.

2.2.2 COLLECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The selection of participants for the interviews was sought out at the hostel "Urban House" in Copenhagen, except for two participants who were identified through the author's personal network. Urban House has had a successful corporation with Comundu for testing of the product and the hostel was chosen as a primary participant collection spot because of their corporative willingness to improve the activities of Comundu. In this way, it has been able to locate backpackers in the Copenhagen area, where the interviews were conducted. Though this selection process resulted in the participants having some kind of knowledge about Comundu, this was not deemed to have a negative impact on the interview outcome.

Potential participants were asked in an introductory conversation before the official interview, if they could relate to the backpacker definition of Phillip Pearce (1990), which will be examined thoroughly in section 5.1.1 – *Knowledge from backpacker research literature*. The five qualifying criteria from Pearce's definition determined whether or not the participants fitted the description of the target group (see appendix 1). Of the five criteria, one was of particular interest to the study, namely the question of whether or not they

chose hostels as their preferred accommodation during travels (C1). This criterion was considered as an ultimatum and needed to be answered in accordance for the participant to be eligible. Of the four remaining criteria (C2-C4), a requirement of at least two complying answers was set as a condition for participation, although as it turned out, all participants were overwhelmingly agreeing with the statements put forward. Lastly, the participants were asked about their self-perception during travel, namely which label they identified themselves with: tourist, traveller or backpacker, because this subject is of importance for their travel culture. Of course, the preferred answer to the question would be “backpacker”, which was the case with all the participants (table 1). The background of this criterion is thoroughly described in section 5.1.2 – *The backpacker label*.

A particular weight on their travel experience was sought out, as the preparatory research showed that this has an influence on their travel behaviour (Richards & Wilson, 2004). Thus, a broad distribution of previous travel experience was considered optimal for the participant composition.

2.2.3 PRESENTATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Table 1 – Overview of interview participant characteristics

	<i>Age</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Number of travels</i>	<i>Number of travelled continents</i>	<i>C1</i>	<i>C2</i>	<i>C3</i>	<i>C4</i>	<i>C5</i>	<i>Label</i>
Christina	25	Danish	7	4	Hostel or guest house	Yes	Yes	1-4 months	Yes	Backpacker
Rasmus	23	Dutch	1	1	Hostel or guest house	Yes	Yes	4 months	Yes	Backpacker
Ellen	22	Dutch	2	1	Hostel or guest house	Yes	Yes	4-6 months	Yes	Backpacker
Natalie	27	Danish	3	2	Hostels	Yes	Yes	3-6 months	Yes	Backpacker
Michael	24	British	1	2	Hostels	Yes	Yes	6 months	Yes	Backpacker
Luka	31	Australian	12	4	Hostels	Yes	Yes	1-4 months	Yes	Backpacker
Helena	24	Danish	3	3	Hostels or guest house	Yes	Yes	3-6 months	Yes	Backpacker

Source: Appendix 1 and 4-10, own creation.

The group was relatively homogeneous in terms of the basic demographics in regards to age, occupation and life cycle status. Thus, they were all soon to be done with studies or on the job market and in the

twenties or early thirties. The group is composed of various nationalities as shown in Table 1, and there is a sensible gender distribution; four female and three male participants. In regards of their experience level, the answers were positively satisfying as the participants individually showed to be well travelled in large parts of the world and many of them through several backpacking trips. Most importantly, all the participants could relate themselves to the label of backpacker when travelling in addition to answering satisfactory to the five determined criteria (C1-C5, appendix 1).

Overall, the group of participants can be described as prime examples of the typical backpacker (Pearce, 1990) and is deemed highly relevant to explore in terms of backpacking behaviour.

2.2.4 INTERVIEW PROCESS

A guide with interview questions was prepared prior to the interview conduction (see appendix 2). The interview guide was structured around four main subjects: (1) personal information, (2) general backpacking experience, (3) backpacking behaviour, (4) use of digital devices, and (5) Comundu – experience and attitude.

The interviews were conducted as semi-structured interviews. The interview guide was used as an outline for the themes and questions to be covered, but the interview situation also provided space for decoys when the interview participant brought up unexpected but interesting subjects (Justesen & Mik-Meyer). Furthermore, the interview questions were not methodically presented. The interview guide was gone over in different orders for each interview depending on how the interview proceeded. The purpose of the semi-structured interview was to guide all participants through the same open questions so every participant reflects over the same topics.

The interview guide was not directly structured around the theme of Comundu. The aim of the guide was rather to collect information about the participants' travelling experience, behaviour, preferences and opinions without stirring the interview specifically towards Comundu. Thus, the questions were intended to be formulated objectively and in broad terms to let the participants speak freely about their travel experiences. The intention of the interviews has been to keep the themes of the study implicit and let them develop naturally during the interview in line with the participant's sentiments. In this way, skewness in relation to any expectations towards certain answers that the participant might be feeling are minimised.

All interviews were conducted in Urban House or in Copenhagen Business School's facilities to keep the environments neutral, except for two interviews that were conducted in the comfort of the participants' own home. The interviews were performed in Danish with the Danish participants in order to keep the interview situation stress-free and neutral. The rest of the interviews was conducted in English. During the

interview, an informal interview style was pursued to encourage a rich dialogue rather than strictly following the interview guide.

The recorded interviews were transcribed after each interview. As transcriptions generally are considered “*constructions from an oral conversation to a written text*” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 183), the interviews are presented in a slightly modified language to make up for the rather fragmented mode of spoken language. In this regard, most pauses were left out and the conversations were gently translated into readable written text in order to ease the understanding. The process of transcribing the interviews allowed for a more insightful comprehension of the empirical material when it was gone through this meticulously, which provided the author with another dimension of understanding for analysing the interview findings. For the purpose of the analysis in chapter 5 and 6, the excerpts from the Danish interviews were translated into English to illustrate the findings of the interviews.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, the theory is chosen in regards to what is deemed relevant and valuable in answering the research question of the present study. The first section reviews the cultural brand approach, which is essential for the understanding of how brands create value in markets where a specific culture is dominating. For Comundu to become an integrated part of this culture, as the research question aims for, they need to aspire for brand icon status within the backpacking culture.

Cultural branding will be the central framework for the entire chapter 6 and other theories will thus serve as secondary inputs to provide in-depth knowledge of some of the aspects of the framework. The secondary theories will provide insights in relation to the understanding of the brands storytelling as will be examined later on.

3.1 THE CULTURAL BRAND APPROACH

In the cultural brand approach, the consumer's identity is analysed at a collective level because the individual is deeply embedded in the culture (Holt, 2002; Heding et al., 2009). Thus, the field of study deals with consumer culture rather than the individual consumer. In cultural branding, the brand earns identity value within the culture and when the identity value becomes strong enough the brand reaches an iconic status (Holt, 2004). The cultural brand approach is leading the way in order to find out how Comundu can become a brand icon within the backpacking culture.

In short, to set the scene of the cultural brand approach, it is important to understand how a few of the most important key words are connected in the process of brand creation. The key words will be defined in the following sections.

Brands are created through *myths* that through *storytelling* is embedded into the culture. The myth should address the current *cultural contradictions* of the culture and derive from the *populist world*. A strong brand myth creates *identity value* within the culture which in time can transfer into the status of a *brand icon* (Holt, 2004).

In relation to the present study, it is relevant to examine how brand value creation takes place within this brand approach to determine how Comundu can sow positive brand associations in the backpacking community. In addition, brand dualism, which is examined in the last section, offers an interesting view of the cultural brand approach in relation to the subject of backpackers and offer valuable insights of how a brand should navigate in a difficult environment such as the backpacking community. But first it is

necessary to map out the market in which the brand operates as well as defining how a brand is understood within the cultural brand approach.

3.1.1 MYTH MARKETS

Cultural branding distinguishes itself from other branding approaches in that the brands do not compete in product markets where product benefits determine the brand's potential substitutes. In cultural branding, identity brands compete in myth markets with other cultural products that use their myth to resolve cultural contradictions (Holt, 2004). Hence, the contradictions shape the myth market. The myth market is built by three blocks: national ideology, cultural contradictions and populist world (Holt, 2004).

National ideology: The national ideology reigns within the culture as a moral consensus. The "citizens" must identify with the ideology, accept its institutions and work with the culture's best interests in mind (Holt, 2004). The ideology is made up of what is considered good and just. The ideology needs to be deeply felt within the heart of the culture rather than directly formulated. The ideology is conveyed through myths that are constructed around ideals of the individual success.

Cultural contradictions: The members of the culture do not always naturally inhabit the ideology. Some aspire to the nation's ideals, but have trouble matching up to them. These tensions between the ideology and the individual experience produce desires and anxieties that create demand for myths to manage the differences (Holt, 2004). Thus, the myth needs to attack the cultural contradiction between the ideology and the individual in order to be relevant.

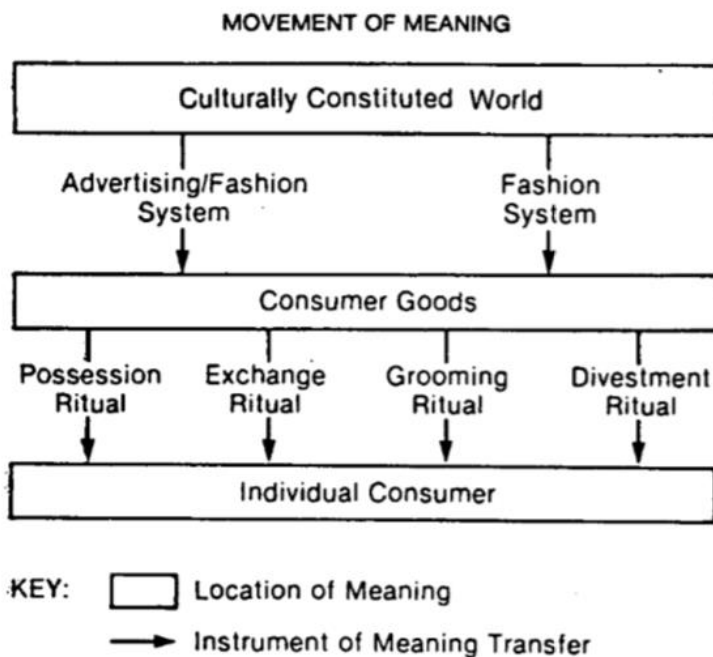
Populist world: Populist worlds are the raw material from which the identity myths are constructed. The people who consume the myth through product use are rarely themselves part of the populist world. Rather, the myth supplies an imaginary connection to the world. The authenticity of the populist world gives the myth credibility.

Targeting myth markets is often complicated because they occasionally shift and the brand is thereby sensitive to the disruptions within the culture (Holt, 2004). Thus, the brand needs to be adaptable to the cultural changes in the myth market and be able to shift their myth.

3.1.2 DEFINITION OF A CULTURAL BRAND

One of the first suggestions of how a product can possess cultural meaning was proposed by McCracken (1986) who formed the cultural consumption theory that considers how products with cultural value influence the consumers. In figure 1, his model *Movement of meaning* is shown.

Figure 1 – The transfer of cultural meaning



Source: McCracken (1986).

The Movement of meaning proposed a theory of cultural consumption, which describes how cultural meaning is incorporated into consumer goods and transferred to the lives of the consumers. Thus, the theory acknowledges that products not only have a utilitarian character, they also are able to carry and communicate cultural meaning (Heding, 2009). The transfer of meaning happens from the cultural constituted world to consumer goods and further down to the individual consumer. The transfer to consumer goods are facilitated by the advertising and fashion systems and incorporated to the individual through consumption of those goods (McCracken, 1986).

This view of how the products, or brands, are carriers of cultural meaning, created the foundation for Douglas B. Holt's research that came to be a core theme in cultural branding. Holt (2004) introduced the cultural branding model as a framework for how to brand companies within cultural formations. The model is based on the cultural consumption theory by McCracken (1986), which provides a basic understanding of how culture and branding is united. The research of Holt (2004) is based on an extensive empirical study of iconic brands and through this, Holt has conceptualised a new perspective on perceiving and managing brands (Heding, 2009).

Holt (2004) argues that "[a] brand emerges as various "authors" tell stories that involve the brand" (p. 3). Thus, a brand only exists through these interactions, which is called storytelling, and the value that the brand stories embed to the brand. The brand logos, names and designs are empty markers if the brand

does not have a history. Brands are formed over time from the ideas that is formulated from customer experiences, media exposure and conversations among people in their everyday social lives. From the collected understandings of these stories, the brand is infused with meaning and is firmly established. There are four primary types of authors involved in the process of creating a brand: the company, the culture industries (media), intermediaries and customers (especially when they form communities). The relative influence that these authors have on the brand creation varies considerably across product categories and the specific culture that it targets (Holt, 2004).

Unlike other branding theories where the brand typically is seen as a psychological phenomenon in the mind of the individual consumer, the cultural branding approach emphasises that the power of a brand lies within the collective nature of the brand perceptions (Holt, 2004). When the brand becomes powerful enough within a culture, the brand achieves brand icon status. Nonetheless, cultural branding still holds some elements of the cognitive and consumer-based brand approach because it is impossible to build a brand without considering the perceived benefits of a product that is closely related to branding in general (Holt, 2004). Brand associations, attitude and equity thereby still have justification, although from a different perspective.

From Holt's (2004) findings, it is suggested that brand icons are compiled of two characteristics: the cultural icons and the identity brands. Cultural icons are persons or things regarded as a symbol by a culture and which is considered worthy of admiration or respect. An identity brand is a brand whose value to consumers derives primarily from identity value, which is the aspect of a brand's value that derives from the brand's contributions to the self-expression of the consumer. A brand icon is found by a combination of the two (Holt, 2004). Thus, the first step for a brand is to establish its identity value within the culture and once this is strong enough, the brand achieves brand icon status.

3.1.3 IDENTITY VALUE CREATION

The collective brand value creation is influenced by social and cultural changes and takes place through the brand playing an active role in the culture (Heding, 2009). Thus, the identity value creation lies more outside the control of the company than in conventional brand approaches. The brand is formed through storytelling and because the company only constitutes one of the influential authors, the company must figure out how to encourage the storytelling among the other authors. The company needs to understand the most relevant cultural currents so the brand can benefit from the most pressing issues at the time (Heding, 2009). In this way, the brand will be able to provide the consumer with the most appropriate web of associations at the time and stimulate the brand value creation. Through the understanding of the current underlying anxieties and desires of the culture, the company can figure out which story to tell. The

story is founded in the populist world and should create a myth to address the contradictions of the culture.

The making of a brand icon is described through the strategic principles of the cultural branding model: cultural expressions, historical fit and myth making, (Holt, 2004), which will constitute the pillars of storytelling in the present study.

Cultural expressions: The brand's value is found in the cultural contents of the brand's myth and the expression of this through the product and communication.

Historical fit: Brand management is about adapting the brand's myth to cultural changes in order to remain relevant. Revisions of a brand's myth are necessary to meet the changing challenges of the culture to remain iconic. Brand consistency at all costs is thereby rejected. Instead of the brand existing above the history, the brand addresses the social tensions of the culture and adjusts in their wake. This pillar is thereby concerned with figuring out how to meet the members of the culture on their level.

Myth making: The brand is a storied product and the product is merely a means to embrace the story. Communication is the centre of consumer value and consumers buy the product to experience the story that is anchored in the brand.

These pillars constitute the storytelling of the brand creation. Exactly how the story should be told in order to address the cultural contradiction is composed in a cultural brief that forms the positioning strategy. When the myth is told the right way it has a greater chance of residing within the culture to form identity value and at last reach the status of a brand icon.

3.1.4 BRAND DUALISM

Within the culture, the successful brand icons create a dualism where the counter part is called the anti-brand movement. The anti-brand movement is concerned with what branding and globalisation do to the culture. According to Heding et al. (2009), the concept of the anti-brand movement rose from the concern that "... culture is not 'bottom-up' any more (significant cultural issues stemming from the people), but rather 'top-down', reversed by big companies and global brand corporations" (p. 221). Thus, culture is no longer created by the people, but by companies. The anti-brand movement encourage to "fight the machine" with boycotts. Through these actions, the people can change the cultural meaning creation in society.

The dualism of the ironic brand versus the anti-brand movement is characteristic for the cultural brand approach. Though the anti-brand movement seems like a major barrier to the company's brand creation,

the company can actually benefit from analysing the tensions between the two sides of the spectrum (Heding, 2009).

The key of addressing the dualism is according to Holt (2002) found in a paradigm shift where brands should: *“be frank about profit motives, act as responsible citizens and be able to deliver original and relevant cultural material”* (Heding, 2009, p. 222). The essential word in this perspective is “authenticity” in all aspects of the business and how the company operates in the community.

3.2 ACCEPTANCE THEORY FOR NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Acceptance theory is useful when introducing new technology in a culture like the backpackers’ because their accept is not something that comes naturally. This section will examine the determinants of acceptance theory.

Studies among users and non-users of smartphones (Meng et al., 2015) show that factors influencing innovation adaption for consumers is depending on adoption behaviour and the perceived innovative nature of the new technology. The adoption behaviour is evaluated in relation to the individual’s levels of innovativeness and willingness and the pace with which they adopt new technology. The different degrees of adoption behaviour are called: innovators, early adopters, early and late majority and laggards (Rogers, 1983; cited in Meng et al., 2015). The perceived innovative nature can be categorised into five characteristics that determine a favourable or unfavourable attitude towards the innovation; relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trial ability and observability.

This suggestion was reformulated in 2003 by Venkatesh and his colleagues to the specific use for innovative technology adaptations, called the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology model (UTAUT). The UTAUT provides a tool for assessing the likelihood for success when introducing a new technology and understanding the drivers behind the acceptance of the technology. The literature on UTAUT traditionally focused on professional use software, but an emerging part of more recent research have discovered its relevance for the app market (Meng et al., 2015), where new technologies are introduced on a daily basis. The UTAUT model consists of four constructs that determine user adoptions of new technology; performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003):

Performance expectancy is the degree to which the user believes that the technology will provide gains in job performance. *Effort expectancy* is related to how easy it is to use the system, thus, the degree of usability of the interface. *Social influence* is defined as how sensitive the user is to other users’ opinions of

he or she using the system. Lastly, *facilitating conditions* refer to consumers' perception of the available resources and support that the technical infrastructure provide.

Once these four constructs are evaluated satisfactorily, the technology achieves acceptance among the users.

3.3 SUCCESS IN ONLINE COMMUNITIES

The following section will review the aspects of online communities from literature that have importance in understanding the benefits and attractiveness that participation generates. This section will be centralised among determining the criteria for constructing a successful online community.

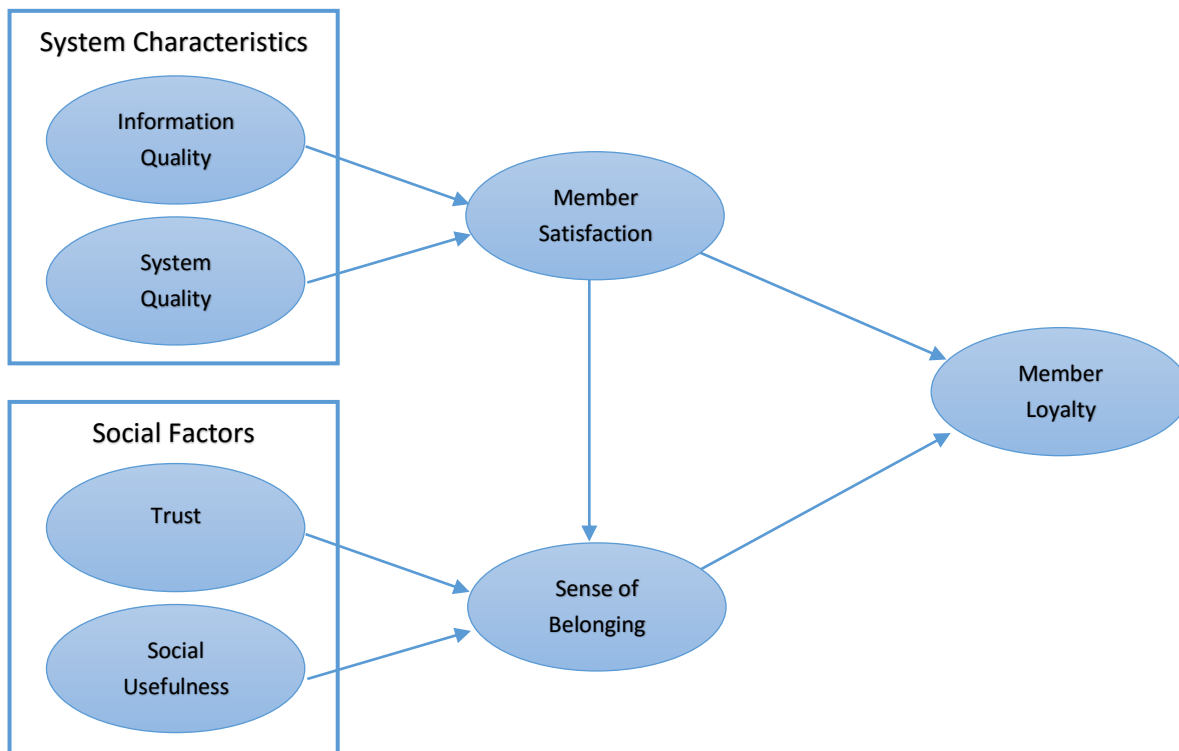
Online communities are growing in numbers, users and especially in the time users spend daily on these platforms. Online communities are generally known under the label "social media", but for the purpose of the present study, the term "online communities" is chosen to emphasise the social unity that characterises these platforms and which is of particular interest in relation to the theme of backpackers.

The social relations are reembedded in mobile and portable networks and mobilises face-to-face interactions (Mascheroni, 2007). Thus, social interactions are rethought through online communities. Traditionally, online communities provide a virtual space where people with shared interests can interact. In literature, online communities are defined as: "*a relational community, concerned with social interaction among its members*" (Lin & Lee, 2006, p. 480). The increasing interest towards online communities can generally be credited to the benefits and opportunities that it offers to its users through ongoing information sharing. Online communities are dependent on social interactions among its members who share interests, build relationships, create fantasies and share knowledge (Lin, 2008).

Increasingly, new online communities emerge and compete to attract new members to achieve a critical mass of users. The success determinants of an online community have been under thorough investigation since the beginning of the millennium, but it has been widely acknowledged that the social interactions are crucial to the success of online communities (Lin & Lee 2006). Thus, ensuring active participation in online communities is a critical issue to guarantee success to the community (Koh & Kim, 2004).

Lin (2008) has developed a success model for online communities shown in figure 2. The model is based on one of the most influential theories on information systems, the DeLone and McLean IS success model from 1992.

Figure 2 – Model of success determinants for an online community



Source: Lin (2008), own creation.

The model suggests that member satisfaction and a sense of belonging are crucial factors in developing member loyalty for a successful online community. Loyalty in a community creates stability and founds the groundwork for expansion of the community. Attracting more member participation is important for any online community because it ensures the community's survival. Furthermore, loyalty enhances member involvement and thus, the activity level on the platform. Hence, member loyalty is the focal point of the model.

The satisfaction of members relies on the *information quality* and *system quality* of the online community. *Information quality* is defined as the quality of the output that the community generates. The content of the social community is evaluated by its accuracy, timeliness, completeness and usefulness. *System quality* refers to the technical aspect of the community where ease of use, system reliability and convenient access are some of the valued denominators.

The sense of belonging is dependent on two social factors, *trust* and *social usefulness*, which is important for the individual's agreement with the culture of the group. *Trust* is defined as the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another. It is found to be the strongest influencer in an online community due to the lack of face-to-face interactions, which makes mutual trust essential in increasing confidence in the platform. *Social usefulness* is referred to as the perceived support from the other community members. In

this regard, approval, respect and recognition is implied to have importance for the sense of belonging. Sense of belonging is important because no level of participation or involvement would occur if it was absent (Lin, 2008).

The research of Lin (2008) found that members are satisfied with the online community when it is reliable, convenient and user-friendly, providing accurate, customized and constantly updated information.

3.4 BRAND TOUCHPOINTS

A key concept of the present study is brand touchpoints that in this regard have the aim of mapping the possible storytelling touchpoints. Combined these touchpoints constitute the myth, which the backpackers experience as a whole during their stay at the hostel. The purpose of this is to find out where Comundu can act as mediator for the communication between hostel and backpacker and thereby improve the communications flow from both sides. In this regard, the use of the brand touchpoints in the present study will set the backpacker as the customer and the hostel as the brand because the interest of Comundu is to facilitate this relationship and find out where Comundu can contribute and be at value for both parties.

Brand touchpoints can be defined as all the encounters that the consumer has with the brand: before, during and after purchase. The touchpoints are closely linked to the customer experience. Considering the nature of the Comundu product, an app, the purchase situation is renamed to download for the purpose of the analysis chapters, so the brand touchpoints will be divided into touchpoints that relates to before, during and after download.

The brand touchpoints aim to determine the successful interactions between the brand and the consumer. The research of touchpoints became especially relevant during the recent economic crisis where it suddenly became crucial to correctly evaluate all marketing leverages to estimate their contribution and return on investment. This, in combination with increased consumer power in communication, led to companies using as many communication channels as possible, resulting in resource waste and large budgets (Spengler & Wirth, 2009). An introduction then was made of a 360-degree analysis of brand touchpoints to enlighten the various strategic options a company faces before making budget decisions.

Spengler & Wirth (2009) suggested how each touchpoint has a different impact on the consumer's perception of the brand and how brand equity can be affected. Therefore, the success of a brand is very dependent on how each brand touchpoint is experienced by the consumer. They also specified that the important aspect to analyse is the activities that actually are received by the consumer and not blindly

observe what is sent out. The only activities undertaken by the company that have an impact on the brand equity are the ones that are obtained and processed by the target group (Spengler & Wirth, 2009).

Instead of focusing on each separate touchpoint, Hogan et al. (2005) investigated how to create a memorable consumer experience. They stressed how brand touchpoints in harmony possess large potential in mapping the customer brand experience and how the customer brand experience is driven by all brand touchpoints.

Davis & Longoria (2003) underline further the importance of making touchpoints work together to create synergy in order to increase their effectiveness and create a consistent brand experience resulting in customer satisfaction. They address the attention towards the Brand Touchpoint Wheel, which is one way to make the process of mapping touchpoints manageable. The Brand Touchpoint Wheel defines three categories for brand touchpoints: pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase experience. The pre-purchase experience includes heightening brand awareness, shaping brand perceptions and expectations and driving brand relevance to link the benefits of the brand to the perceived needs of the consumer. The purchase experience consists of instilling confidence in the brand and delivering the value that the customer expects so the consumer ultimately will make the purchase. Last, the post-experience touchpoints are leveraged after the sale and regard use and building relationships. The objective of the after-purchase evaluation should be increasing brand loyalty and advocacy so the customer endorses and recommends the brand to others. Previously, these have been under-leveraged and underestimated touchpoints, but recently companies have begun to pay extra attention into the forming of customer-brand relationships. The key of the Brand Touchpoint Wheel lies within selecting the touchpoints that drive the desired brand experience.

3.5 WORD OF MOUTH

Word of mouth (WOM) is the marketing communications platform that companies have the least control over and at the same time, it has showed to be one of the most powerful influencers of the consumer. WOM is not to be bought or owned, it needs to be earned.

In the early stages of the research process with this study the significance of WOM influence among backpackers became evident. In the present study, the face-to-face WOM communication at the hostel among backpackers are the central topic in relation to understanding the behaviour of the backpacker. The online WOM exchanged in the forum of the Comundu app is secondarily investigated.

3.5.1 REVIEW OF IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF WORD OF MOUTH LITERATURE

Early on, Katz & Lazarsfeld (1955) found that orally travelled personal recommendations had a greater influence on people's opinions and behaviour than any form of mass advertising. It is thereby apparent that the researchers from the beginning understood the power of personal contacts and recognised the importance that it held for the future of marketing.

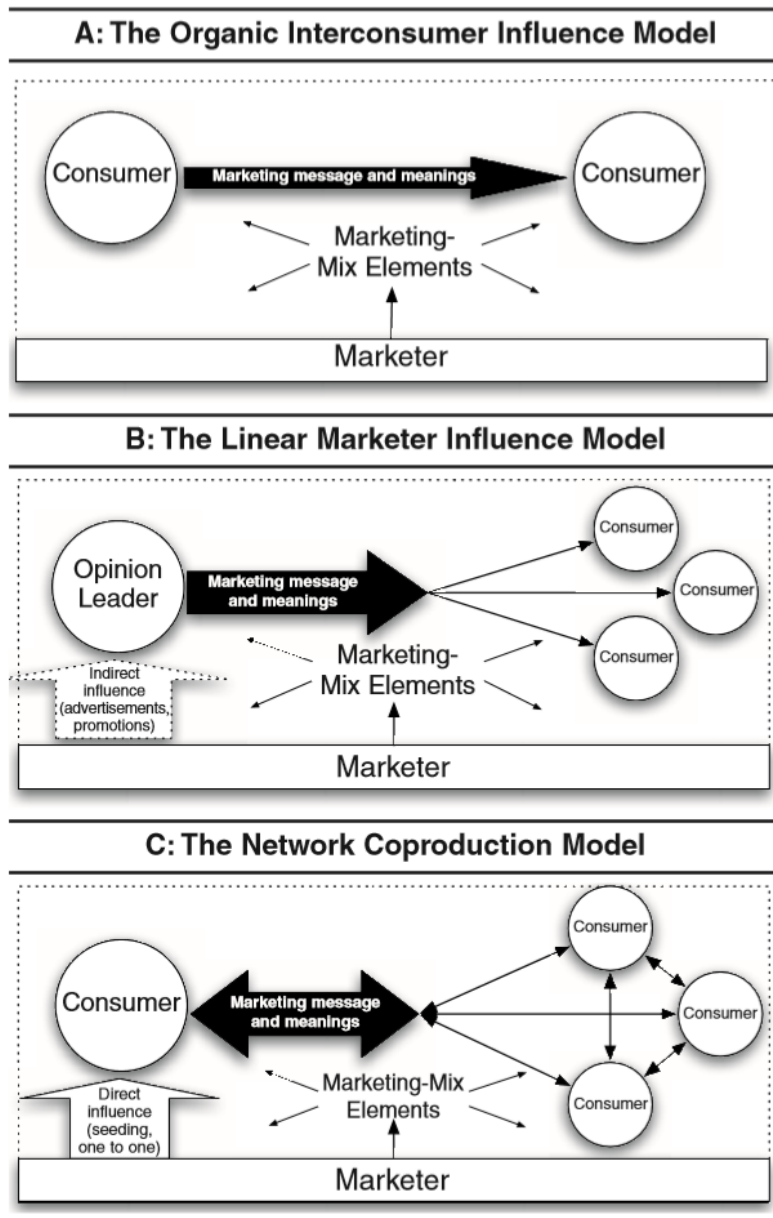
The earliest characterisations defined WOM communication as: *"oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, regarding a brand, product, or service"* (Arndt, 1967; cited in Breazeale, 2008, pp. 297-298). However, since then, WOM communication has expanded with the many online possibilities that are now available and this definition might not be completely sufficient to describe the current situation (Brown et al., 2007; Kozinetz et al., 2010). According to Breazeale (2008), it has been argued that WOM is a fleeting phenomenon because it spontaneously occurs and then vanishes as soon as it is uttered, but with the internet, this is no longer valid because practically nothing disappears on the internet.

One of the main evolvments in WOM communication over the years is the number of accessible channels for information exchange and the power with which they influence each other. As seen in figure 3, the evolution of WOM communication has gone from a simple, primary face-to-face interactions in the Organic Interconsumer Influence Model, to opinion leaders controlling the WOM influence towards the majority of consumers in the Linear Marketer Influencer. The latest model to illustrate the mechanisms of WOM is the Network Coproduction Model, where consumers are active co-producers of value and meaning in a web of influencers. The traditional WOM communication has been supplemented with the online form of WOM which is best illustrated through the Network Coproduction Model where the consumer gets influenced from a wide range of communication channels. The consumer is thereby stimulated from a large number of different sources with positive as well as negative opinions and experiences. The three models coexist and are still equally valid in different situations (Kozinetz, 2010). The main development is though that the consumers have access to numerous ways of interacting with each other and sharing opinions.

Simultaneously with the development in WOM communication, it is seen in figure 3 that the marketers gradually have found more effective ways to reach the consumer, from mass marketing to a more direct targeting approach adapted to the individual consumer (Kozinetz, 2010). The marketer has thus become less in charge of the information exchange even though the activities are optimised and resources are saved. Kozinetz et al. (2010) argues that the marketer still has influence on consumers' WOM communication, but a notion worth remembering is that the communication still can and will happen

without the influence from the marketer. The power of information and experience exchange lies with the consumer who is more powerful than ever before.

Figure 3 – The evolution of WOM theory



Source: Kozinetz (2010)

An aspect of WOM communication that differentiates it from all other advertising tools, is the social aspect: *“Word of mouth is a social network phenomenon: people create ties to other people with the exchange of units of discourse (that is, messages) that link to create an information network while the people create a social network”* (Dwyer, 2007, p. 64). Thus, exchange of information is creating social networks and enhancing the personal ties among the peers.

This might be why WOM is perceived as one of the most credible and trustworthy sources of information and is more readily acceptable through social networks and communities (Buttle, 1998). WOM communication has been shown to influence a variety of conditions such as awareness, expectations, attitude and behaviour (Buttle, 1998). Thus, from a marketing perspective, WOM communication is a powerful influencer inside the culture of social communities: *“People trust other people, especially those ‘like themselves’. [WOM] information is considered more interesting, understandable, reliable, relevant, objective, credible and engaging”* (Eccleston & Griseri, 2008, p. 593). Similar personality, outlook and beliefs are thereby important factors in establishing trust.

Especially in the case of new product introductions, WOM play a particularly important role because awareness must be built and consumers are in need for information about the product and brand, for them to consider purchasing it (Mahajan et al., 1984). Since WOM communication is the most trusted source, WOM has a significant influence on whether or not the product launch is a success.

3.5.2 MOTIVATIONS FOR UTTERING WORD OF MOUTH

Sundaram et al. (1998) identified four major motives for passing on WOM messages, which are: altruism, product involvement, self-enhancement and help the company.

Altruism: This motivation is based on doing something for others without expecting anything in return. Research shows that consumers engaging in WOM often have the intention of guiding the receiver to make a satisfactory purchase decision (Sundaram et al., 1998). Helping others is considered one of the main motives of WOM communication.

Product involvement: Directly linked to the opinion of the product, product involvement is derived from personal interest in the product and excitement from product ownership and/or use (Sundaram et al., 1998). Naturally, this motivation is of particular interest to companies, because how the product is perceived to meet expectations and fulfil the needs of the consumer has a major influence on their likeliness to share their experience. Satisfied customers tend to be more likely to spread positive WOM.

Self-enhancement: As the opposite motivational factor of altruism, self-enhancement focusses on improving one's image as being and intelligent and competent shopper. They project themselves as experts to enhance their status and seek the appreciation of the receivers (Sundaram et al., 1998). However, this motive is not considered as having as much weight as the others since WOM generally is closely linked to giving sincere advice. In self-enhancement, there also lies the social benefits that exchange of information generates.

Help the company: Commitment to the company and brand can be a powerful motivational factor for sharing positive WOM (Sundaram et al., 1998). Within this motivational factor also lies a loyalty expression and a desire to maintain the valued relationship with the brand.

The motivational factors should be taken into account when the company develops new strategies for generating effective WOM communications. Understanding the motives that generate the desired positive WOM is important in knowing how to encourage and inspire it. Conclusively, it can be argued that the credibility and power the WOM communication perceive is a major advantage in a world where the level of trust in traditional advertising and companies appears to be declining (Allsop et al., 2007).

4 PRESENTATION OF COMUNDU

The following chapter will provide a presentation of Comundu as the case company of the present study. The following will be based on public available material and meetings with co-founder and co-owner, Mia Grosen, which can be found in appendix 3.

Comundu provides an app available for Android and IOS that facilitates the communication between backpackers and hostel. The backpacker is able to connect with other guests, arrange get-togethers and get the latest recommendations from the hostel about must-sees at the destination and hostel events. The advantage for the hostel includes the ability to get information about activities, events and practicalities out to its guests in an effective way. In this way, Comundu creates value for both the backpacker and the hostel, covering the communication flow both between hostel – backpacker and backpacker – backpacker.

Comundu's vision entails building a bridge between the physical and the online community of backpackers. This vision has contributed to the Comundu-name, as Comundu is a combination of the words 'community' and 'mundo' ('world' in Spanish). The name brings associations to communities around the world, which is the exact concept of the Comundu app; to facilitate and strengthen communities both online and offline in hostels around the globe (Beginners and Experts, 2015).

4.1 HISTORY

Comundu was founded in Copenhagen in 2014 by the siblings Mia and Lasse Grosen, as a social platform for backpackers that allows them to connect with the hostel and other guests during their stay. Both Mia and Lasse have a lot of travel experience as backpackers and their individual experiences cover over 60 countries (Beginners and Experts, 2015). The inspiration for Comundu emerged when Mia was working at a hostel in Istanbul. She discovered that there was no suitable way of communicating with the guests except for a blackboard in the reception of the hostel. At the same time, she observed that backpackers increasingly were sitting with their smartphone in the common room instead of interacting with each other and meeting the other guests, which has always been a large part of the backpacking experience. She wanted to find a way to combine the online and offline experience at hostels and at the same time make hostel offerings more visible for their guests. These thoughts were realised through Comundu, which now works as a communications channel among hostels and backpackers in several hostels around Europe and is expanding slowly to the rest of the world.

One of the crucial issues for small start-up companies like Comundu is that others see the potential and invest. Comundu received their first external funding, a public grant, while they were doing preliminary product tests in a hostel in Bangkok. This has subsequently been supplemented with an amount of private investments and additional public grants (Trendsonline, 2015), which has formed a stabile base from which Comundu to develop. One of the private investors who now is part of the board of Comundu is the Danish hotel magnate, Henning Arp-Hansen, who contributes with years of experience within the Danish hotel market as owner of a massive hotel portfolio in Copenhagen (Berlingske, 2015). Comundu thereby have great resources of knowledge and experience to draw from in addition with positive perspectives in collecting the necessary capital to exploit the market in the future.

The business model of Comundu is based on earnings generated from the subscribed hostels (Comundu hostels), who pay a monthly fee depending on the number of disposable beds. With the subscription, the hostel is provided access to a customised platform to use for communication with its guests. An important aspect of Comundu is to make the platform completely free for the backpackers.

4.2 ACTIVITIES

The target group of users for the Comundu app is 18-28-year olds, who are guests at one or more of the Comundu hostels during their travels. Primarily, this target group can be categorised as backpackers. Comundu has noticed that the guests increasingly are carrying and using smartphones and other digital devices on their trip. The aim is to tap into the guests' existent behavioural pattern and routines, so Comundu becomes a natural part of their hostel stay (Grosen, appendix 3).

The marketing efforts that Comundu has introduced to directly targeting the hostel guests include posters, flyers and recommendations from the hostel staff in an attempt to make the guests download the app. The efforts have been tested in hostel environments and have shown varying degrees of success. In cooperation with the hostels, Comundu has made several efforts in onboarding guests, mostly in the form of digital improvements to their interaction with the guests. Hostels in general are not as tech savvy and therefore Comundu can be a big help in bringing the hostel into the digital age (Grosen, appendix 3).

Comundu has also put efforts in their online presence. They are active on social media channels such as Facebook and Instagram where the focus especially lies in promoting the backpacking travel experience and waking the desire to travel. In their communication on both social media and their website, www.comundu.com, the message that they wish to convey is that Comundu is something that the

backpackers can relate to. Comundu is not a corporate machine, Comundu is made by backpackers for backpackers and they genuinely wish to improve the travel experience for its members (Comundu, 2016).

4.3 COMPETITION

Comundu's competition from similar travelling apps is primarily about signing the hostels. Once the hostel is subscribed, the guests only have that one option to choose from, when looking for an app from the hostel. The hostel will primarily will be the location of where the backpackers download Comundu. This type of competition is not further reviewed in the present study as it is beyond the scope dealing with B2B competition. The scope of the study is instead to research the B2C aspect between hostel - backpacker and Comundu - backpacker.

The competition on the market is slowly growing. When the idea for Comundu emerged, there was no app like Comundu on the market, but developing intuitive and usable software takes time and in the meantime other apps are slowly emerging. The focus of Comundu lies in the social features that the app provides, because no other app is providing the possibility of chat and communication among the backpackers in the same way that Comundu does. This is important to note in order to understand the importance of the online community-feature, although this primarily relevant for their competition on the B2B market when signing hostels to their web.

4.4 FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Comundu has begun as a sophisticated communication tool for backpackers and hostels, providing recommendations and information about events. The future perspectives of Comundu are though reaching far beyond that. In the future, the intention is that Comundu should be able to provide a booking service, so guests can book their next stay and hostel activities directly in the app. The ideal is that when the web of Comundu hostels is extensive enough, the backpackers will only need one app for the hostels they visit on their trip. In this way, the Comundu app will encourage the guests to choose another Comundu hostel for their continued journey.

The backpacking market is a market in rapid progress, both on the digital front and in proportion. In general, the increased mobility around the world and young travellers attaining more purchasing power have made the number of youth travels grow steadily (Richards, 2015). The niche of backpackers represents a large part of this market as the backpacking travelling style has become more popular and normal. Ironically, the increased accessibility has made backpacking part of the mainstream tourism, which

they always have tried to escape (Richards, 2015). The increasing popularity has developed a complex net of hostels, transport companies, internet cafés and travel agencies, who target backpackers and constitutes the backpacking industry.

The emerging digitalisation has opened up a new market within the backpacking industry as the new generation of backpackers are online and socially connected (IPK International, 2014). Research show that approximately 90 percent of young travellers are never separated from their mobile devices when travelling (IPK International, 2014) and the tendency emerging predicts that this has more slowly, but steadily, spread to backpacking (ETFI, 2013). This aspect will be further analysed in the following chapter 5 – *Getting to know the backpackers*.

Thus, the backpacking market has huge potential for companies who have the skills to tap into the newly discovered digital market of backpacking.

5 GETTING TO KNOW THE BACKPACKERS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a thorough understanding of the backpackers through the existing research literature and the findings from the conducted interviews. The interview findings will supply the existing literature as well as contribute to the knowledge of how smartphone are influencing the backpackers' travels. In the end of this chapter, the interview findings will be compared to the findings of the research literature. This chapter will thereby be answering sub questions 1 and 2.

5.1 KNOWLEDGE FROM BACKPACKER RESEARCH LITERATURE

The first section will explore the existing research about backpackers from the preliminary findings to the definition of today's backpackers. Within this context lies a requirement to take a look onto the backpacker label, which is of significance for how the backpackers understand themselves. Furthermore, the traditional target group analysis found in section 5.1.3 – *Backpackers as a target group*, will look into the demography, motivations, travel patterns and culture of the backpackers and lastly, the existing research about the backpackers' digital behaviour will be uncovered.

5.1.1 EMERGENCE AND DISCOVERY OF THE BACKPACKER

The concept of the backpacker was first mentioned in the 1970's, when a new type of tourists was discovered, who performed long-term budget travelling. Early researchers named them "drifters" as they were observed to break out of the "Western cultural bobble" in which that the mass tourists were travelling (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004). The drifter emphasised freedom and mobility and formulated a semi-political statement against "*growing political dominance and cultural homogeneity of life in the western developed world*" (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004, p. 74). The drifters had a general despise for commercialism and corporatism, which they thought were controlling society. Eric Cohen (1973) divided tourists in "institutionalised" mass tourists and non-institutionalised travellers. The non-institutionalised roles included "drifters" and "explorers" who had common values of spontaneity and independence, but differentiated primarily on their different budget limitations.

Riley (1988) removed the negative connotations such as "hippie" or "bum" that in time had come to associate the drifter and she detached the associations of drug culture and anarchistic values that had become synonymous with the phenomenon (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004). She described the group as well educated, middle class travellers who do not aimlessly drift around but simply travel under flexible itineraries.

Nevertheless, it was not until 1990 that the term “backpacker” was used to describe this group of travellers. The definition was put forward by the Australian professor in Tourism, Philip Pearce, who in his book “The Backpacker Phenomenon” (1990) described five denominators for the backpacker segment.

These are:

- Preference for budget accommodation;
- Emphasis on meeting other travellers;
- An independently organised and flexible travel schedule;
- Longer rather than brief holidays;
- Emphasis on informal and participatory holiday activities.

The first criterion is a “basic and necessary determining criterion” that needs to be fulfilled, while not all of the rest, but several, need to be met for the traveller to be called a backpacker (Richards & Wilson, 2004).

Along with the backpackers becoming an accepted and noteworthy part of tourism, backpacking slowly evolved into a valuable industry and the market quickly adapted to backpackers’ need of budget accommodation. Pearce argued that the growth of the backpacking market and the shift he noticed in the view on backpackers are attributed to the development of a corresponding industry in the form of the emergence of the Youth Hostel Association (YHA) in Australia in the 1990s (Pearce, 1990; Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004). These became the first examples of hostels aimed directly at backpackers and have undoubtedly contributed to the emergence of hostels around the world. From then on, backpackers have been an important and very visible part of tourism, willingly or not, and interest has grown to examine this traveller type in depth (Richards, 2015).

In the following section, a comprehensive analysis will be made of the knowledge that has been gathered about the backpackers until this day.

5.1.2 THE BACKPACKER LABEL – BACKPACKER, TRAVELLER OR TOURIST?

In literature there has been an ongoing discussion of whether to designate the group “backpackers” or simply “travellers” (Richards & Wilson, 2004; Sørensen, 2003). The Global Nomad Survey conveyed by Richards and Wilson (2004) show that more than half of the participants could relate to the definition of a traveller while almost a third preferred the label “backpacker”. Less than 20% considered themselves “tourists”. The survey showed a connection between how many trips the participant had taken and which term they identified themselves with. Participants who was during their first trip (and primarily under the age of 20) was more likely to choose the tourist label, whereas older and more experienced participants within travel labelled themselves either “backpacker” or “traveller”.

A large part of the backpacker identity is formed by the collective rejection of the “tourist” label and every aspect of the definition that can be defined as “mainstream”. The backpacker in general is much more clear about what a tourist is and what a backpacker is not, than what a “backpacker” actually is (Richards & Wilson, 2004), which indicates that the most important thing is to distance themselves from the mainstream tourist term.

Interestingly, the survey also showed some degree of rejection towards the “backpacker” term, which leaves “traveller” as the only label that no one had any objections about. Accordingly, the “backpacker” label was still infused with somewhat negative associations as of being “a new age hippie” (Richards & Wilson, 2004).

Despite of these findings, the term “backpacker” will be used throughout this study, to emphasise the specific qualities that belong to this particular target group and avoid any associations to other travel or tourist segments. The term “traveller” would probably have been a more neutral denomination, but it is also a quite broad term and this study seeks to investigate the “backpacker” in particularly.

5.1.3 BACKPACKERS AS A TARGET GROUP

The following section will in depth examine how the backpackers can be defined today with the combination of drawing from existing international surveys and various research conducted about the backpacker.

5.1.3.1 Demography

Several surveys have been performed to try and determine the typical characteristics of the backpacker. The first global quantitative survey of its kind was conducted by the ATLAS Backpacker Research Programme (BRG). The survey was named “The Global Nomad Survey” and generated replies from 2,300 respondents with 42 different nationalities (Richards & Wilson, 2004). The Global Nomad Survey is still considered in today’s research as the foundation of determining backpacker characteristics. Most recently, WYSE Travel Confederation has performed the most extensive and large-scale survey to date, New Horizons III Survey, which represents over 34,000 responses drawn from 137 different countries (WYSETC, 2013). The purpose of the survey is to provide an overview of the youth and student travel market, including the backpacking market. Both surveys are conducted by organisations of interest. The time spread between the surveys contributes to a knowledge of how the backpackers as a target group has developed for the past decade.

As seen in literature, the backpackers are widely defined as “young budget-minded travellers”. Both surveys have showed a great majority of young backpackers. 95 percent of participants were under the age

of 30 in the Global Nomad Survey (2004). Interestingly, the New Horizons III Survey (2013) stated that the over 30 age group has grown consistently the last decade and now accounts for 17 percent (WYSETC, 2013). This indicates that backpackers increasingly include a more mature segment. Following Pearce's requirements of a backpacker, it is possible to find backpackers in all ages (Oliveira-Brochado & Gameiro, 2013) since the term rather defines a specific travel style than an age group. However, the vast majority of backpackers are students (Richards & Wilson, 2004; WYSETC, 2013) with a higher education degree or still studying for one. Given the large proportion of students, the average income of backpackers is low and they typically save up for several months or a year before travelling out.

A typical finding is that most backpackers are female (Richards & Wilson, 2004; WYSETC, 2013) and that female backpackers tend to travel more alone than males. Furthermore, research shows that more and more nationalities are represented among backpackers, although they still are predominantly of Western origin (Sørensen, 2003; Richards, 2015).

In relation to the stage in the life cycle that backpackers find themselves in, backpacking is often related to transitions in life or even life crises. A common belief is that backpackers travel to "find themselves" and reflect upon their own identity, especially in the transition from adolescence into early adulthood (Cohen, 2004). This concept is known in literature as *rite de passage*. This includes stages between education steps, jobs or even relationships. Nevertheless, there is a tendency among backpackers to travel when a change in their life is emerging, whether it is the direct cause of the travel or just a convenient moment to travel out.

5.1.3.2 Motivations

The surveys found what can be named the classical reasons to go travelling, such as: exploring new cultures, learning new things and meeting new people (WYSETC, 2013). These reasons have been basically unchanged since the start of backpacker research (Richards & Wilson, 2004). The main purpose of the trips is being on holiday, although the number is smaller than previous studies (WYSETC, 2013). Specifically for backpackers, building friendships is one of the main motivations for traveling (Richards & Wilson, 2004; WYSETC, 2013), which is in accordance with Pearce's findings (1990), where meeting fellow travellers was the only included motivational criteria for defining a backpacker.

Another of the major attractions offered by backpacking is the pursue of freedom that enables them to enjoy experimentation and self-fulfilment under relatively reachable and affordable circumstances (Cohen, 2004). Backpackers are able to take a step back and gain a new perspective on the society and to reflect upon their own identity in ways that are impossible in their normal everyday lives.

This transition in life is connected to their life cycle stage and is known as *rite de passage* as briefly mentioned previously. Backpackers are often experiencing this phenomenon when travelling out. *Rite de passage* was originally in backpacker literature used to describe the separation of the young backpacker from friends and family and the safe life at home (Cohen, 2004). The trip symbolises the transition from youth to adulthood, where the backpackers during the trip can prove themselves from the problems arising on the way. The accomplishment of problem-solving using their own independent decisions marks their competences and makes them capable of returning home as an adult. Previously, the separation was a radical part of the journey as the backpackers had no possibility of being in touch with the people at home. Now, the separation has become less severe (Berger & Paris, 2013; Cohen, 2004) due to the emergence of email, internet cafés and the practicalities of the smartphone, which is frequently used to check up on status at home or even seek advice in difficult situations. Another aspect that has changed drastically is that going on a backpacking trip does not require as much effort or preparation as previously and has become more accessible for the youth in Western societies, both economically and practically (Cohen, 2004). Thus, long backpacking trips has become more common.

Another motivational factor is the opportunity for experimentation that emerges on the road. This can be related to no parental and societal control, drugs and alcohol, sexual preferences or extreme sports. In this way, the trip may not be the educational travel of personal evolution for the backpackers that *rite de passage* suggests, but rather a possibility to test limits and boundaries in ways that they may not consider at home.

Interestingly, none of the surveys has mentioned the economical aspect as a motivational factor for backpacking even though previous research on this subject showed very strong results in this aspect (Murphy, 2001).

5.1.3.3 Travel patterns

On average, the respondents of the Global Nomad Survey had taken 6 trips outside their region of residence (Richards & Wilson, 2004) and the results showed that as the travel experience increased, people tend to travel further away. This supports the notion that the one major benefit gained for backpackers in general is the thirst for more travel (Richards, 2015). Additionally, the travel time tends to be relatively long, on average more than 60 days. The length of the trips is typically related to occupation and income as those in work with higher income travels for a longer time period than students.

The average spend per travel has been increasing significantly the last decade. The spend on youth travels has experienced a growth of 9 % per year from 2007-2013, although this number also includes studying

abroad etc. (WYSETC, 2013). Given young people's relatively low income, they are able to raise their spending power while travelling by saving before the trip and by parental funding. A large part of backpackers also engages in work on the trip or voluntary work that generates free accommodation and food to be able to expand the length of the trip.

The spend of backpackers arguably contributes to businesses and host economies in the visited destinations (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995). The benefit of this is obtained by a range of small locally-owned businesses as opposed to international hotel chains, coffee shops and duty-free stores. The money spend by backpackers serves the local community to a much larger extent than the conventional tourists' because the money end up directly in the hands of the locals (Richards & Wilson, 2004). In this way, the backpackers contribute to the local community in ways that is beyond compare to the normal tourists' contribution. Backpackers embrace the authentic local offerings without the local community needing to spend already scarce resources on providing services to attract the general international tourism (Scheyvens, 2002). Thus, the local community gains in many aspects from the backpacking community and receives both direct (spending in local shops) and indirect (small business development and employment) benefits from their visits promoting local development to the destinations (Scheyvens, 2002).

In general, the backpackers prefer spending money on experiences and adventures, while they save as much money as possible on the elementary necessities such as accommodation and transport. This means that they would gladly spend 100 euro on tours that would give them memorable experiences while staying in the cheapest accommodations and travelling by 24-hour bus rides instead of spending money on domestic or regional flights (Richards & Wilson, 2004). This also indicates that time is a plentiful resource for the backpacker and that they prioritise to lengthen the trip by saving resources and making the journey from one place to the next a part of the experience. Thus, the backpackers are highly aware of the priority of their spending, both to maximise the length of their trip, but also because they prefer to obtain authentic experiences by "living like the locals" instead of selecting the more comfortable choices.

Backpackers in general favour budget accommodations, particularly hostels (WYSETC, 2013), which is in accordance with the key criterion of Pearce (1990). This preference is not only related to the cheap nature of hostels but is even more related to the environment of the hostels. The hostel environment invites to meeting other like-minded backpackers with a variety of common facilities and activities. Generally, hostels dispose of common areas for social interaction and movie-nights, kitchens for cooking with other guests, a bar for meeting others joyous company on happy hour before going out at night and the unavoidable dorm rooms, where backpackers sleep and share restroom facilities with a large number of other guests. In addition, hostels often offer a number of activities for their guest, both free and for a charge, such as

walking tours, shared dinners and pub crawls together with a number of excursions offered by collaborating partners of the hostel which typically include jungle tours and extreme sports.

The most frequent activities of the backpackers are visiting cultural and historical sites at the destination along with sitting in cafés or restaurants and shopping (WYSETC, 2013). They also spend a great deal of their time on active sports, such as diving or trekking. Adrenaline kicks in terms of skydiving or bungee jumping are typically also part of planned activities during the travel, especially when travelling in Oceania or South America (WYSETC, 2013). Backpackers prioritise experiences above everything else and they gladly pay for activities and tours if they deem that it will bring them extraordinary memories to take with them home. Accordingly, the activities of backpackers are informal and participatory similarly to Pearce's definition (1990).

The general impression from literature is that backpackers travel off the beaten track and determinately search for untouched areas on their travels (Cohen, 2004). Noticeably, even though this seems like a central characteristic of the backpacker, this is not a part of the Pearce definition (1990). Travelling off the beaten track is more a romanticised image of backpacking travels. In reality, backpackers primarily seek out backpacking enclaves where they can find fellow backpackers and where the area and infrastructure is thoroughly tested by thousands of other backpackers before them. Only a minority really travel off the beaten backpacking trails or spend much time staying with local people (Cohen, 2004). These enclaves are typically placed near must-sees at popular backpacking or tourist destinations and are always supplying a variety of hostels to choose from. This phenomenon is described as *the institutionalisation of the backpacker* early on in the backpacker literature (Cohen, 1982; Riley 1988) as a regimentation of backpacking travel patterns in terms of infrastructure, destination and routes (Sørensen, 2003). The paradox in this regard is, as discussed earlier, the large effort that backpackers make in distancing themselves from tourists, who according to them travel to the same destinations for sightseeing. In this respect, backpacking enclaves are a parallel to the tourists' vacation resort (Cohen, 2004), despite of the backpackers' condemnation.

5.1.3.4 Culture

The backpackers as a community is a very heterogeneous group in terms of age, nationality, purpose, motivation and life cycle stage (Sørensen, 2003). Nevertheless, they share a label that they all acknowledge, the definition of being a backpacker while travelling. The label is the reason why backpackers to a varying degree connect to a common set of values, beliefs, norms and behaviour, which forms a shared identity that they to a varying degree all can relate to. Because of the diversity among the group in terms of demography, Pearce (1990) argues that the backpacker may be best described through the social

interactions that define the backpacking culture and are one of the primary motivations to go backpacking (Riley, 1988).

Groups and social interaction in enclaves

Even though most backpackers are known for travelling alone or with a single companion, the reality is that the majority spend most of their time in the company of other backpackers and frequently create impromptu travel groups along the road. Usually, friendships are formed for a few days after which they split up and team up with others (Sørensen, 2003). The temporary groups are formed as friendly encounters in a shared but loosely defined subculture (Murphy, 2001).

Backpackers seek out the company of others and therefore seek out the backpacking enclaves. Encounters with other backpackers are of such importance for the backpacker that it is the primary purpose of visiting the enclaves. Even though locals are appreciated both as cultural inputs and as friendly staff at the hostel, they are of secondary importance in comparison to other backpackers (Murphy, 2001).

This might be the reason why the most reliable and important source of information by far is WOM communication among backpackers (Murphy, 2001). This information is often exchanged through the social encounters in the hostel common room, where story-swapping is a large part of the social behaviour and has a strong influence when it comes to planning the next step in the travel itinerary. Hostel staff, travel sites and blogs are also frequently used, but they are secondary compared to fellow backpackers' advice.

Flexible travel itineraries

One of the only tangible features that backpackers for sure share is their flexible multiple-destination travel itinerary. The theme of travelling and the planning of this is therefore socially and practically important in conversations as it is the only for certain shared subject for all backpackers. The flexible itineraries may suggest that backpackers are doing very little planning before the trip (Richards & Wilson, 2004), but it is in reality a question of keeping the options open during the trip to not miss out on any unforeseen opportunities. Backpackers usually get a lot of inspiration and advice from fellow backpackers on the road with whom they casually and coincidentally have gotten into conversation. These recommendations typically have a large influence in the design of the updated travelling schedule, which is often altered multiple times during the trip as new information and recommendations come at hand. Accommodation is rarely booked prior to the trip. Most backpackers prefer to arrive at the destination and organise themselves, while some, which is often connected to none or little travel experience, preferred to book a night or two in advance so they would have a place to go when arrived (Richards & Wilson, 2004). One aspect of the trip that the backpackers typically have in place is the return ticket home (Richards & Wilson,

2004), as it can be necessary to present when applying for travel visas or because of responsibilities that might be waiting at home. Nevertheless, return tickets are rarely as permanent that they cannot be postponed if cannot-miss opportunities emerge on the trip.

Road status

Road status is a cultural phenomenon among backpackers that serves as a hierarchisation process and produces a shared cultural identity (Sørensen, 2003). The phenomenon is related to whether the traveller is conceived by fellow backpackers as a “real backpacker” or not. Road status is obtained in several ways: paying “local prices”, getting the best deal, travelling off the beating track, dangerous experiences etc. In principle, anything can build road status as long as it has a certain roughness factor in the mind of the audience. In other words, road status is measured in hardship, experience and competence along with an ability to communicate it in the right way to fellow backpackers (Sørensen, 2003).

A frequently used method of communication is the look of the backpacker. Ragged and smeared clothes can symbolise the struggles and rough situations the backpacker has gone through on the trip. Conversely, a fresh and clean backpack indicates that one is untraveled, a newcomer and thus, has no road status. Another method is storytelling, performed most often in the common room of the hostel, where exaggeration and manipulation to make it a better story is rather the rule than the exception (Sørensen, 2003).

One of the most important aspects of road status is the ability to travel inexpensively, which signals road competence. The intention is often explained as a matter of not paying more than the locals, because it is humiliating to be ripped off. Nevertheless, what matters in reality is not to pay more than other backpackers (Riley, 1988). The question “how much did you pay” is frequently asked among backpackers, not only for practical reasons, but primarily for exchange of road status (Sørensen, 2003). Interestingly, road status seems more important for backpackers on their first trip, while backpackers with more experience tend to have a more relaxed attitude (Sørensen, 2003). Perhaps, the first-timers have a need to prove themselves more in the eyes of other backpackers to attain the feeling of fitting in the community.

Lonely Planet

The Lonely Planet guidebook is widely known as *the backpacker’s bible* and has for decades led the way for a countless number of backpackers. It thereby has a large role in the backpacking culture.

Lonely Planet is the world’s largest travel guidebook publisher and was founded in 1972, which is around the time of the discovery of the drifters as a travel segment. Lonely Planet was one of the first agencies to target its guidebooks towards backpackers and low-cost travellers in general. In 2009, they expanded their

publishing business to include digital copies of their guidebooks. Worldwide, they have sold 120 million books and around 11 million units of its travel app (Bethea, 2014).

The original Lonely Planet-book was based on the author's own nomadic wanderings in Asia (Richards & Wilson, 2004) and provided a common reference source for backpackers. The irony is that the Lonely Planet was designed to guide backpackers off the beaten track, but in reality they ended up creating new beaten tracks to follow (Richards, 2015), resulting in the well-known backpacking enclaves that is seen today. Lonely Planet has often been subject to criticism on this behalf because a mention in a Lonely Planet book can draw large numbers of people, which in several places have led to overcrowding and disturbance and destruction of local culture and sites (Hampton, 2010).

Among backpackers, Lonely Planet is without question the most frequently used guidebook (Richards & Wilson, 2004). Despite of the digitalisation's entry to backpacking, the physical guidebook is still a frequently used information source both before and during the trip, although the available online channels have taken the lead together with WOM (Pearce et al., 2009). The online version of Lonely Planet on the contrary is lacking far behind in the frequency of uses and seemingly cannot keep up with the reputation of its offline counterpart.

However, Lonely Planet has through its long-time position come to symbolise the backpackers, their activities, norm and values (Sørensen, 2003). Thus, the symbolic influence of Lonely Planet on the backpacking culture is uncontestably important.

5.1.3.5 Digital behaviour

Digital devices have revolutionised the way that backpackers interact with each other, with travel products and how they gather information (WYSETC, 2013). It is even said to have become one of the distinct features of this particular travelling style (Mascheroni, 2007).

The emergence of technology for communications use was first seen in literature as an important part of the backpacking trip in the beginning of 2000s. Back then, the communication was conducted through internet cafes with a more or less miserable connection which made patience an essential attribute when checking the e-mail inbox. The internet was still considered secondary to the Lonely Planet guidebook in relation to information research (Richards & Wilson, 2004), not least because the bad connection required a few hours more spent to accomplish the purpose. During the last part of the 2000s, the mobile phone, and at last the smartphone, became more and more essential among the chosen items to be found in the backpack.

Today, the vast majority of backpackers carry digital devices such as smartphones, tablets and laptops, which combined with the hostel offering of free Wi-Fi has made travel blogs and online reviews increasingly popular to find recommendations and advice for the travel itinerary. These have to a large degree substituted the Lonely Planet and other guidebooks as a source of information (Richards, 2015). Information search is done thoroughly before the departure and during the trip by consulting a wide range of information sources (Richards & Wilson, 2004).

In addition, social media of every kind has become particularly important for backpackers, both to keep in touch with friends and family at home and to keep in touch with new friends gathered along the road and who they might meet up with again during the trip (WYSETC, 2013). The primary social media is Facebook, which is used for all sorts of communication (Pearce et al., 2009). The advice of friends and family were interestingly one of the main information sources on the road (WYSETC, 2013), which emphasises the accessibility of contact with people at home while travelling. This is one of the aspects of backpacking that has changed dramatically since the digital revolution. Backpackers manage their multiple networks while traveling and at home through social networking sites, email, and other technologies which have blurred the boundaries between home and the road (Berger & Paris, 2013). The tendency is growing rapidly to stay frequently in touch with friends and family at home, while previously the isolation on trips where one of its attractions (Mascheroni, 2007; Richards, 2015).

Digital devices and social media have become social objects and part of the backpacking sociality (Paris, 2012). Previously, the backpacking sociality was limited to the face-to-face interactions that the backpackers encountered on the road, but now the sociality has become divided between the physical and the interactive encounters.

Emergence of the flashpacker

The digitalisation has resulted in the emergence of another type of traveller whose roots have grown from the backpacker foundation, the flashpacker (Hannam & Diekmann, 2010). What defines the flashpacker is primarily that they carry digital devices and mediate the experience through the digital devices and communications technology (Paris, 2012). The flashpackers share the mindset of backpackers (Paris, 2012), but they usually have a larger disposable income and choose backpacking by choice rather than budget necessity (Paris, 2012).

One of the largest differences between the backpackers and the flashpackers is that the backpackers see the social interaction as one of the major highlights of the trip and the flashpackers do not necessarily feel the same need for encounters. Some studies even suggest that a large part of the flashpackers prefer to

spend some or all of their travel in hotels rather than hostels (WYSETC, 2013), an unthinkable and absurd thought among backpackers.

With today's use of digital devices both among backpackers and flashpackers, it can be hard to sharply divide each type into their own category. Flashpacker must thus be defined as a sub-segments of backpackers, who are tech-savvy, "backpack with style" and still engage in some parts of the backpacking culture (Hannam & Diekmann, 2010). Flashpackers are the innovators or early adopters of technology (Meng et al., 2015), while backpackers typically are late adopters of anything that can be categorized as mainstream or commercial (Richards & Wilson, 2004), but even backpackers have surrendered to the benefits of the smartphone during travel.

Because flashpackers typically do not take part in the sociability- and hostel part of the backpacking culture, they are not an attractive target group of this study. Yet, they are interesting to mention because they have been the first step in showing the digital path for the backpackers.

5.2 INTERVIEW FINDINGS

The main findings of the conducted interviews have been divided into five key themes, which will be reviewed separately in the following. The transcriptions of the interviews can be found in appendix 4-10.

5.2.1 SEARCH FOR AUTHENTICITY

A large part of the participants chose backpacking as their preferred travelling style because they come closer to the authentic culture and the locals than with any other way of travelling, which was especially explicit from the more experienced travellers: *"Hostels are closer to the local culture and gives a feeling of the destination you are located at"* (Natalie, appendix 7) and *"[Experiencing the local community] is the whole meaning of my travels. It is by far the largest reason why I travel out"* (Helena, appendix 10). This appreciation of the local culture is also reflected in the spending: *"I would much rather spend my money on experiences and great food, than pay for a place to stay. In the same way I also prefer to support the local community where they have their own businesses"* (Natalie, appendix 7). This was mainly expressed by the more experienced participants, who also thought that backpacking had become too popular and normal and wished for more original travelling styles: *"Backpacking is not authentic anymore, so in the future I might wanna go live with the locals instead of the overcrowded hostels"* (Natalie, appendix 7).

During the interviews it became evident that a distinct part of backpacking is the backpacking enclaves. The participants seemed more or less aware of the concept, although the word 'enclaves' never was part of the conversation. Instead the phenomenon was referred to in variations of *"you go to all the same places, so*

everywhere you are there are backpackers around” (Ellen, appendix 6). The thoughts on the phenomenon was generally positive because it provided an invaluable social aspect, though the crowdedness of the popularity of backpacking also was an emerging issue among the participants: *“It is not always easy to go off the tracks because all other travellers go there as well”* (Rasmus, appendix 5).

The interview findings show that the motivations for backpacking among the participants were very identical. The answers were variations of wanting to explore the world, feeling the freedom of travelling and getting a new perspective on their everyday lives. Most often the travelling occurred when the participant was in some kind of transition stage in their life, typically before or towards the ending of their studies.

5.2.2 DOMINANCE OF SOCIAL ASPECTS

From the interviews, it was evident that there were two main reasons for selecting hostels as the accommodation of choice. First, the price because the cheap nature of hostels makes it possible to travel for a longer time. The second, and possibly the most important reason, was that hostels are a sure place for meeting other likeminded backpackers. The majority of the participants preferred a hostel that had a social and casual atmosphere as in opposition to party hostels or really quiet hostels. Being social and meeting new people in the hostel largely compensate for the negative aspects of the hostel stay, such as being continuously interrupted in the sleep when staying in large dorms because of people coming in at different times in addition to lack of comfort, privacy and occasional cleanliness.

The interview findings show a favourable attitude towards participating in activities arranged by the hostel. Almost all of the participants, with the exception of one, participated regularly in hostel events during their stay, because it, according to them, is the best way to get to know the other guests.

According to the interview participants, the first two things they want to find out when they enter a hostel is the Wi-Fi password and if there is anything happening at the hostel or in the city that they would not want to miss. This behaviour is closely related to the primary use of the hostel, which is planning of the trip and being social with the other backpackers.

WOM from other backpackers is the primary information sources for planning of the trip: *“I always think that if a backpacker says it, then it must be good. [...] I prefer listening to other backpackers [for advice]. They just always know what you want, because they want the same”* (Ellen, appendix 6). The participants expressed no doubt of following these recommendations blindly because they are considered genuine and reliable. Online reviews of hostels and places to go, such as Tripadvisor and travel blogs, also have a large impact on the participants’ choices and they rely heavily on these when planning the trip.

The Lonely Planet is still a famous object in the hostel environment, though none of the participants carry it around, but use the hostel's copy. Only two of the participants had an online version. The interview findings suggest that Lonely Planet still plays some kind of role in the information search, at least as inspiration source, although the participants avoided the places that was directly mentioned in Lonely Planet: *"When a place is mentioned in Lonely Planet, then you know it is going to be more expensive and overcrowded, so we used it most to locate the good areas at the destination and then found a hostel on our own when we arrived"* (Natalie, appendix 7).

The backpacking mentality is greatly centralised among the sociability and openness of the backpackers: *"You change a little bit when you are a backpacker, you become more open"* (Ellen, appendix 6). Several participants expressed how easy it is in general to get in conversation with other backpackers because everyone is sharing the same experience and everyone is outreaching. It is especially this togetherness that defines the community. This is one of the reasons why WOM among backpackers are the most reliable source of recommendations, because they all have the travel experience and outstanding adventures as a common goal. As one participant put it: *"... [Other backpackers] got genuine recommendations for you, 'cause you're all kind of following the same trail"* (Michael, appendix 8).

5.2.3 USE OF THE SMARTPHONE

All of the participants brought their smartphone for travelling and some also brought tablet or laptop, though primarily in relation to school or work related use or simply for entertainment purposes. In addition, all participants expressed a constant use and necessity of their smartphone. As one participant put it: *"It is everything. It is my camera, telephone, internet. Everything in one place. [...] It does it all, I use it all the time"* (Christina, appendix 4).

The first and primary act when entering a hostel Wi-Fi is checking in on social media to get an update and see if there are any messages or the like. The next is information search about the present destination and events that potentially could be attended. These acts illustrate the primary concerns of the backpackers that emerged throughout the interviews: sociability and exploration. Among the variety of internet uses, a set of more practical uses is recognised as well, such as gathering of information on routes, transportation and finding and booking the next hostel stay. These activities confirm the flexible travelling style and the independently planned travel itinerary that is altered on the move.

The interviews also included a section in regards to the participants' general feelings about apps to find out their motivations on this aspect. The interview findings show that generally the participants are willing to download apps if it initially reflects some kind of practical or social functionality. On the contrary, if the app

somehow failed to meet expectations, the app was easily discarded. Several of the participants expressed in addition that the selection of apps was highly affected by limited space issues on their smartphone, which means that the app should be particularly beneficial for it to be prioritised.

5.2.4 THE IMPACT OF THE SMARTPHONE FOR THE BACKPACKING CULTURE

The recurring impression among the participants was overall that the smartphone has made their travels easier. Booking, planning and finding transport are all done with the smartphone, so basically everything the backpackers need is right by their hand. Furthermore, it has become more tangible to cope with struggles along the journey because the backpackers now are more in control when they can look up information themselves. The general feeling among the less experienced participants was that they feel safe when they know that they always have the features of the smartphone to count on in a case of emergency.

On the other hand, some participants expressed that even though it had become easy to plan and book the next destination, they felt that a lot of the freedom of travelling had been reduced because it has become harder to just show up at a hostel and get a room because everyone is now booking in advance and the hostels are often occupied. One participant explained that *“you have to plan a lot more than you used to”* (Christina, appendix 4), which is contradicting the flexibility of the travel itinerary to some degree.

The general feeling among the participants was that the smartphone took up too much space on the backpacking experience as a whole and that they all tried to limit their smartphone use while travelling. However, a few of the participants showed slight astonishment or embarrassment when thinking about the role that their smartphone in reality plays on their travels: *“... it’s shameful, I know, but it is true”* (Michael, appendix 8).

Those of the participants who have been travelling since before the penetration of smartphones argues that it definitely has changed some part of the backpacking culture. They observed that the backpackers more or less constantly are on their smartphone while being at the hostel, especially in the common room, which is very different from their past experiences: *“People have become unsociable. I think it is worrying that it has become a tendency to use your phone everywhere, also in the common rooms that in my opinion only should be used of those who have an intention of engaging with others”* (Natalie, appendix 7). They concurrently agreed that the atmosphere of the common room in particular had changed for the worse because people to a lesser degree was interacting and to a larger degree was minding their own business being occupied with their smartphones.

Thus, the overall opinion was that the use of smartphones has a negative impact on the social interactions at the hostel, though it is hard to do without. One participant expressed it this way: *"[Travelling] is definitely easier, but it takes away some of the charm that you are always online. Before you could go travelling without being in touch with everybody all the time. You were out of reach and forced to deal with it"* (Christina, appendix 4). The interview findings conclude that there are worries among a large part of the participants that backpackers more often are engaging in the social life on their smartphone instead of seeking it out in real life.

5.2.5 OPINIONS ABOUT COMUNDU

About half of the participants expressed that they had heard of Comundu, but only one had downloaded and tried it during travelling. However, the participant only tried it briefly before travelling on to another hostel and it was in the very early test stage of Comundu, so her review of the app was unfortunately uncontemporary. Nevertheless, the majority of the participants showed positive sentiments towards the possibility of them using the app when visiting a Comundu hostel.

The interview findings showed that the one aspect, which the majority found to be particularly interesting by Comundu, was the fact that they would always be updated by watching the ongoing dialogue in the hostel's feed and thereby be able to pick and choose between the emerging options that seemed appealing: *"I like the thought of meeting people on my own terms through Comundu. Then I can follow everything that is going on and choose whatever fits me"* (Natalie, appendix 10).

When asked what the participants are missing from an app while travelling, a suggestion that was mentioned on several occasions was the idea of an app that included an events-calendar for the visited destination. One thing that the participants were especially agreeing about was that they would love to have an overview of everything going on so they would not miss anything: *"It would be great with some kind of event-app for the area you are in [...] where you can see everything that is going on where you are. Then they can send notifications like "this is happening today". [...] It would be great if you didn't have to miss out on anything"* (Natalie, appendix 10). Several participants expressed that they really hate to miss out on experiences while travelling. Thus, the participants would not want to miss anything but they also like everything being on their own terms. The freedom of choice is obviously playing a large part in the freedom of backpacking and in this aspect, they would like to be presented with all the choices to make the right selection.

However, a few participants who already had expressed concern about the smartphone taking too much space in the backpacking community worried that Comundu would boost the smartphone use at the hostel.

The worry was that the sociability of the hostel would be transferred to the digital world. One participant also uttered scepticism about finding information in the app about what to see and where to go: *“I just think that if you find the information through an app then it will only be the highlights you see and then you won’t find the little places and little details that really makes a place interesting. If it is written down somewhere for all to see then it will be something that everyone does, and then it won’t be as authentic for long”* (Helena, appendix 10). In this scenario, the app will become the new Lonely Planet in terms of guiding the backpackers to the same mainstream enclaves, unless the app finds a way to overcome this struggle.

5.3 COMPARISON OF INTERVIEW FINDINGS WITH THE LITERATURE

What basically define backpackers is, that they are driven by a shared desire to travel. Considering the strength of the backpacking culture, the heterogeneous demography seems secondary when it comes to defining the backpacker, which is also evident from the interview findings. However, as a cultural phenomenon, the backpackers are relatively homogenous. The social interactions, the backpacking enclaves, the flexible travel itinerary and the desire to explore the world are clearly dominating features in the backpacker segment. The interview findings could even indicate that when travelling out, the backpackers are taking on a role and engaging in the culture in a way that leaves the “normal” life behind. When the backpackers are travelling, they fully commit to the lifestyle of the backpacker. They share motivations, desires and behaviour and these are the characteristics that really matter in understanding the backpacking community. This is how explicit that the culture is within the backpacking community.

Both the research literature and the interview findings showed that WOM is far the most used and trusted source of information for backpackers. Planning is a large part of being a backpacker and because of the flexible itinerary, WOM is an important aspect of many activities. On the other hand, the Lonely Planet showed in the interview findings to be of less significance towards the backpackers’ information search than the literature suggested. According to the participants, Lonely Planet is primarily a source of inspiration rather than a source of actual information.

The interview findings also suggested that the freedom of travelling was more dominant than current literature suggests. The way that the feeling of freedom was described by several participants, it had more similarity to the early descriptions of the drifter than the contemporary backpacker. In addition, the desire to interact with the local community and explore the authentic cultures was also far more distinct than the impression from the literature. The yearning to travel off the beaten tracks is not a prehistoric phenomenon. As backpacking has become popular and more normal, the desire to find alternative destinations and ways to travel has become highly contemporary once again. This increasing popularity has

made the phenomenon mainstream, which is a label that the backpackers always have distanced themselves from.

Though the backpacker basically is the same by the judgement of the backpacking culture, the available aids to help on the journey have certainly changed. Wide channels of information sources, online booking and the fact that the distance to people back home feels much shorter, are all parts of the digital revolution. From being the most simple and primitive way of travelling, backpacking has now entered the digital age and this opens up for endless opportunities to revolutionise “the backpacker-way-of-travelling”.

Nevertheless, not everyone is entirely positive in regards to this development. The interview findings suggest that the new digital aids that have infiltrated the backpacking lifestyle seem to have a considerable impact on the sociability and thereby the community. Use of the smartphone seemingly has an inhibiting effect on the social interactions, which nevertheless still are one of the attractions of going backpacking in the first place. In addition, the online booking features are suggested to take away some of the desired freedom of backpacking away. Thus, the smartphones can be said to create paradoxes in the backpacking community.

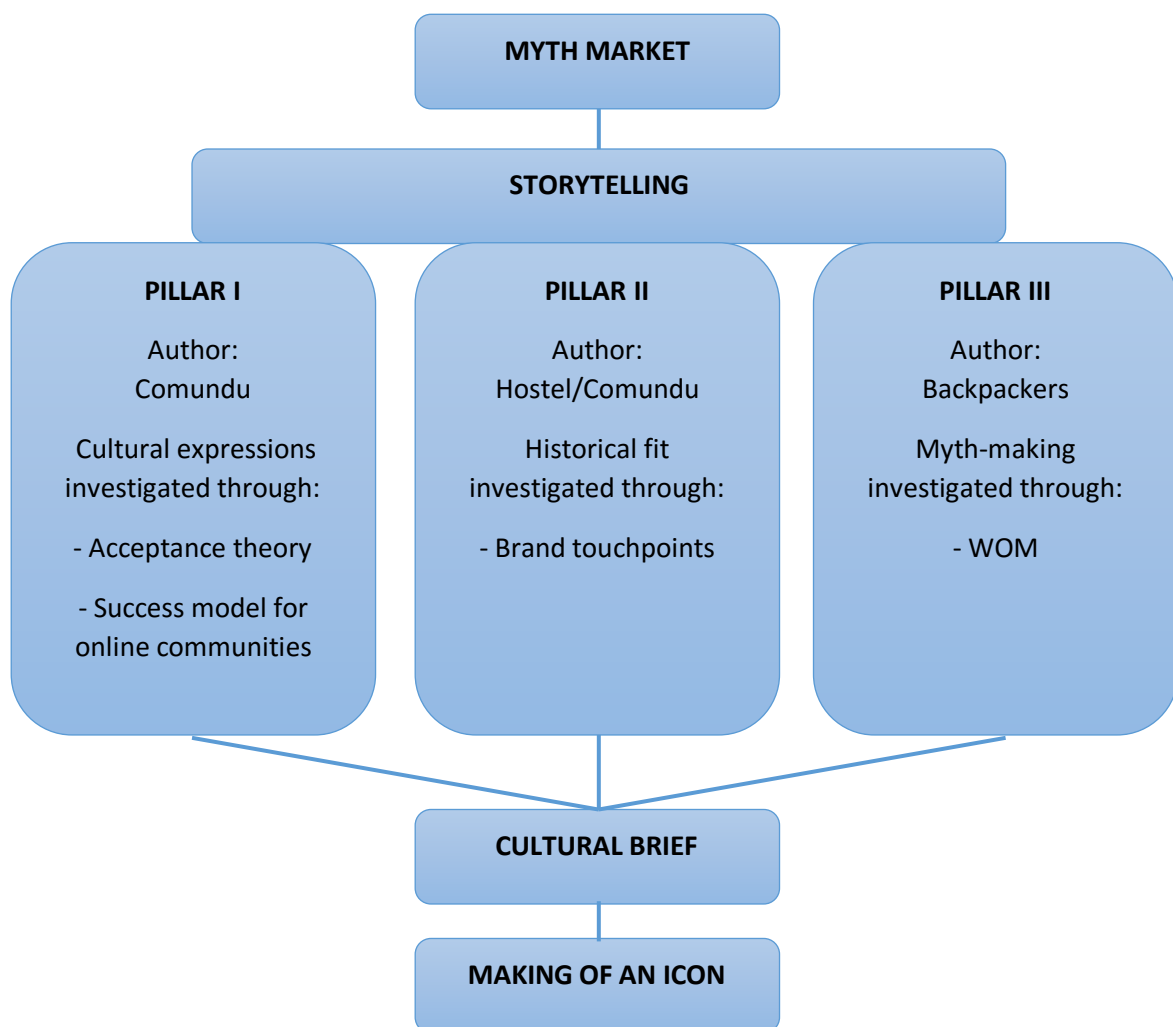
Nevertheless, the digitalisation does not affect the mindset of the backpacker, which still is very similar across the backpacking community. The backpacker is still staying in budget accommodations, seeking out the company of other backpackers, keeping a flexible travel itinerary, taking rather long trips and preferring active activities, which still 26 years later match Pearce’s definition (1990).

6 ASPIRATION FOR BRAND ICON STATUS

During this chapter, the present study will explore Comundu's journey step by step in relation to how they become a brand icon within the backpacking community. The analysis will be drawing from the conclusions of the target group analysis in combination with the knowledge of Comundu. This analysis will discover insights into answering the research question. In aspiring to become an integrated part of the backpacking culture, Comundu can through the creation of identity value become an icon among the backpackers.

Figure 4 shows the structure of chapter 6.

Figure 4 – Comundu logo and punch-line



Source: Own creation with inspiration from Holt (2004)

The first step of the analysis will shortly present what it takes to become a brand icon within the backpacking culture to establish the rareness of this phenomenon and explore the myth market in which Comundu is competing.

Next, a thorough analysis of storytelling is conducted in relation to Comundu building identity value within the backpacking culture. In this regard, three pillars of storytelling have been formulated in order to assign the different authors a clear purpose within the storytelling. The pillars will examine respectively number 3, 4 and 5 of the sub questions. The first pillar, cultural expressions, investigates how Comundu can integrate its product, the app, into the backpackers' behaviour. The app is Comundu's primary element of storytelling and in this relation two subjects need to be considered for the foundation of the storytelling to be in place. First, discovering the determinants that decide whether the backpackers can accept the new technology and second, what it takes for Comundu to be a successful community. The second pillar, historical fit, examines the touchpoints between the hostel/Comundu and the backpackers and how these can be used in the storytelling and myth creation of Comundu. The third pillar, myth-making, discovers how Comundu can encourage WOM communication among the backpackers to strengthen the storytelling.

Lastly, this study will examine how Comundu can achieve brand icon status within the backpacking culture by the construction of a cultural branding strategy in terms of the cultural brief.

6.1 THE MYTH MARKET

The first step in cultural branding is to establish the conditions under which Comundu operates. This section will first discover which brand icons that already has entered the backpacking culture and next establish Comundu's myth market to define the market in which they compete.

6.1.1 BRAND ICONS IN THE BACKPACKING CULTURE

The theory of brand icons may not immediately seem applicable to the non-commercialised culture of backpackers, which became evident from both backpacker literature and the interview findings. Nevertheless, the use of the cultural branding theory has extended itself into also including products that people rely on to express their identity or simply, products they use as a means to improve their lives (Holt, 2004). Indeed, backpackers will be able to relate to this definition, because many of them through backpacking are finding themselves and looking for a new perspective on their everyday lives (Richards & Wilson, 2004).

Nevertheless, backpackers can be a difficult target group to target marketing activities towards. Their resentment of everything they can categorise as commercialised or mainstream makes it particularly

problematic to create positive brand associations, because once a brand is popular, it logically becomes mainstream. Within the backpacking community, the status of a brand icon is reserved for very few brands. To the extent of the author's knowledge, only one brand really qualifies for such a label: Lonely Planet.

Brands become icons when they perform identity myths and Lonely Planet has certainly succeeded in performing myths within the backpacking community. Lonely Planet managed to associate its brand to the lifestyle of a backpacker in such a degree that they unarguably are synonyms. The identity myth that Lonely Planet portrays is the aspiration of a world-traveller, who travels to the far corners of the world with simple aids and experiences the authentic cultures in the local community without any disruption from tourists or globalisation. Lonely Planet represents the freedom of travelling and the escape of the busy and materialistic life at home.

6.1.2 COMUNDU'S MYTH MARKET

The building blocks of the myth market: *national ideology*, *cultural contradiction* and *populist world* will be examined as reviewed in section 3.1.1 – *Myth markets*, which will establish Comundu's myth market.

6.1.2.1 National ideology

The national ideology of the backpacking culture is strongly embedded in the social interactions between the members, because, as was suggested in chapter 5 – *Getting to know the backpackers*, the sociability must be considered one of the strongest pillars that holds the community together. From the interview findings it was expressed from almost all of the participants how the backpacking culture “... *is something really special that you do not encounter anywhere else*” (Christina, appendix 4). The culture is strongly felt although no one provides a specific definition of what in reality constitutes the culture. The culture is simply deeply felt when travelling.

The moral consensus in this regard is closely related to the behaviour of the backpackers and how the backpacker is encouraging the cohesion of the group. The “good and just” behaviour is grounded in being open to new people and participative in joined events. This includes encouraging social behaviour and encounters.

6.1.2.2 Cultural contradiction

The current cultural contradiction between the ideology and the individual backpackers has emerged with the digitalisation of backpacking. The smartphone invasion to the world of backpacking is by many seen as a downgrade of the backpacking culture because it takes up much space in the environment. Though no one denies the benefits that this aid has provided to their trip, several of the participants expressed that they felt that some of the charm of the backpacking lifestyle had been torn apart, as was found in section

5.2.4 – *Impact of the smartphone for the backpacking culture*. They found that the atmosphere in the common room had become more antisocial because people were on their smartphones instead of socialising. Although this is an evident cultural contradiction, there is also a contradiction between the critics of the smartphone tendency and their own behaviour. The suggestions from the interview findings namely indicate that the critics themselves may be as much a part of the problem. They express how they wish that they also would put away their smartphone and be in the moment, although they do not follow through. The anxieties of the contradiction are thereby related to being afraid that the social culture of backpacking vanishes, as well as a fear of missing opportunities on the travel because their smartphone has taken up too much time and space. Thus, the cultural contradictions are concerned with embracing the new online aids versus “being a real backpacker” by being social and offline.

6.1.2.3 Populist world

The populist world originates from the drifter and the original backpackers who travelled the world with few resources and found the authentic corners of exotic cultures. The populist world is much related to what originally constituted a real backpacker and travelling off the beaten tracks while interacting with the authentic, local communities. From section 5.2.1 – *Search for authenticity*, it was obvious that some of the interview participants, especially the more experienced travellers strived for this type of travelling. The backpackers are not really a part of the populist world, although they strive to be. The contemporary backpackers are travelling in enclaves and have surrendered to the comfortabilities of the smartphone, which “the real backpacker” never would. Even worse, they let the smartphone compromise the backpacking culture and thereby betray the moral consensus of the national ideology. It is Comundu’s job to authentically portray the populist world in its storytelling so that the backpackers feel that they are part of it when they use the app. In the myth of Comundu, Comundu originates from the populist world of the authentic backpackers.

6.1.2.4 Competition in the myth market

The market that Comundu in reality is operating in is the market where the competition can provide a myth to overcome the same cultural contradictions. Thus, Comundu is competing against brands that can offer the same “illusion” of fitting into the authentic backpacking culture and provide information that encourages this process. Examples of this include Lonely Planet and social media such as Instagram and Facebook which increasingly is used by e.g. hostels to promote themselves and their offerings. Tripadvisor and popular travel blogs could also be considered because they increasingly are used for the backpackers’ information search, and hence, provides information of how to “become a real backpacker”.

Once the myth market has been established, it is time to go on and find out how Comundu can use storytelling to perform the right myth in the right manner to target the cultural contradiction identified in the myth market.

6.2 STORYTELLING

As it was suggested in section 3.1.3 – *Identity value creation*, brand icons are built from three pillars that constitute the cultural branding model: *myth-making*, *cultural expressions* and *historical fit*. The brand value creation in this model takes place through storytelling that needs to be activated through all three steps of the cultural branding model in order to create identity value among the backpackers.

The four main authors of storytelling vary in their influence across product categories (Holt, 2004) but only three will be examined in the following: the company (Comundu), the intermediary (the hostel) and the customers (backpackers). The fourth author, the culture industries, is taken out of the equation for the purpose of this study because popular culture do not seem to have the same influencing power over the backpackers as the other three. From both the research literature and the interview findings it is suggested that backpackers reject anything “mainstream” or corporate and therefore a prerequisite has been made that the impact from these culture industries are minimal in terms of creating brand icons within the backpacking culture. Thus, the analysis of the storytelling is divided into three subsections, which explore the storytelling from the three primary authors: Comundu, the hostel and the backpackers.

For the purpose of the present study, each pillar of the model has been assigned an author that is accountable for the storytelling in the respective pillar. For the *cultural expressions*-pillar, Comundu is the author because it is Comundu’s responsibility to create value between the product and the customers and thereby forming the most important content of the brand’s myth. Second, the *historical fit*-pillar is dependent on the hostel’s storytelling because the hostel environment is the focal point of all communication and thereby the environment that needs to be adaptable for Comundu to fit into the culture of the backpackers. Lastly, the author of the storytelling in the *myth making*-pillar is the backpackers, who through the power of WOM in their community share stories that embrace and create the brand.

These pillars and their storytelling will be further explored in the following subsections. The aim of each pillar of the analysis is to find out which aids that makes the author tell the story. First, a deeper look into what constitutes “the myth of Comundu”, as this author sees it, is necessary to understand which myth that needs to be conveyed in the building of a brand icon in the backpacking community.

6.2.1 THE MYTH OF COMUNDU

The story of Comundu can in fact be written much similar to the one about Lonely Planet, which was told in section 5.1.3.4 – *Culture*. The founders, who hold a deep desire to travel and explore the world, discover through travelling that others might benefit from the findings that they stumbled upon during their trip and they afterwards submit themselves into improve the travelling experience of other travellers. Basically, this could be the essence of the story of both Lonely Planet and Comundu. The difference lies in the product: one is a manual guide into the ideal paths to follow by backpackers and other travellers; the other is the digital evolvement of the first, although extended with several and more advanced features such as the online community.

So far, so good. The foundation for the success of the myth seems to be in place and in line with the statement that initiated the present study: *“We will become the new Lonely Planet”*. Now, Comundu needs to detach themselves from the Lonely Planet brand and become their own. Eventually, Lonely Planet became somewhat outdated and was not able to keep up to speed with the rapid growth of the backpacking popularity so that everything converted into enclaves and no one travelled “outside the beaten tracks”. The challenge for Comundu is to keep evolving with the speed of the culture and stay ahead of the game.

The story of Comundu is based on the fact that they are created by backpackers, for backpackers. This is first of all conveyed through the punch-line in the logo (see figure 5): *“Comundu – together we travel”* suggesting that Comundu is a natural part of the backpacking community. This is emphasised with this statement from their website: *“We know by heart that we will be backpackers - in one way or the other - for the rest of our lives. And we know that you probably feel the same way. Because that's the thing with backpackers, often we think the same way”* (Comundu, 2016). From this, it is obvious that the backpacking culture surrounds the culture of Comundu as well. The message to their users is that they love travelling just as much as they do and that they exist only to improve the travelling experience of backpackers. This is emphasised by their vision for the company: *“If we can help backpackers share more stories, meet more people and have even more fun our dream is fulfilled”* (Comundu, 2016).

Figure 5 – Comundu logo and punch-line



Source: Comundu internal material from Mia Grosen

The message of the myth is thereby that Comundu wishes to maintain the backpacking culture as it always has been, without neglecting the digital advances. In this way, Comundu uses their myth to address the cultural contradiction among the backpackers. Thus, Comundu is combining the backpackers' online presence with their offline interactions, encouraging physical encounters between its users.

6.2.2 PILLAR I: CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS THROUGH COMUNDU'S PRODUCT

The following section explores the storytelling of Comundu and how the app can create value to its users. The storytelling of Comundu is related to the cultural expressions of the product and how the brand creates meaning towards the cultural contradiction. In relation to Comundu, this means how the backpackers adopt the new technology and how it becomes a success. Thus, this section will dig into acceptance theory and the success model of online communities.

6.2.2.1 Acceptance of the Comundu app

In addressing the cultural contradiction between the ideology and the backpackers through cultural expressions, the first issue regards how to get the backpackers to accept the new technology despite of their concerns about the digitalisation disrupting the culture. The suggestion made in section 5.1.3.5 – *Digital behaviour* about backpackers being late adopters of technology, makes this task particularly important for the penetration of Comundu into the community.

The UTAUT model reviewed in section 3.2 – *Acceptance theory for new technologies* tackles this issue by the suggestion of four constructs that determine how well the users adopt the new technology (Meng et

al., 2015), which are directly dependent on how Comundu and the product perform. The UTAUT model might be more related to the direct characteristics, features and benefits than performing the actual myth, but it has been found necessary to include acceptance theory because of the nature of the cultural contradiction, where the acceptance of digital aids into the backpacking culture is a key issue.

The *performance expectancy* of the Comundu app is dependent on whether or not the app provides useful and sufficient information that contributes to the knowledge of “how to be a real backpacker”. Thus, it is crucial for the acceptance of the app that the backpackers see the relevance of its features for use in empowering the backpacking culture. Practically, this involves providing up-to-date information about where to go and what is happening on that specific site while the backpacker is staying there. The interview findings show that not missing out on opportunities are one of the most valued priorities of backpackers. Active users on the platform is also crucial to ensure the information flow of inspiring input. Successful integration of travel apps to smartphones relies on an understanding of potential users’ needs and the degree to which the app can meet users’ expectations (Meng et al., 2015). Thereby, the content of the app needs to be up-to-date, relevant and inspiring for the performance expectancy to be evaluated positively. Most importantly, the content on the app needs to be varied and be able to keep inspiring in an attempt to avoid making new beaten tracks and overcrowding.

The *effort expectancy* is of even more practical nature. Simply, the effort expectancy is the evaluation of the technical performance rather than the content of the app. Evident from the interview findings was that an app does not get many chances of succeeding and the technical performance was a crucial determiner of the overall evaluation of the app. Thus, if the Comundu app is made by fine craftsmanship where the user interface is intuitive, easy to use and it has an attractive design, the foundation of the backpackers’ satisfaction with the effort is established.

The *social influence* is unquestionably the strongest construct in whether the app will be adapted into the culture. The individual backpackers are fully dependent on the backpacking community’s opinion and acceptance of the app to determine of whether or not the app is adapted into the routines. When the technology is widely accepted within the culture, it heightens the ritual power of the myth and gathers the members of the culture. This process lies completely outside of the brand manager’s administration and is dependent on that the myth is compelling enough to draw the backpackers together on their own (Holt, 2004). This aspect will be discussed in Pillar III.

Last, the *facilitating conditions* refer to the hostel environment and how it encourages and invites its guests to download and use the app as well as offering support for any issues that might emerge. The hostel’s role in the myth-making is discussed in Pillar II.

6.2.2.2 Success criteria of Comundu's online community

The success of the online community on the Comundu app is vital in determining whether or not the myth will be adapted in the community. If the online community is not a success, the myth of Comundu will not stand a chance of addressing the cultural contradiction and establishing its myth. The myth needs to be felt not only in the physical community, but it also needs to transfer into the online platform. If the myth is present in the online community, the cultural contradiction will be contested because then Comundu will succeed in combining the offline and online worlds of backpacking.

The interaction between fellow backpackers in online communities provides backpackers with a useful and always up-to-date source of travel information, which is similar to the one found in the common room, only more mobile and conveniently accessible at all times. Even more interesting, online communities provide a mobile platform where the backpacking community can exist and evolve. In this way, the backpackers can be part of the community and collect inspiration about travels both on the go and from home. Literature shows that constant contact with the culture through the internet can help cultivate the individual's backpacker identity (Mascheroni, 2007; Sørensen, 2003). In this way, the backpacking community is extended, which in the future can lead to new aspects and opportunities of the culture.

Lin's success model for online communities (2008) suggests that member loyalty is the determining element for success, as reviewed in section 3.3 – *Success in online communities*. The customers of iconic brands are loyal because they are locked into a social network (Holt, 2004) physical or virtual. The social mechanisms of the network are thereby determining the strength of the loyalty. The loyalty is created by the shared myth between Comundu and the backpackers and maintained through the culture of the social network. Loyalty is thereby a shared goal for both the success of the online community and success of the brand value creation.

The success criteria for loyalty are *satisfaction of members* and *sense of belonging*. The *satisfaction of members* is much related to the *performance* and *effort expectancy* of the acceptance model, which addressed the generated content quality and the technical performance of the Comundu app. This criterion will thus not be further elaborated in this section, because the success determiners are the same.

The *sense of belonging*, on the other hand, is related to the *trust* and *social usefulness* that is experienced among the members. The level of *trust* is dependent of how comfortable the members feel among each other to share information on the platform. Given that the interview findings have shown a willingness to share WOM communication, it is anticipated that the trust is strong among members of the backpacking community. This is also closely related to *social usefulness*, which requires mutual respect and approval

among the users of the online community, which is also generally evident throughout the backpacking culture. The backpackers clearly respect each other's opinions and value their advice, which provides a safe space in which to share experiences and suggest encounters.

Once loyalty is present, the decommission of the brand is a collective decision. If a single backpacker decides to dismiss the brand, then he or she loses the social effects of the network (Holt, 2004). Creating loyalty among the members is thereby crucial in ensuring the Comundu's survival and success.

6.2.2.3 How to use the knowledge of acceptance and success criteria to encourage storytelling

The myth of Comundu can only address the cultural contradiction if the backpackers adapt the app into their culture. The interview findings have shown that the participants are particularly selective in choosing apps for their devices. They therefore need a valid reason to prioritise Comundu into their collection of apps. The adaption of Comundu into the backpacking community creates the incentive to incorporate the app into the backpacker's routines, because to participate fully in the community, the backpacker needs to participate in the online community as well.

Conclusively, the acceptance of Comundu and the loyalty that is created through the success of the online community, constitute the foundation that needs to be in place for Comundu to be able to perform its myth. The myth is performed by Comundu through the cultural content that is conveyed through the communication, or storytelling, between Comundu and the backpackers. In developing this loyalty relationship with the backpackers, the company needs to be an active contributor and social participant in the virtual spaces (Paris, 2012). Thus, the important elements in making the app an integrated part of the backpackers' behaviour is to make the content relevant and inspiring, to make sure that the technical aspect is impeccable and that the social atmosphere on the platform is comfortable. This will create loyalty among the backpackers and create the foundation for the Comundu's storytelling.

6.2.3 PILLAR II: HISTORICAL FIT THROUGH THE HOSTEL'S BRAND TOUCHPOINTS

The second pillar of the storytelling of Comundu is dependent on the hostel as an active author. Though Comundu and the hostel primarily work together in promoting Comundu towards the guests, it is the hostel who has the responsibility of the daily maintenance and practical update of the communication efforts. Nevertheless, this section will explore all the important touchpoints, which makes Comundu co-author of this storytelling pillar. In addition, the hostel is the focal environment of the app, as it is directly linked to the hostel and will primarily be the place where the guests become aware of the service and the primary place of use due to the internet access. The hostel settings are thereby a source of many possibilities in

reaching the backpackers and communicating the myth. The following section will examine the most important touchpoints between the hostel (and Comundu) and the backpackers.

6.2.3.1 Brand touchpoints

The backpacker is, as mentioned, a difficult target group in terms of their resentment for anything commercialised or mainstream and therefore it is important that the touchpoints are orchestrated in such a way so they do not have the opposite effect than the desired. The design of the activities should thereby be carefully considered.

In relation to Comundu being a small start-up company, the choice of brand touchpoints and where to prioritize the investments are of particular interest because resources are not as plentiful as they can be with established companies and enterprises.

In the following, some of the current brand touchpoints that Comundu and the hostel make use of will be analysed in regards to the Brand Touchpoint Wheel. Traditionally, the components of the wheel have the purpose of creating a consistent brand message across all touchpoints, but this is contradictive in regards to the cultural brand approach. Rather, the touchpoints will have the aim of conveying the myth in relation to the historical fit, which, as mentioned, can vary over time as the cultural contradiction changes. The touchpoints then should deliver parts of the myth from different angles and from different point of views, such that the full picture of the touchpoints together conveys an holistic myth. In this way, the different parts of the wheel will create synergy to the myth so it appears as an entirety.

Pre-download touchpoints

In this phase, the primary purpose of the touchpoints is to make the target group aware of the product and brand and convince them that it can satisfy the perceived needs. In the case of Comundu, this has relevancy in relation to the performance and effort expectancy as suggested in the acceptance theory. The most effective tool to encourage this process when the backpackers arrive at the hostel is through WOM around the hostel, which will be discussed in Pillar III of the storytelling.

Figure 6 – Comundu marketing poster for hostels



Source: Comundu internal material from Mia Grosen

The concrete initiatives that Comundu has introduced in this regard are posters and flyers at display in the hostel areas and having the staff notify guests on arrival about Comundu and the obtained benefits. An example of a poster design is showed in figure 6. The design of the poster is held non-commercial with a very simple text about the app and has prioritised a visual travelling design, so the hostel would like to hang it and the guests would like to look at it (Grosen, appendix 3). This corresponds to the backpackers' rejection of commercialism (Richards & Wilson, 2004) and enhances the chances that they will receive the message of the poster in a positive manner. The flyers are held in the same "travelling mood" design but provides more information about the product. This material especially awakes the feeling that "Comundu is one of us" and portrays that Comundu loves travelling just as much as their customers, which is why they are capable of providing a product to improve the travelling experience in terms of the "Comundu is one of us"-message. As reviewed in the presentation of Comundu, this is the design and message that also is

expressed through Comundu's social media strategy and on its website. Thus, the social media touchpoints between Comundu and the backpacker portray their origins from the populist world and transfers elements of recognisability between social media and the hostel ads.

The feedback from these initiatives is rather mixed in terms of their effectiveness in the pre-download phase. The struggle in all cases is to deliver the message in a way so the guests immediately understand what Comundu is (Grosen, appendix 3). The backpackers like the design, but do not understand the message right away. Furthermore, hostels always have numerous posters hanging and flyers lying around, so it is a challenge to differentiate and stand out in the crowd. In the case of staff promotion, the outcome showed that it is hard to maintain the interest of the staff (Grosen, appendix 3). Even with bonus systems, the experience showed that the staff either forgot to deliver the message or simply failed to prioritise it because in the situation of arrivals, the staff has a lot of other information to pass on as well.

Touchpoints in the download situation

For Comundu, this stage is all about the download action and getting the backpackers to sign up and join the online community. In this regard, Comundu has attempted to make initiatives that ease the downloading process by making Comundu available through sources that naturally occurs in the guest's routines at the hostel.

One of the more recent initiatives of Comundu is the development of a landing page, which is the first page the guest sees when logging onto the hostel's Wi-Fi. The idea behind this action originates from the statement that the first priority for the guest when arriving at the hostel is to get hold of the password for the Wi-Fi. The landing page is designed specifically to each hostel to enhance trust and credibility (Grosen, appendix 3) so the guest does not confuse it with spam. On the landing page, the guest is invited to a preview of the Comundu-experience where they can try several of the features and see the postings and conversations among the other guests. In this way, they can get a first look to the benefits of the community and the value that the app creates to their hostel stay. It is thereby meant as a teaser for the app where the guest can try it out on the web before downloading the app. Last, they are encouraged to download the app and join the community, where they are forwarded to the app store to boost the download probability. The landing page has been very successful in relation to click rate, the share of guests who clicked to be forwarded to the app store. Normally a click rate of 11-17 percent is to be expected and considered satisfying. Comundu has during its test run experienced a click rate of 52 percent (Grosen, appendix 3).

Post-download touchpoints

At this stage, the primary job for Comundu is to establish a relationship with the user and make sure that they continue to use the app while they are staying at the hostel. In the long run, when the web of Comundu hostels is expanded, the intention is that the guests should be carefully guided to the next Comundu hostel through a booking feature to avoid all booking happening through the dominating booking platforms such as hostelworld.com.

An important initiative is the replacement of the traditional information blackboards in the reception with flat screens displaying the latest feed of the Comundu app. They enable guests to stay updated about what is going on and confirm that it is an active forum. The posts are monitored of both Comundu and hostel staff so no inappropriate posts are displayed. The initiative has received positive feedback from both guests and hostel staff, but are also an expensive post since Comundu is providing the screens.

6.2.3.2 How to use the knowledge of brand touchpoints in storytelling of the myth

Dhebar (2013) stresses that the overall brand experience goes beyond the *“simple summation of [the] separate experiences at every touchpoints regardless of their mode of timing”* (p.2) and therefore the touchpoint architecture should be a holistic experience, which is relevant in terms of making the myth a full experience from the separate touchpoints. In regards to storytelling of the myth, the reviewed initiatives are solid steps on the way to make the Comundu touchpoints tell the Comundu myth while the backpacker stays at the hostel. Nevertheless, the touchpoints seem rather divided and do not yet offer the holistic experience that constitutes the myth.

The message conveyed through the design of the flyers and posters is right on the mark in portraying the populist world that Comundu originates from and the backpackers strive towards. The part that is missing is the angle of the myth addressing the cultural contradiction. The landing page and the flat screens illustrate the digital part of the Comundu community, but the bridge that it builds towards the physical community might be less obvious. Thus, Comundu and the hostel need to discover touchpoints and ways of communicating that directly address the cultural contradiction, so Comundu can portray that the intention is to help preserve and advance the culture, not tear it apart.

In order to generate identity value in the backpacking culture, the myth must directly challenge the current issues of the culture – the span between the physical backpacking culture and the digital world that threatens to destroy it. The historical fit of the myth is dependent on how well the brand performs its myth and reinvents it in the face of cultural change. Comundu thus needs to address the pressing issue hands on,

but be ready to adjust the myth, while preserving the populist world, when the climate in the culture changes.

Furthermore, when managing an online community, Comundu is less in control of several of the touchpoints that cover discussion, chat and arranging of events within the online community. The success of these touchpoints is therefore solely dependent on other users' reactions and interactions on the platform and general activity in the forum. Of course Comundu and the hostel can delete inappropriate comments and posts, but it is important that the users feel that they can interact freely with each other without feeling monitored. The success of the online community, as suggested in section 6.3.2.2 – *Success criteria of Comundu's online community*, is dependent of the activity and atmosphere on the platform, the content and the technical performance, where Comundu primarily have influence on the last two factors. For the third factor, Comundu needs to rely on the norms of the backpacking culture as an entity and that the motives for WOM communication, which will be examined next, will be sufficient in securing interesting content on the feed.

6.2.4 PILLAR III: MYTH-MAKING THROUGH WOM AMONG BACKPACKERS

This section will examine the storytelling of the backpackers. The key influencer of backpackers is, as it was found in chapter 5 – *Getting to know the backpackers*, WOM communication. WOM communication has the power to infuse all aspects of the backpacking culture. Therefore, the motivations behind WOM is explored in this section to provide insights about what triggers myth-making, which is an important step in creating a brand icon among backpackers.

6.2.4.1 The power of word of mouth

The Network Coproduction Model (Kozinetz, 2010), which was reviewed in section 3.5 – *Word of mouth*, reflects quite accurately how the inner mechanisms of the backpackers' interaction at the hostel work according to the interview participants. The openness and the culture of the backpackers make the backpackers communicate freely across the hostel. It appears from the interview findings that even though the backpackers form groups, everyone communicates with anyone and the WOM communication flows spontaneously and easily. The communication is two-way, because recommendations are mutually exchanged between the backpackers. Furthermore, the enclavic nature of the hostel forms a safe space where the backpackers feel comfortable to exchange all kinds of stories and experiences. The way that several of the interview participants described the hostel atmosphere makes it sound like a cocoon where the culture is commonly acknowledged by everyone who joins it and where everyone is welcome. WOM is

more trustworthy when it is uttered through people who have the same mindset (Eccleston & Griseri, 2008), and WOM among the backpackers is thereby considered extremely trustworthy.

It is evident that influence from WOM communication is dominating when it comes to planning the next step on the trip and decision-making in general. The interview findings show that the backpackers blindly trust what is recommended from equal peers. Especially for Comundu who is launching a new product to the backpackers, WOM can be beneficial because WOM both builds awareness and generates product information that naturally flows among the target group (Mahajan et al., 2004). Thus, through WOM, Comundu could make the backpackers instantly understand what Comundu is about, because the backpackers will be more effective in communicating it to each other.

6.2.4.2 Motivations for sharing recommendations through WOM

Knowing the motives that dictate why the influencers share WOM information is essential for those wanting to encourage the influencers to spread the messages.

Altruism

The interview findings show evidence of altruism motives for sharing advice and recommendations with others. It comes natural and effortless to the backpackers to share the “dos and don’ts” that they themselves have experienced so others can avoid making the same mistakes. The backpackers do not expect anything in return for their advice because they genuinely wish to improve the travel for each other. Thus, when altruism is the motive for uttering WOM, only the best experiences and products are recommended.

Self-enhancement

Even though altruism seems to be dominating, the literature suggests that also self-enhancement can be of some significance in the form of achieving road status among the other backpackers. When sharing exiting experiences or useful tips among other backpackers, the backpackers can receive road status in return, because he then appears to be experienced and/or knowledgeable, as was suggested in section 5.1.3.4 – *Culture*. Knowing tips and tricks about how to get around or how to find the interesting spots at the destination can produce admiration from the audience. Thus, it cannot be denied that self-enhancement in some instances form the motivation for sharing WOM information in the common room of the hostel.

Product involvement and help the company

Product involvement and help the company are both motives closely related to the brand experience. As stated in section 3.5 – *Word of mouth*, these motivational factors can be activated due to an excitement for the product, personal involvement or as a loyalty declaration towards the brand. Either way, these motives

derive from the satisfaction that the user experiences with the product and the brand associations it wakens. The loyalty generated from the creation of a successful community will have a large influence in encouraging this motivational factor and thereby content, technical performance and the cultural atmosphere on the platform is determining factors in whether the backpackers will recommend Comundu on behalf of these motives.

6.2.4.3 How to use the knowledge of WOM to encourage storytelling/create brand myths

Basically, the backpackers have a desire to help other backpackers because it is in their culture to do so. When they have had a great experience, whether it has been a destination on their trip, a restaurant or a product that has benefitted their travels, they consider it their obligation to pass it on. What Comundu can do is to “take advantage” of this process of information exchange and turn it into its advantage. Comundu can help the process along naturally and encourage the conversations, which by a large part can be done through providing a good product communicated with the right message in the right way. The more memorable and useful their experience is with the app, the more likely the backpackers are to pass it on to others (Murphy, 2001). Naturally, the motives of sharing WOM communication have a large influence in the process as they initiate the information flow.

The myth of Comundu is spread through the perceived authenticity of the brand among backpackers. The backpackers need to believe the myth to include it in their WOM communication. Thereby, sincerity is a key concept that Comundu needs to embrace to stimulate the WOM motives. Comundu therefore needs to be sincere in its messages towards the target group.

6.3 CULTURAL BRIEF

The last section of the analysis will combine the results from the three pillars of the storytelling to discover how Comundu would be able to reach brand icon status within the backpacking culture through the storytelling by the three authors. This knowledge constructs the element of the cultural branding strategy as Comundu aspires towards icon status.

A brand's identity value is driven by the quality of the myth, which is the centre of the branding strategy. The strategy must be directed towards the kind of story the brand will tell, which is the Comundu myth and how the story is told. This component can be compared to the positioning strategy of conventional branding, while in cultural branding, it is referred to as *the cultural brief*.

The cultural brief possesses the tactical approach of positioning Comundu in the backpacking culture as a brand icon. The essence of the cultural brief is described by Holt (2004): “... *brand myths succeed when the*

brand performs the right story, which is authentically grounded in the brand's populist world, and is executed with a charismatic aesthetic" (p. 65). The next sections will explore these three components of a cultural brief: myth treatment, populist authenticity and charismatic aesthetic (Holt, 2004).

6.3.1 MYTH TREATMENT

Myth treatment is related to the creative ideas that embody the brand's proposed role in the culture by addressing the cultural contradiction. The outline of the story should be able to make the ends meet between the backpackers and the cultural contradiction. As found in Pillar II, this is probably the main issue that needs to be attended because as the communication flows at the moment, the story is not telling the full myth. The myth is to this point rather single-sided. The story regarding the populist world seems to be in place, but the part where Comundu builds a bridge between the online and offline community is only implied. Comundu needs to find a storyline to tell this story instead of leaving it implicitly.

6.3.2 POPULIST AUTHENTICITY

The populist world that the brand myth draws from is dependent on being perceived as credible and authentic from the audience. This is earned through delivering on two qualities: literacy and fidelity.

The brand demonstrates literacy through a nuanced performance that displays an understanding of the cultural rules and norms within the community. The literacy portrays that Comundu stems from the same place as the backpackers and that they are part of the culture. This is performed by establishing the populist world in the communication, as mentioned previously. As the touchpoint analysis suggested, Comundu has this in place and the analysis will move on to discussing fidelity.

Fidelity is demonstrated through staying true to the culture and standing up for their rights. In this way, the loyalty goes both ways. Comundu can establish its loyalty to backpacking through showing devotion to the backpacking culture. Through the populist world, Comundu shows that it embraces the culture through literacy. Comundu needs to stay true to the culture in every aspect of the business. An example of how Comundu is already expressing this is in the B2B market (Grosen, appendix 3). Comundu makes an effort in participating in the discussion about the OTAs (Online Travel Agents) who dominates the booking market of hostels and push small hostels out of the market by charging large fees per booking. When mixing in the discussion and defending the small hostels, Comundu participates in protecting the small hostels from the corporate machines, which is in line with the backpacker mentality. This sort of activity demonstrates Comundu's fidelity to the culture.

6.3.3 CHARISMATIC AESTHETICS

The communication must radiate charisma in order to win over the audience. The charismatic aesthetics must illustrate a distinctive and compelling style that reflects the populist world from where the communication originates. The ad poster showed in figure 5 is a prime example of expressing the aesthetics of Comundu's populist world and what backpacking is really about. This charisma is recurring through all Comundu's communication.

Until now, the active communication of Comundu has been primarily through social media, where the message obviously conveys the story of Comundu originating from backpackers who love travelling just as much as their users. The theme is the same as showed in the poster, pure love for travelling the world.

6.4 MAKING OF A BRAND ICON

Now that the present study has examined the storytelling and the design of the communication in depth, it is time to investigate the next step in establishing Comundu as a brand icon. It is important to note that brand icons are shaped over time and that the first goal is to establish identity value within the culture.

The brand needs to keep the myth relevant and inspiring during the period where the cultural contradiction is current. Brands that draw from authentic populist worlds, such as both Lonely Planet and Comundu by originating from backpackers themselves, create an instant credibility that is grounded in the people who live in this populist world and is guided by the beliefs that the brand expresses (Holt, 2004). When originating from this culture themselves they possess an advantage because they have an empathic understanding of their target group that is required to create the stories that builds identity value. The story needs to address the target group most acute desires and anxieties for the myth to hit the target in the cultural contradiction.

Comundu is not a complete stranger to the idea of storytelling, because a large part of their B2B strategy towards hostels derives from storytelling through social media, email campaigns and blog posts (Grosen, appendix 3). It is this thinking that needs to be transferred into their B2C branding strategy as well.

Usually, in the making of an icon the conventional brand icons use mass advertising to spread their myth, but Comundu needs more subtle methods given their size and the nature of their target group. Brands weave their stories into the culture through touchpoints. Iconic brands are typically the result of a few masterful performances, rather than an unending line of consistent, but forgettable activities (Holt, 2004). The art is thereby to orchestrate activities that get the myth right and establish the icon within the culture. Because the backpackers only stay at a hostel a few days at a time, the storytelling probably needs to start

as early as possible. The earliest touchpoint that is in the control by the hostel and Comundu is the booking confirmation mail, which might serve as a kick-start of the story, given that a way can be found to make them linger at the mail longer than just checking that the dates are right.

Through constant nurture and variation of the myth to keep it interesting and relevant combined with monitoring potential shifts in the cultural contradictions Comundu can nourish its identity value in the culture: *“Brands become cultural icons by performing myths that address society’s most vexing contradictions”* (Holt, 2004, p. 221). In time, provided that the myth establishes itself within the backpacking community and builds a solid bridge between the cultural contradiction and the backpackers’ desires, Comundu should be able to reach brand icon status.

The concrete recommendations for Comundu arising from this analysis of this chapter will be further outlined in chapter 8 – *Recommendations*.

7 DISCUSSION

As stated in the introduction, the present study taps into the paradoxical intersection between the backpacking culture and the digital revolution as well as between the anti-commercialism of the backpackers and Comundu as a brand and company. The aim of the discussion is put the results of the analysis into this context once and for all and discuss the possibility of Comundu becoming a natural part of the backpacker's travels in spite of these paradoxical elements of the backpacking culture. Thus, this section discusses the cultural contradiction of the backpacking culture and the likelihood of Comundu defeating this issue through its storytelling. The discussion will thereby be addressing the sixth and last sub question of the present study.

7.1 THE PARADOX OF DIGITALISATION WITHIN THE BACKPACKING CULTURE

The gains for backpacking from the digitalisation are obvious. Planning, information search and booking have become much easier and less time consuming because the information and aids are always right by the backpacker's hand. The advancements in communications allow the backpackers to connect instantly and continuously with their social networks and thus eliminating the isolation and physical distance. Friendships across the globe can grow despite of the distance. In many ways, digitalisation has made it easier to be away and on the go.

On the contrary, the digitalisation has also brought downsides into the backpacking culture. The interview participants that are able to compare the experience of backpacking before and after the digital revolution indicate that they experience a change in the backpacking community which entails that people are focusing their attention on their smartphones in the common room instead of socialising as they did in the past. One of the struggles is that the Wi-Fi connection typically is strongest in the common room. Previously, the common room was a place where the backpackers went to interact with other guests at the hostel and now, it has changed into being a zone of smartphones and social media.

Another consequence of the digitalisation of backpacking is found in the booking process. In the past, backpackers would drop by a hostel casually on the road whichever would fit the current state of mind and hour of the day. Now, the backpackers have to book nights in the next hostel several days in advance to make sure there are available beds. This has also been frequently mentioned as a large part of the freedom of being a backpacker. Being able to decide how long one is going to stay in one place and figuring out the next step along the way is one of the fundamentals of backpacking. Several participants indicated that they felt a large part of the freedom had been taken away since booking of hostel stays became digitalised.

As some backpackers see it, the digitalisation is removing some of the crucial elements of the backpacking culture: the sociability and the freedom of travelling. The main challenge of Comundu is to convince the backpackers that this is the opposite intention of Comundu as the mission of Comundu is to build bridges between the online and the offline aspects of backpacking. At this point, Comundu might not be able to overcome the reduced sense of freedom that the booking causes, but they are able to address the contradiction of smartphones disrupting the social atmosphere at the hostel. The analysis showed that they need in their communication to explicitly express this intention through a story that makes the myth holistic in its expression.

The digitalisation of backpacking is inescapable, so for the culture to be preserved, the backpacking community will discover that they need a method to combine the two worlds. Comundu should thereby communicate that they provide this method.

7.2 DUALISM

In order to address the cultural contradiction of the paradox between the digitalisation and the backpacking culture, another subject demands attention: the dualism of the cultural branding aspect. The dualism is particularly relevant within the backpacking culture because of its despise for commercialism and corporate companies. Similar to the digitalisation, the backpackers feel that this is a threat to the backpacking culture and the local environments that they love to explore.

Comundu is not striving for an iconic brand status in the traditional sense like Apple or Coca Cola, but what is interesting is the relation between the iconic brands and the mainstream culture that the backpackers despise. In this regard, there are several similarities between the anti-brand movement and the backpackers. Only Lonely Planet has mastered to become an iconic brand among backpackers, even though this brought mainstream and corporate elements into the brand and thereby contributed to the industrialisation of the backpacking culture. Thus, the dualism from the cultural brand approach is also to be found in the culture of the backpackers.

Within a culture and especially a culture as strong as the backpackers, the highest position a company can reach is the status of a brand icon. Though it is a challenge to reach brand icon status and become “popular” within the backpacking culture without unintentionally including the concept of commercialism into the equation of associations. The dualism is forcing brands to accommodate the new requirements of an increasingly critical consumer culture.

Though, Lonely Planet can be defined as a brand icon within the backpacking culture, its relevance and power seem to have been slowly fading for the previous decade. The digitalisation has taken over the role of primary information source and the popularity of the backpacking lifestyle has diminished the position as a guide to travel off the beaten tracks. The track that probably were relatively unbeaten a decade ago is now pretty beaten. The nature of the Lonely Planet has made it difficult to meet these challenges despite of the digital version that the books now can be bought in. When looked at it this way, then Comundu might have an advantage over Lonely Planet. Since Comundu is a purely digital medium, the information content can be easier adapted and updated. In addition, since the online community enables the backpackers to communicate and share WOM on the platform, the information can be expected to be more accurate, varied and relevant than anything else, provided that there is an active information flow on the site.

However, the solution to addressing the dualism lies in keeping an emphasis on the fidelity aspect of the population authenticity. Through its operations within the backpacking world both in the B2B and B2C aspect, Comundu has a solid opportunity to avoid the label of being a corporate machine. When fighting for maintaining the small parties' interests within the backpacking industry, then the community will reward the company. Especially once this behaviour is maintained after the company in the long-run possibly becomes an icon within the backpacking culture and thus, grows in size and influence in the business world. The fidelity to the backpacking community as a whole is the key to address the dualism of cultural branding.

8 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the cultural branding analysis, six subjects emerged from which Comundu can make improvements in terms of developing identity value within the backpacking culture, which in the long run can translate into brand icon status.

Create loyalty within the online community

Once the acceptance within the culture has been established, Comundu needs to make sure that the content of the app is always up-to-date and that the hostel recommendations etc. changes once in a while, so that backpackers who return to the hostel later on their trip can find new inspiration. Furthermore, the technical performance needs to be impeccable. These elements will in combination with the transfer of sociability and trust into the platform's atmosphere boost the loyalty among its users and contribute to the success of the online community.

Develop a second side to the storytelling

As found in the storytelling analysis, the communication between Comundu/the hostel and the backpackers might only be telling on side of the myth. To add more depth to the story, the myth needs to a larger degree address the cultural contradiction in a more apparent way. Comundu needs in its myth to explicitly portray the bridge that it builds between the online and digital world of backpacking.

Expand the touchpoint grip

Until now, Comundu has been very creative in inventing new touchpoints where Comundu can communicate with the backpacker, such as the landing page and flat screens. But Comundu might benefit from tapping into more of the existing touchpoints that already exists between the hostel and the backpacker. This might be less costly and easier in the way that they will not need to reinvent the wheel every time and the resources can be focused on myth-making and telling the right story in the right way.

Encourage WOM among backpackers

WOM communication can be encouraged through providing a solid product and an authentic message that create a holistic experience. The altruistic nature of the backpackers ensures that a good story or

experience with a product is enough to make the communication flow. WOM is also a natural consequence of the loyalty creation towards the online community. A good and memorable experience from use of the app encourages WOM among backpackers.

Address current issues within the backpacking industry to demonstrate fidelity

By demonstrating fidelity to the backpacking environment, Comundu fights the dualism in the culture and creates an image that enhances the populist world and the commitment to the culture. This is done by fighting the battles that threaten to damage vital elements of the backpacking community, such as preserving the authentic local communities and nature. In this way, Comundu will express sincerity and authenticity.

Extend the product features and ensure relevance to inspiration in the content

In the long run, it is necessary to look at how the Comundu product can be improved in order to meet the needs of the backpackers.

Backpackers wish to find information that is less “mainstream” and more original and authentic so they can escape the overcrowded enclaves once in a while. Comundu could benefit from this knowledge by providing features on the platform to pass on the advice and recommendations uttered in the online community, such that it is kept in a more permanent medium. If Comundu could find a way to store this information, this library of suggestions would in time become large enough that it would challenge the obstacles of everyone going to the exact same places. Comundu has the opportunity as an online information source to always be updated and inspiring.

In addition, from the interviews it was evident that one of the anxieties of backpackers includes missing out on opportunities during travelling. If Comundu could add a feature to its app that collected all current and future events at the destination, then Comundu would add another incentive for backpackers to include the app in their travel.

9 CONCLUSION

The aim of the present study has been to find out how Comundu can be branded towards backpackers and make the online community a natural part of the backpacking community without disrupting the physical social nature of the culture. Clearly, the backpacking culture is dominating how the backpackers behave, interact and whether a product or a brand carries eligibility to become part of this culture. Thus, the focal point of the study has been the culture and how to preserve it in the digital world and incorporate Comundu as a natural part of the community. The fact that Comundu is targeting a culture rather than the individual backpackers made a thorough understanding of this culture central to this study.

Even though the backpackers have been known in research literature since the 1970's, the culture of the backpackers seems unchanged. Both from the more recent research and the interview findings of this study, it is evident that the freedom of travelling and meeting other backpackers are the dominating pulls to go backpacking. The phenomena of the flexible travel itinerary, *rite de passage* and backpacker enclaves are still relevant to describe the contemporary backpackers, who also have a need to distance themselves from concepts such as "tourist", "mainstream" and corporate companies who disrupt the authentic local communities.

The interview findings of the present study contributed especially to the knowledge of how the increasing digitalisation and use of smartphones affect the backpackers' travels. Smartphones are very common among backpackers and evidently, they perform many different tasks during the travels. Nevertheless, it is obvious that even though the participants appreciate the beneficial gains it provides to make the travel easier in many aspects, many of them think that it is taking up too much space and energy. It was a clear statement that they strive to use it less because it costs time and compromises both being present in the moment and the social aspect of backpacking. Especially the smartphone use in the common rooms was mentioned as a negative aspect because people have become less sociable. In addition, the extent of online booking was also mentioned to have taken away some of the freedom in backpacking. However, ultimately none of the participants would rather do without the smartphone while travelling, but they emphasised that the smartphone has removed some of the charm from the culture.

The culture is what makes the backpackers homogeneous as a target group, because once the backpackers are travelling, they get consumed in the culture. Even though the backpacking culture is filled with several paradoxes, the core of the culture holds it together. This is why the branding part of the analysis is founded in the cultural branding approach.

Through cultural branding, Comundu's myth builds identity value through storytelling among the backpackers. Comundu's myth is centralised in the populist world and emphasises that Comundu is made by backpackers for backpackers. They are thereby part of the culture themselves. The myth needs to address the current great paradox in backpacking: the digitalisation vs. the sociability of the culture. This cultural contradiction is what needs to be dealt with through storytelling for Comundu to become an integrated part of the backpacking culture.

The storytelling of Comundu has three authors. (1) The company itself should first and foremost through its products establish a successful online community that it accepted within the culture. The key is to ensure quality in both technology and content and to encourage a solid culture and atmosphere on the platform. (2) The hostel will in corporation with Comundu and through its touchpoints with the guests offer several angles of the myth to make it holistic and authentic. There is evidence that the communication of Comundu currently is one-sided with emphasis on the populist world. (3) The backpackers are the strongest influencers of the storytelling through the power of WOM within the culture. The findings show that for Comundu and the hostel to encourage the storytelling, the backpackers need to perceive Comundu as a valuable product and have a good experience with it at the hostel, because the main motivation of the backpackers' storytelling is altruism.

In regards to the cultural brief that constitutes the branding strategy, it is important for Comundu to express their myth through aesthetics that emphasise their relation to the populist world and its authenticity. This is a discipline that Comundu already masters as the current design of the communications material embraces Comundu's membership in the backpacking culture. Addressing the cultural contradiction needs to be explicitly emphasised in the storytelling's myth treatment.

Tackling the paradoxes of the digitalisation as well as the dualism of cultural branding are crucial for the outcome when aspiring for icon status. In both cases, Comundu needs to address the conflict hands on. The digitalisation issue, which also is the cultural contradiction, needs to be addressed more or less directly in their storytelling to convince the backpackers that Comundu is the way to combine the online and physical world without disrupting any of them. The dualism is overcome by expressing fidelity to the backpacking industry by participating actively in fighting threats of the backpacking society.

Conclusively, the combination of these findings contributes to the combined knowledge of how Comundu can be branded in regards to become an integrated part of the culture. Thus, the important elements in the recommendations for Comundu include: (1) Ensure relevance and inspiration within the app, (2) Develop a second side to the storytelling, (3) Expand the touchpoint grip, (4) Encourage WOM among backpackers, (5) Address current issues within the backpacking industry to demonstrate fidelity and (6) Extend the product

features to ensure relevance and inspiration in the content. In relation to the quote that initiated the present study, Comundu has the opportunity to take the same role in the backpacking culture as Lonely Planet has had for decades, the status of a brand icon. The aim for Comundu is thereby through the strength of its myth to build identity value within the culture that can be so strong that the brand in time will reach brand icon status as well. Through strong identity value and in time, icon status, Comundu can become an integrated part of the backpacking culture.

10 PERSPECTIVES

Limitations of the interview findings can be found in terms of the number of interview participants. Though the necessary number of participants in a qualitative interview study is a contested issue (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), the scope of this study only allowed for relatively few participants. In return this allows for a more in-depth understanding of the participants' experience with the field of interest. However, as the backpacking culture's significance became evident through the process of the study, one might wonder if focus group interviews would have generated more comprehensive findings. The individual interviews generated an adequate view into how the individual backpacker perceives the backpacking culture, but focus groups might generate more holistic findings as it provides the opportunity to observe the culture in action while the participants interact. The interview findings from the individual participants are in this study instead elevated to a cultural level (Heding et al., 2009) in reference to the concept of inference, where general assumptions about the target group as a whole are made on behalf of the statements of a few interview participants.

Furthermore, given that this has been the first attempt to provide findings in the area of the smartphones' impact on the social aspect of backpacking (Pearce et al., 2009; Berger & Paris, 2013), additional research on this subject is needed. Though the interview findings of this study provide interesting suggestions, it is inadequate to draw any final conclusions from in terms of the number of interview participants. The contributions from this study provide suggestions to how the smartphone creates a paradox in the backpacking culture and how it can be handled in the case of Comundu. The findings of this study is simply suggestions of how *one truth* be stated in relation to the chosen research philosophy. A few suggestions for future oriented studies drawn from the present study includes: (1) Investigating quantitative facts of how much space the smartphone actually consumes, here among the daily time use at the hostel. (2) Further qualitative research on the backpackers' experience and opinions about being constantly online and available while travelling in relation to their social interactions. (3) Further research on how to address the paradox outside the context of Comundu. (4) Additional elaborating and solution focussed research on how the impacts of the online booking affect the freedom feeling of the flexible travel itinerary. With these findings, future research would elaborate considerably on the knowledge of how the smartphone affects the backpackers' travel.

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12 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – QUALIFYING QUESTIONS

<i>Qualifying questions</i>		Preferable answer
<i>C1</i>	Which accommodation do you prefer while travelling?	Hostel
<i>C2</i>	Are you interested in meeting other travellers?	Yes
<i>C3</i>	Is your travel schedule flexible when travelling?	Yes
<i>C4</i>	How long have your trips been?	At least 1 month
<i>C5</i>	Are your travel activities primarily informal and participatory?	Yes
<i>Label</i>	What label would you put on yourself when you travel?	Backpacker

Colour code	Needs to be answered correspondingly
	2/4 needs to be answered correspondingly

Source: Pearce (1990) and own creation.

APPENDIX 2 – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Initial questions to decide if the participant is a backpacker (Pearce's definition, 1990):

- Which accommodation do you prefer while travelling?
- Are you interested in meeting other travelers?
- Is your travel schedule flexible when travelling?
- How long have your trips been?
- Are your primary activities informal and participatory?
- What label would you put on yourself when you travel? (traveler, backpacker, tourist?)

General information

- Name:
- Age:
- Nationality:
- Gender:
- Occupation when not travelling:

Backpacking general information

- How many times have you been backpacking so far?
- Which places did you go backpacking, and why those places?
- How long have your trips been? /How long was this trip in total?
- How old were you at that time?

- With who were you traveling (alone or companion?)
- How was it to backpack alone? /How was it to backpack with them?
- How did you get in contact with fellow travelers?
- How was your contact with the people at home?

Backpacking behavior

- Why do you prefer hostels?
- What do you think are the negative aspects by being in hostels?
- What are the criteria that you choose a hostel by?
- How do you find and book your hostel?
- What is the first thing you do/ask about when you arrive at the hostel?
- How do you use the hostel?
- How do you find out about hostel activities?
- Do you find it difficult sometimes to get to know about hostel activities?
- How do you seek information? (about places to see/go, transport, next hostel etc.)
- How important are the hostel staff for your experience? What do you use them for?

Use of digital devices:

- Which digital devices do you bring on your trips? (smartphone, tablet, laptop?)
- How do you use your smartphone/tablet/laptop while travelling?
- What is the first thing you check when entering Wi-fi at a hostel? (first website and the purpose of this)
- Do you visit internet cafes?
- What can make you download an app? /delete an app?
- Which apps do you use when travelling?
- Is there anything that you wish an app could do, that you do not have already?

Comundu

- Have you ever heard of the Comundu app?
- Do you think you would like to use this app during backpacking, and why or why not?

Or, if yes:

- Have you tried it?
- What did you use it for?
- What did you think about it?

APPENDIX 3 – NOTES FROM MEETING WITH MIA GROSEN, 16 FEBRUARY 2016

App'en består af 4 hoveddele:

- Top 5 picks
- Events
- Staff recommendations
- See all guests – er en ny funktion for hostels, da backpackere typisk er ude meget af tiden, svært at se hvem eller hvor mange gæster der befinder sig samme sted

Mål og trends

- Målgruppe 18-28-årige
- Målet er at tappe ind i backpackernes eksisterende mønstre
 - o Backpackere bruger i højest grad smartphones, men også tablets i stigende grad
- Mål for Comundu at kombinere online og offline
 - o Comundu mødepunkt: "meet other guests every night at 9 – and download the app to learn more"
- Trend at ligge telefonen væk – telefonen kan bruges på en måde at fremme offline aktiviteter
- Eksplicit hentydning til Comundu i materiale – også i forbindelse med onboarding
 - o Genkendelighed ved repetition af brand ved forskellige touchpoints
 - o Gøre Comundu nemt at forstå
- Social proof
 - o Vigtigt for målgruppen
 - o Bange for at gå glip af ting
 - o Indirekte anbefalinger, word of mouth mere pålideligt, vide at andre har haft gavn af at bruge tjenesten
 - o Især mht. platforme – platforme er først fedt når mange bruger det
- Værdi mellem hostels og backpackere
 - o Anbefalinger kan tages med ud i byen
 - o Top 5 picks – generelle ting man SKAL lave i den pågældende by/location
 - o Comundu lægger stor fokus på de sociale – ingen andre giver mulighed for chat
- Bonus program
 - o Anbefalinger – WOM gæster imellem
 - o Passivt fra Comundu – fremmes gennem landing page mv.
 - o Bruge hostels til at fortælle historien
- Trend – begrænse spam
 - o Få budskabet ud til de rigtige mennesker på det rigtige tidspunkt så de får den rette information
 - o Hvad er relevant på lige netop dette tidspunkt – touchpoint?
 - o Er en smule tænkt ind i landing page, backpackere planlægger i løbet af dagen og ikke på forhånd eller fra morgenen af
 - o Backpackere er meget umiddelbare i deres adfærd og det gør dem svære at forudsige og ramme
 - Skal gerne gå stærkt med at få respons på en forespørgsel eller et forslag

Hvordan er situationen med onboarding af hostels?

- Går efter større hostels – 100+ sengepladser
- En opstået mulighed er samarbejde med hostelorganisationer

Hvilke konkrete tiltag har I foretaget for at få indarbejdet Comundu i backpackernes rutiner?

- 1. prioritet er at onboarde backpackere

Marketing tiltag: Comundu → Backpackere

- Generiske plakater på hostels (ikke customised)
 - o Vækker genkendelse
 - o Det var deres tanke at lave dem til mindre reklameplakat og mere visuelt for at hostels ville hænge dem op
 - o Feedback: fede plakater, og mange downloadede også appen, men hvad er det?
 - o Desuden hænger der altid rigtig mange forskellige ting på et hostel, så hvordan skiller man sig ud i mængden?
- Flyers (ikke så god feedback – backpackere forstår ikke hvad Comundu er)
- Staff

- Svært at vedligeholde interesse for at udbrede Comundu-budskab
- Comundu bliver glemt eller nedprioriteret på trods af forsøg med gevinst-ordning
- Stor udskiftning i personale (mange er selv backpackere og rejser videre)
- Der er dog generelt stor begejstring for Comundu – **men hvordan kommer man skridtet videre??**
- Nemt for Comundu at teste tiltag, hvad der virker og hvad der ikke virker

Marketing tiltag: Hostel → Backpackere

- Booking
 - Mest anvendte bookingmetode er Hostelworld
 - Hvert hostel har egen præsentation som delvist selv kan styres af hostel mht. content – hvordan kan Comundu byde ind på det og udnytte dette touchpoint? Flere hostels har indtil videre erklæret sig villige til at lade Comundu gøre noget – men hvad?
- Confirmation email
 - Forskelligt om det er en standardmail fra Hostelworld eller om den er customized fra hostelet's side
 - Kan være klar selling point for Comundu
 - Hostels er ikke særlig tekniske – kan Comundu tage over?
 - Hvordan kan man få gæsten til at bruge mere tid på mailen end lige at tjekke at datoen er i orden?
 - En ide er at udsende en mail få dage før ankomst (ikke testet)
 - Har du styr på...? Få det bedste ud af dit ophold!
- Indtjekning (her har fokus ligget for Comundu indtil videre)
 - Staff
 - Plakater
 - Wifi (landing page)
 - Wi-Fi kode på Comundu layout – hvordan får vi materialet ud??
 - Landing page
 - Hostel som afsender – giver tryghed
 - Hostel grafik så det ikke ser fremmet ud når gæsten logger på
 - Social proof
 - 11-17% clickrate er normalt – Comundu har oplevet 52%
 - Højest clickrate på "See all guests"
 - Mangler bedre oversigt, design: nyt design er på vej med tiles
 - Skal kunne skabe værdi uden at downloade app'en – gæster kan få den første "Comundu-experience" på web gennem landing siden
 - Teaser – prøv hvad den kan
 - Hjælp til blødere onboarding
 - Evt. receptionsreklame på disk – fange opmærksomheden når gæsten alligevel står og venter og kigger sig omkring
 - Gøre noget anderledes – skille sig ud! Skal kunne passe til alle hostels
- Løbende interageren med staff gennem ophold
 - Spørgsmål til staff (recommendations, guides, arrangementer mv.)
 - Staff er mere involveret og sociale end på hoteller
 - Evt. meeting point med Comundu som afsender (testet på UrbanHouse, Istedgade)
 - Tavler på hostellet skiftes ud med skærme
 - Kan bruges til at vise sidst opslåede feed – men der er behov for filter således at kritik eller negativ feedback sorteres fra
- Tjek ud
 - På sigt skal gæsten guides videre til næste Comundu hostel
 - Fremme booking uden om store bookingplatforme

Marketing tiltag: Comundu → Hostels

- Meget lidt content
- Rettet mod decisionmakers → lead generation
- Storytelling
 - Social media
 - Email campaign
 - Blog posts
- Kort afstand fra hostel-ejer til gæster
- Problemsolving, ikke spam
- Get positively involved in debates
- Raison d'être - Formål er større end produkt/brand

Touchpoints

- Bekræftelsesmail når de signer op på app
- Newsletter
- Egen blog – egne historier
 - Også gerne forhindringer – sympati
 - Mindre corporate, mere backpacker
- Existing blogs
 - Expert artikler
 - Mismatch mellem digitalt brug – backpackere er storforbruger, men hostels bruger det ikke
 - OTA – booking fees debate
 - Hvordan får hostels flere bookinger uden om OTA
 - Standpunkt – Comundu er altid på hostels' side
 - Undiscovered målgruppepotentiale
 - Eks. 20 % af unge har ikke prøvet hostels
 - 50 % har interesse, men fordomme
 - 30 % vil aldrig prøve det
 - Nedbryde fordomme: hænger ofte sammen med gamle forestillinger om hvordan hostels var før i tiden, snuskede, ulækre, rodede, mv.

APPENDIX 4 – TRANSCRIPTION OF CHRISTINA INTERVIEW

Initial questions to decide if the participant is a backpacker (Pearce's definition, 1990):

Which accommodation do you prefer while travelling? – *Christina*: "Hostels or guest houses"

Are you interested in meeting other travellers? – *Christina*: "Yes"

Is your travel schedule flexible when travelling? – *Christina*: "Yes"

How long have your trips been? – *Christina*: "1-4 months"

Are your primary activities informal and participatory? – *Christina*: "Yes"

What label would you put on yourself when you travel? – *Christina*: "Backpacker"

General information

Name: Christina

Age: 25

Nationality: Danish

Gender: Female

Occupation when not travelling: Working in an office until September when her studies start

Interview start

Interviewer: "I am sitting here with Christina, and thank you for your participation in this interview"

Participant: "Of course, that's no problem"

Backpacking general information

Interviewer: "How many times have you been backpacking so far?"

Participant: "7 times."

Interviewer: "Which places have you been backpacking?"

Participant: "Asia, South America, Africa, and then I've been to Australia, but that was only half of the time we backpacked. And then a little bit in Europe."

Interviewer: "So you are quite the experienced backpacker, why did you choose those places?"

Participant: "Pure interest and a desire to go explore, and some of the places I have come back to."

Interviewer: "How long have your trips been?"

Participant: "Between 1-4 months"

Interviewer: "In what kind of accommodation did you stay mostly during your travel, and why did you chose this type of accommodation?"

Participant: "Mostly hostels or guest houses, because of the atmosphere and the people. It would be all wrong to stay at a hotel."

Interviewer: "How old were you the first time you travelled?"

Participant: "19"

Interviewer: "And when was your last trip?"

Participant: "A month ago on Bali"

Interviewer: "Who were you traveling with, alone or companion?"

Participant: "I've always travelled with a friend or a boyfriend"

Interviewer: "How was it to backpack with them?"

Participant: "Very good"

Interviewer: "What are the advantages of travelling with a companion?"

Participant: "To feel safe, and the fact that you have someone to share the experiences with. You have someone to talk to about it when you get home. You meet a lot of people on the trip, but I like to have someone to share it with."

Interviewer: "Would you ever consider travelling alone?"

Participant: "Yes definitely, you meet so many people along the way that I wouldn't be concerned to get lonely"

Interviewer: "How did you get in contact with fellow travellers?"

Participant: "Primarily you meet them at hostels, but also during the activities you participate in. it is very easy if you yourself in committed."

Interviewer: "How was your contact with the people at home?"

Participant: "The contact is okay. On the first trip the smartphone wasn't up to date and useable in foreign countries, and then there would easily pass a few days or something between the contact. But I still think that a few days between is pretty often".

Interviewer: "Now with the smartphone, has it become easier?"

Participant: "Definitely. Before you had to prioritise your time and find a computer somewhere, and now you are always connected to the Wi-Fi and you always have your phone with you?"

Interviewer: "So you went to internet cafes before the smartphone?"

Participant: "Yes, whenever it was possible."

Interviewer: "And now you never use them?"

Participant: "No, never."

Interviewer: "Is it your impression that it is a general tendency?"

Participant: "Yes, many of them has also been shut down. When I travelled the first time, there was internet cafes everywhere, and now you never see them."

Interviewer: "Have you ever felt homesick during your travel?"

Participant: "No never, I have the opposite, I never wanna go home again."

Interviewer: "Why did you decide to go backpacking?"

Participant: "I have an extreme desire to go see the world, and then I love to meet new people and to feel free. That is the feeling I get when I travel, I feel free. Nothing else can make me feel the same way. I and only I decide what is going to happen and when. If I like to stay in a place for a month I can do that, if I only want to stay two nights I do that. When you wake up in the morning there is no one who tells you what you should or shouldn't do. Of course there are obligations waiting at home, but when you travel there is nothing to clean, no acquaintances that you need to make time for. The world is fantastic and open at your feet and you only need to get out and see it."

Interviewer: "How would you describe the overall experience of your last trip compared to the others?"

Participant: "In South America the hostels got used a lot more than when I have travelled in other parts of the world. It was kind of a base for all backpackers and not just a place where you sleep until you can go out the next day. A lot of the countries in South America are expensive, so you go out and by food and then come back to the hostel to cook it. You spend a lot of time at the hostel, and everybody is doing it. I also think that people were more travelling with someone than other places I have been. You easily form groups to travel on with, and of course that is related to all the time you spend at the hostel and meet at lot of people. You quickly find out that most backpackers are following the same trail, and then it is just natural to go to the next stop together."

Interviewer: "Have you visited hostels in Europe as well?"

Participant: "Yes a few. London, Barcelona, that sort of thing"

Interviewer: "What are the differences between hostels in Europe and the more typical backpacker places such as South America or Asia?"

Participant: "There are more hostels to choose from in the other places, but I think that the backpacking culture is the same no matter where the hostel is located. I think there are more backpacker travelling alone in Europe, and then it is even more important that you can connect with people at the hostels. In South America there are very few who travels alone because it is not that safe, and then you tend to form travelling groups to a greater extent than I imagine you do in Europe. Europe is safer so you do not see the same need to gang up, and maybe the atmosphere in hostels in Europe are then much more important because when you are backpacker you still wish to meet other backpackers. But I haven't travelled that much in Europe, so it is hard to say."

Interviewer: "What was the absolute highlight of your trip and why?"

Participant: "In South America it was all of the great experiences in nature that you do not find anywhere else. It was even greater than the social bond with the others, and on other trips that has been the highlight. The social relationships are often the foundation of whether you feel good about the trip. But there are so many great experiences in South America that it exceeds everything else."

Interviewer: "What was the least good experience during the trip and why?"

Participant: "Illness, I was very unfortunate on the trip to South America. But I would say that sometimes we stayed in hostels that was pure party-hostels, and if you don't wanna go out every night then there is no one who pays respect for someone who would like to sleep. So it is impossible to sleep. If you choose to stay in a hostel like that, then you need to join in or else it is very rough. Somewhere we didn't have other choices than to stay in such a hostel, and we needed to get up early the next day for an outing, and that was hard to go through."

Interviewer: "What were the struggles during traveling?"

Participant: "Mostly related to the illnesses, but fortunately the hostel staff was very friendly and helpful. So they did all of the things that we didn't know how, like contacting the hospital etc. In that situation the staff and their willingness to help is crucial."

Interviewer: "Could it have made it easier if you could find such information in an app for instance?"

Participant: "Very much, especially in the case of where we needed to go, but if we needed to call someone, I would prefer to have the staff help me still. A lot of the people you need to get a hold on don't speak English and that complicates the process. The hostel is your base and that is where you go if you need help with something."

Interviewer: "What would you do differently on a potential next trip?"

Participant: "I've travelled so many times now that there actually isn't something I think I would change. If you had asked me before the trip to South America, then I hadn't understood that you needed to book in advance, but I definitely have learned that lesson now. On my last trip there wasn't anything that surprised me, but there has been on my past trips. There are so many things changing with the digitalization related to how you find information about things, how you plan your trip and how people act. It was a lot more difficult before you could do everything on your phone, you had to go out and see for yourself if things were possible."

Interviewer: "Is it a good thing that it has become this way?"

Participant: "Both good and bad I would say. It is definitely easier, but it takes away some of the charm that you are always online. Before you could go travelling without being in touch with everybody all the time. You were out of reach and forced to deal with it. Now the phone is always next to you and you are always on."

Interviewer: "How about in the common room, can you feel that the atmosphere has changed with the emergence of the smartphone?"

Participant: "Yes definitely, everybody sits with their phones, always. Of course you also talk, but everyone has the phone next to them and everyone is online. In the past, when you were in the common room it was to be there and talk to other people, and now it is also typically the room with the best Wi-Fi connection, so you go down there to be on your phone as well. It definitely has become harder to get in contact with other people down there than before."

Interviewer: "How was it for you to come back home after traveling?"

Participant: "Depressing, sad, awful. After my longer trips I always get a hint of a depression when I get home. It is hard to get home and let go of the lifestyle you had when you were on the road. The freedom to go wherever it suit you and meeting new people every day. It shouldn't be that way but I always need time to get used to being home."

Backpacking behaviour

Interviewer: "Why do you prefer hostels?"

Participant: "Hostels are something very special. The atmosphere and other backpackers, it is just very special to me. The backpacker culture is very different from anything else I have experienced. It cannot be compared to hotels. It is something really special that you do not encounter anywhere else."

Interviewer: "Is there any negative aspects by staying in hostels?"

Participant: "If you really need a good night's sleep and quiet it can often be difficult because you are typically staying in dorms with a lot of other people. It can be quite rough when you sleep lightly like I do. However, it doesn't really bother me, but if you want some privacy, hostels might not be the right place for you."

Interviewer: "What are the criteria that you choose a hostel by?"

Participant: "It really depends on the destination and what you are looking for at that particular moment. I always pay a lot of attention to what people are saying about it, the atmosphere and how easy it is to get in touch with the other guests. It is much more important than the location for me."

Interviewer: "How about Wi-Fi access, is that a criterion for you?"

Participant: "Wi-Fi is at pretty much every hostel today, so it is not really an issue. Of course there are location where the connection is really bad, but every hostel has it."

Interviewer: "How about cleanliness?"

Participant: "Yes, well for me that actually is a major issue, it is part of the atmosphere. If someone writes that it is disgusting or dirty, it has major influence on my choice. And then again, if someone writes that people are not communicating or if there are activities such as dining together once a week or so, these things are enough to change or make my mind up."

Interviewer: "Where do you see what people has to say about the hostel?"

Participant: "On hostels.com you find reviews on hostels from previous guests. I primary book hostels through it. Previously, we used Lonely Planet because information wasn't as accessible, and then you couldn't see what others thought about it. It is only like two or three years ago. But now that everything is digitalized you have everything you need on your smartphone, you can see what everyone thought of the hostel, good and bad reviews."

Interviewer: "Do you check those things before you leave the hostel to go to the next one?"

Participant: "Yes, I have to. I didn't the first times I travelled. But with all the new possibilities to reserve nights at the hostels, there isn't room for you if you just show up. Now I always book ahead when I leave a hostel to travel on to the next hostel. I really had to get used to these new circumstances in the beginning because I felt that the freedom of backpacking became reduced. I have to know immediately if I'm gonna stay two or three nights, because you have to decide when you are going to be at the next place. Before you only needed to know where you wanted to go, and then you went when you felt like it. You have to plan a lot more than you used to, I would say."

Interviewer: "Do you meet up with some of the people you have met in the hostels later on?"

Participant: "Definitely, you talk a lot with the people you are with at the hostel about where to go next. Where they are going or where they recommend you to go have a major influence on where your travels are taking you."

Interviewer: "What is the first thing you do/ask about when you arrive at the hostel?"

Participant: "Normally you already have booked, so you know which room you are staying at when you arrive. You have read a lot about it. So I think that the first things I ask about is where things are located, if there is Wi-Fi, or if there are some activities at the hostel that we shouldn't miss out on. If there is something you have to know"

Interviewer: "How do you use the hostel?"

Participant: "I use all the facilities at the hostel, kitchen... But it depends a lot on where you are. For example, in South America it is very typical that you cook at the hostel because it is expensive to go out and eat. Everybody cooks at the hostel, so you cook and eat together at the hostel, you drink a beer at the bar, watch a movie or play some pool together. In that way everyone uses all the facilities. On the contrary in Asia it is so cheap to go out and eat, so you would never cook yourself at the hostel. You would still use the facilities to spend time with the other backpackers, but you would never use a kitchen, only for breakfast maybe."

Interviewer: "How do you find out about hostel activities?"

Participant: "From the other travellers, from the hostel staff or through blackboards or flyers."

Interviewer: "Do you find it difficult sometimes to get to know about hostel activities?"

Participant: "If you reach out it is easy, if you don't it isn't. It never just jumps in your lap if you don't look for it. Of course you can read it on the blackboard, but it is not like it makes you want to go if you do not hear it from someone else too."

Interviewer: "Have you ever found it difficult?"

Participant: "Well, yes and no. I am myself very outreaching, but I am sure that those processes in some way can be optimised in some way. It doesn't always seem like it is prioritised to get the information of the events out to the guests. They don't inform the newly arrived, so you have to go look for it yourself."

Interviewer: "How important are the hostel staff for your experience?"

Participant: "It has some importance. If they are rude it has an impact on the overall experience of the stay, but otherwise it doesn't matter a lot to me."

Interviewer: "What do you use them for?"

Participant: "Information. A lot of places it is not like they participate a lot, they do their job, and my focus is not really on them, it is on the other backpackers. But if they are rude or if they are not helpful when you need their help to find

something, then it is critical, because that is where they are important. It means a lot if they are friendly and willing to help. But otherwise it is not like I use them that much.”

Interviewer: “You don’t use them for recommendations for where to go or what to see?”

Participant: “Yes of course, but otherwise I use the other backpackers a lot. But sometimes I do use them for recommendations.”

Interviewer: “How do you seek information when you travel?”

Participant: “At the hostel or from other backpackers, or from the internet or Lonely Planet.”

Use of digital devices

Interviewer: “Which digital devices do you bring on your trips?”

Participant: “My phone.”

Interviewer: “How do you use your phone while travelling?”

Participant: “It is everything. It is my camera, telephone, internet. Everything in one place. I don’t even bring a camera anymore. It does it all. I use it all the time.”

Interviewer: “What is the first thing you check when entering Wi-Fi at a hostel?”

Participant: “If I am far away it is probably Facebook, because it is my contact with the outside world and the people at home. Check if someone has left a message. So I check the social medias. My e-mail. And then if we don’t know where to go then we use the internet.”

Interviewer: “The social medias you check, is it primarily to keep in touch and meet up with other backpackers you have met or people at home?”

Participant: “Both. I never text on the trip, everything is happening through the internet. Every connection with any people is through the internet.”

Interviewer: “Do you often meet up with people later on the trip?”

Participant: “All the time. Maybe 8 out of 10 times you figure out how to meet up with them again. Mostly you arrange it through Facebook or something, but you often also just end up some of the same places.”

Interviewer: “What can make you download an app?”

Participant: “If I feel that it can make something easier compared to a homepage, something that fits the need that I have, because I am always on my phone. Or if I find that it possesses some knowledge that I can use or other useful features. It really doesn’t require that much. If someone speaks positively of something I am very willing to try it out.”

Interviewer: “Then what can make you delete it again?”

Participant: “It doesn’t work properly or it doesn’t contribute with what I expected it to.”

Interviewer: “Which apps do you use when travelling?”

Participant: “I can tell you very specifically. I have a travelling folder on my phone with everything I need when I am away.” [finding her phone] “I have an app for translations, a currency-app, Hostel World for booking, a dictionary, postcard-app and one for planning transport in foreign countries.”

Interviewer: “Is there anything that you wish an app could do, that you do not have already?”

Participant: “Actually, I would wish that every country or destination had an app where you could find information about what happens in the city. In Denmark we have one, at least in Aarhus where I live, and it is really handy. You can see everything that happens and when, and then you can make the booking for the event directly on the site. Then you never miss out on anything in the area. I would love to have one for everywhere I go.”

Comundu

Interviewer: “Have you ever heard of the Comundu app?”

Participant: “Yes I have, but I haven’t had a chance to try it out yet. But I’ve downloaded it and looked around. Unfortunately, I haven’t stayed at a hostel that used it, but I have heard good things about it from other backpackers.”

Interviewer: “Do you think it would be useful on your backpacking trips?”

Participant: “Yes I imagine that a lot of the things that I normally go look for on the internet will be on the app instead, that everything is in one place. It would be a lot easier. And maybe features that you never even thought about you would find useful.”

Interviewer: “Okay well that’s about it. Thank you very much for participating.”

Participant: “You’re welcome.”

APPENDIX 5 – TRANSCRIPTION OF RASMUS INTERVIEW

Initial questions to decide if the participant is a backpacker (Pearce’s definition, 1990):

Which accommodation do you prefer while travelling? – *Rasmus:* “Hostels or guesthouses”

Are you interested in meeting other travelers? – *Rasmus:* “Yes”

Is your travel schedule flexible when travelling? – *Rasmus:* “Yes”

How long have your trips been? – *Rasmus:* “4 months”

Are your primary activities informal and participatory? – *Rasmus:* “Yes”

What label would you put on yourself when you travel? – *Rasmus:* “Backpacker”

General information

Name: Rasmus

Age: 23

Nationality: Dutch

Gender: Male

Occupation when not travelling: Student

Backpacking general information

Interviewer: “So I would like to start with some general information about the time you have been backpacking. How many times have you been backpacking so far?”

Participant: “I have only been backpacking once so far, but I am definitely going back to it when I have the time.”

Interviewer: “Which places did you go backpacking, and why did you choose to go to these places?”

Participant: "I went to New Zealand and south-east Asia with Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos. There was not necessarily a special reason for these places, but just because it is easy to be here as a newbie in the backpack world."

Interviewer: "So how long was this trip in total?"

Participant: "I have been away for four months in total."

Interviewer: "In what kind of accommodation did you stay mostly during your travel, and why did you chose this type of accommodation?"

Participant: "Mostly I stayed in hostels and guesthouses, because that was the cheapest there was. We wanted to be away for as long as possible, so we wanted to spend our money wisely. And besides the price the hostels are also the place where you meet the other backpackers of course, everyone goes to hostels when you are a backpacker, so you meet people at the same level you might say. Hostels have a special vibe where everyone else staying there was backpackers and therefore had many advices to give about what to see and where to go."

Interviewer: "How old were you at that time?"

Participant: "I was 19 when I went traveling."

Interviewer: "So now I would like to know a bit more about the contact during your travels. With who were you traveling, where you alone or with others?"

Participant: "I was traveling with two friends and then we met up with some other friends in Asia."

Interviewer: "How was it to backpack with those friends?"

Participant: "Well, we made those plans years before, because we definitely wanted to go backpacking all three of us, so we decided to go together and that was really nice, they are nice guys. Everything went well during the trip. It was nice to travel with someone else as it might have been a bit overwhelming to figure out everything by yourself. It was also really nice never to feel alone and have someone to share my experiences with."

Interviewer: "So even though you were traveling with friends, were you interested in meeting other people as well?"

Participant: "Yeah we were, definitely. On hostels and just when you talk with people there you meet a lot of people, especially in south-east Asia. In New Zealand we rented a car and mostly saw a lot of nature, so we did not meet that many people there because we also slept in this car, but in Asia it was very social with all the other backpackers, everyone would like to meet new people, that is the whole atmosphere of backpacking, everyone is open while backpacking and ready to meet up I think. But yeah, at some places it was easier than other places to meet with people. We also picked up hitchhikers when we drove around New Zealand, so that is how we met people as well."

Interviewer: "How was your contact with the people at home?"

Participant: "Not so much, I called my parents a few times, but I lost my phone somewhere in the first weeks so I did not have that much contact, I was very much offline, which was also a good part of it actually. We still went to internet cafés once in a while where you could chat with friends and be on Facebook and stuff like that. I made a Facebook page together with my friends and all our friends and family were part of that group, so we could inform a lot of people by just posting something on that group, that was easy and chill. My friends had smartphones and there was Wi-Fi almost everywhere we went."

Interviewer: "So now I would like to talk with you about how you experienced the backpack trip. First of all, why did you decide to go backpacking?"

Participant: "It was after the Danish high school, we were just done with the studying and we wanted to do something else. So we first worked for half a year and then went traveling, to go out, to see the world and be away from home as well. It was the easiest way to travel around with a backpack and experience the most. So many people I know have been backpacking and now it was time for me to see some more of the world."

Interviewer: "Was it important for you to see something of the real culture of those countries?"

Participant: "I think it is interesting to learn about a new culture, that is also what makes it a new experience, that it is a different way of living than the people do back in Denmark, Europe. But actually, I think as a backpacker I still saw mainly the highlights of an area, especially if you are not staying that long in the same place. It is not always easy to go off the tracks because all other travellers go there as well."

Interviewer: "What would you do differently on a potential next trip?"

Participant: "I would bring my smartphone and do a bit more research at home so I knew a bit more about the places I was going, I think it is good to know where you are going in order to get the most out of the experience."

Interviewer: "How was it for you to come back home after traveling?"

Participant: "It was so nice being back in my own bed and not feeling like I lived in my backpack! But it also felt a bit strange that I had experienced so much, it feels unreal when you get back to your everyday life. Luckily I had my best friends to share all this with, also when we were back home again."

Backpacking behaviour

Interviewer: "Then I would like to ask you some questions about the backpack behaviour at the hostel. You already said it in the beginning of this interview that you prefer hostels while backpacking because of the price and the social aspect it has to it, but what do you think are the negative aspects of staying in a hostel?"

Participant: "Some of the hostels are really cheap and really gross, with cockroaches crawling on the floor, that is a downside. Also when sleeping in a dorm room with people coming home in the middle of the night, that sorts of things. You do not have so much privacy and cleanliness as a 5-star hotel, but that is not a deal breaker for me."

Interviewer: "How do you seek information about which places to go and which hostels to stay at?"

Participant: "We talked to other backpackers if they had been to places where we were going and also we had the lonely planet book. That is the easiest way if you don't know where to go. All the people you meet want to tell you where they have been and want to help you out with where to go, so in the end actually all the backpackers are at the same places and you see the same people during your travel all the time, that is funny. Also, we used the internet a lot or asked staff at the hostel or read in my lonely planet guidebook."

Interviewer: "How do you find and book your hostel?"

Participant: "My friend had an app where we could see what was available in the town we were going to next and book right away."

Interviewer: "Did you get a lot of help from this app?"

Participant: "Yes, it was very great to use because it had all the information we needed in one, we could book right away."

Interviewer: "Did you also miss anything on this app which could have been nice during your trip?"

Participant: "It would have been nice to have it combined with some sort of online lonely planet which shows you what sights you should see in the city, but I have not really missed a lot during my travels."

Interviewer: "What is the first thing you do or ask when you arrive in the hostel?"

Participant: "I would probably ask where the room is. My friends ask for the password for the Wi-Fi. But also what we should check out in the place and where the best places to eat are."

Interviewer: "How do you find out about hostel activities?"

Participant: "Most of the places there was a schedule about what was going on and I got a lot of information from the receptionist at check in."

Interviewer: "Do you find it difficult sometimes to get to know about hostel activities?"

Participant: "No, not really. The staff working at the hostels mostly know very well what is going on in the hostel and they can tell you everything about the activities, you just have to go to them and ask about it."

Use of digital devices

Interviewer: "Now, I would like to ask you some questions about the use of digital devices on your backpack trip. Which digital devices do you bring on your trip?"

Participant: "I brought a mobile phone, but not a smart phone and I lost it very fast during my trip already, so that was why I was very much offline during the travel. But then we went to internet cafes and once in a while to check out what was going on at home."

Interviewer: "So did you do that on purpose not bring a smart phone with you?"

Participant: "Yes I just thought I did not need a smartphone. It would only be very annoying that you have to charge it every night, so I wanted to bring an older phone which you only have to charge once a week. In this way I could still be in contact with home a bit, but not have to take care of my smart phone all the time, it is more suitable for traveling."

Interviewer: "Would you do the same the next time?"

Participant: "No, I would probably bring my smartphone."

Interviewer: "How would you use your smartphone?"

Participants: "I would take all my photographs with my smartphone, it is just annoying to both bring phone and camera. I would look up information about where I was, use it for contacting my family and friends at home."

Interviewer: "What is the first thing you check when entering Wi-Fi?"

Participant: "It is probably Facebook to see if someone had written to me. But actually, I like not being that much online when I travel. I feel less social pressure to always be available, I feel more free. So the next time I will still try to limit the use."

Comundu

Interviewer: "So I am at this moment doing a research for Comundu who created an app for backpackers, have you ever heard of Comundu?"

Participant: "No, I have never heard of it."

Interviewer: "Comundu is an app for your smartphone developed for backpackers, where you can sign up when entering a hostel. You can see which other people are also checked-in in the same hostel, so you can contact them via the app to go out and meet in real life. Do you think you would like to use this app during backpacking, and why or why not?"

Participant: "It seems like a really good idea, and if there is a big network with this app in the hostel than it is perfect to get in contact with other people and do some stuff together. I would see myself doing this kind of thing."

APPENDIX 6 – TRANSCRIPTION OF ELLEN INTERVIEW

Initial questions to decide if the participant is a backpacker (Pearce's definition, 1990):

Which accommodation do you prefer while travelling? – *Ellen*: "Hostels or guests houses"

Are you interested in meeting other travellers? – *Ellen*: "Yes"

Is your travel schedule flexible when travelling? – *Ellen*: "Yes"

How long have your trips been? – *Ellen*: "4-6 months"

Are your primary activities informal and participatory? – *Ellen*: "Yes"

What label would you put on yourself when you travel? – *Ellen*: "Backpacker"

General information

Name: Ellen

Age: 22

Nationality: Netherlands

Gender: Female

Occupation when not travelling: Student

Interview start

Interviewer: "So welcome Ellen, and thank you for participating in this interview. We're just gonna jump right to it."

Backpacking general information

Interviewer: "How many times have you been backpacking so far?"

Participant: "Only one time with only backpacking. I've also been to India where I also backpacked, but I mostly just lived there, so I don't know if I should call it backpacking or not."

Interviewer: "Did you live in hostels in India?"

Participant: "Yeah, well I stayed in a guest house and then I stayed in hostels around India when I was moving around"

Interviewer: "Okay, so you have some experience with hostels in India as well?"

Participant: "Yeah, I do, but mostly Thailand"

Interviewer: "So that is where you really went backpacking – only Thailand?"

Participant: "Yes actually, I stayed there for three and a half months, only in Thailand. I did some volunteer work as well, so I stayed for five weeks in one place and then I went to the north and went backpacking there."

Interviewer: "So you must have seen all of Thailand?"

Participant: "Yeah pretty much"

Interviewer: "Why did you choose Thailand?"

Participant: "Because I just turned 18, so I was pretty young and it was my first travel alone. And then I thought that Thailand was so easy for backpackers, because you meet new people very easily and I was with an organization the first few weeks so then I was sure to meet people because we all had the same base camp in Thailand. So that is why I chose that, because from then on it would be very easy for me to travel alone, because Thailand is a very safe country."

Interviewer: "Yeah, so why did you choose India the other time? Because I've heard that it is quite the opposite?"

Participant: "True. Well actually I wanted to go to Cape Town, but then I got in contact with someone and she said that she had a contact who had something very cool in India, and then I got in contact with that man, so I went to India together with one of my friends. It was a very interesting internship for us to do. But it was very different from Thailand."

Interviewer: "How long were you there for?"

Participant: "In India I was 6 months"

Interviewer: "In what kind of accommodation did you stay mostly during your travel, and why did you chose this type of accommodation?"

Participant: "Hostels, because it is cheap and in Thailand because you know that you are going to meet other people. I had the Lonely Planet with me, and then I could see which one had a good price and then I could meet other backpackers. If you see it in Lonely Planet and it is recommended, then you know that it is a good place to meet people."

Interviewer: "How old were you at that time?"

Participant: "In Thailand I was 18 and in India I was 20"

Interviewer: "With whom was you traveling in Thailand?"

Participant: "Well, people I met. I booked via Activity International and it is an organization who sends volunteers to those places. Then I got in contact with another girl who was going to travel at the same time. I didn't know her, but we had the same plane from Amsterdam to Bangkok, so I asked if we should just travel together. So we actually travelled together for six weeks and then I met another Dutch girl who I travelled with for three weeks, and then I just met others. So I have actually never been alone even though I didn't know any of them when I left. I hate to be alone, and luckily I never was."

Interviewer: "What were your thoughts about before you left? Where you scared to be by yourself?"

Participant: "Actually, now when I think back I don't understand that I did it, I would never do it again. I just did it without thinking too much about it, but actually I remember crying a lot before departure, like what the hell am I going to do, what am I gonna start with? I really didn't want to sleep one night alone, and the only time I did was actually the night before going home to the Netherlands, because then all of your friends had left, and even that was hard for me, haha. So it is actually very weird that I did it, but it turned out very well"

Interviewer: "How was it to backpack with people you just met?"

Participant: "It was super nice. I would actually not consider going with one of my friends, because you know them very well and I think that I would get annoyed very fast. You change a little bit when you are backpacking, you become more open. I had a little trouble in India travelling with a girl I knew from home, I thought that she was acting weird at times, but if you are with someone you don't know then you can handle it much better, because you didn't know who that person is. I really like that. I became very good friends with them, and the girl I travelled with in Thailand is still one of my really best friends and it is four years ago. You get to know each other very quick, because you're in the same situation together."

Interviewer: "How did you get in contact with fellow travelers?"

Participant: "It actually just happened, someone comes and talks to you and say: "hey where are you from?", and I'm like: "I'm from Holland", and he's like: "hey, he's from Holland too", and then you're kind of together. It's just very easy in those countries. It was very easy for me, because all the backpackers are open and everyone wants to meet other people. And you go to all the same places, so everywhere you are there are backpackers around. There were many times where I met the same people just because you were doing the same route, so I met them first, way down in the south, and then again up in the north, and then I was like: "yay, you're also here", so it was more like that actually. It just came naturally; I didn't really search for it. Also, I met people in the beginning in the base camp, and then I knew that they were gonna be in north Thailand in a few weeks from now, and then I said: "I'm also planning to go up there, shall we meet up?", and they were like: "yeah sure"."

Interviewer: "So you often plan way ahead to know you're going to be there?"

Participant: "Yeah, of course the plan is always open, but I planned to be there in the north at that time. But if you meet other people your plans can always change."

Interviewer: "Has it ever been hard for you to meet other people?"

Participant: "Yes, at some point I was staying in a house with other volunteers for a few weeks and then I was planning to go to the islands of Thailand, but I didn't want to go alone. So I was like, "okay who is going to come with me?". I had no contact with anyone. Then I met a girl and then the day before she cancelled on me. Then all of a sudden one of the people I knew from the Netherlands contacted me and said that she just arrived from Indonesia, she Facebooked me and asked if I wanted to travel with her and I was like: "yeah! I would love to!". So I was very lucky at that point not to end up alone. The thing is that I didn't stay in a hostel at that time, because if I did I am sure it wouldn't have been a problem, because it is so easy to meet other people there."

Interviewer: "Have you ever felt homesick during your travel?"

Participant: "Yes definitely, I missed home a lot. Especially, the moment that was really tough on me was at some point where a girl who I had travelled with for four weeks went home, and I was kind of heartbroken because I was left alone. Maybe because I was pretty young. I didn't know what to do, where to go or who to meet"

Interviewer: "How did you cope with it?"

Participant: "I Skyped with home a lot back then on my laptop. I had it with me, so I never went to internet cafes, I just had internet at the hostel. I was both places very surprised of how much Wi-Fi there was. They have it everywhere, but of course it is not always working as good as you'd hope, but it is never a problem to find. In Thailand I was more in contact with people at home than I was in India, because there I had my best friend with me, and then you have her to talk to if there is any struggle."

Interviewer: "What were the advantages of travelling with someone you knew?"

Participant: "That you're never worried about being alone. You can share it all together. So it is comforting. But maybe it also makes you less open to meet other people, because you're not in the need for it. In Thailand I met so many people, but in India we actually just had a group of friends who we travelled with. If you're travelling alone you're more outgoing and it really gives a really different experience. I would go backpacking to go out of my comfort zone and have an adventure, and it is probably easier if you go alone."

Interviewer: "Why did you decide to go backpacking?"

Participant: "Because I wanted to see the world. I wanted to see more than just the Netherlands. Also to grow as a person, to be aware of what is going on, on the other side of the world. Maybe you don't see it that much when you

are in touristic Thailand, but still you see another culture and you see that not everyone has the same privileges as you do. I really feel like I develop myself when I travel and get a new perspective on things.”

Interviewer: “How would you describe the overall experience?”

Participant: “Super good, it is a time where I learn a lot. It is so inspiring and interesting, I love it.”

Interviewer: “What was the absolute highlight of your trip and why?”

Participant: “When I look back on it now it is definitely the people I’ve met. I met my boyfriend there and one of my best friends. So definitely the relations you make. It is very different meeting people travelling from meeting them at home, because you are much more at the same level when you are travelling. It is just another world. It has a different vibe around you when you are backpacking. Everyone is in this vibe and everyone understands you. When you meet people it goes so fast to get to know people. It quickly feels like you have known people for years. When you’re at home it goes very slowly, but when you travel it goes fast because you experience everything together, good and bad. You’re always together for that time. It is so special.”

Interviewer: “What was the least good experience during the trip and why?”

Participant: “In Thailand it was the homesick and in India it was the fights with my friend, because then I also felt homesick. It was really a struggle. Sometimes I wondered if I should just go home, but that would be kind of a failure. So I stayed, but sometimes I really wasn’t happy. But I think it was because I was young and had lived with my parents my entire life. It was a big step.”

Interviewer: “What would you do differently on a potential next trip?”

Participant: “If I had to do it over I would probably do some more preparation, but I would never go alone again. It was a good experience, but it just isn’t for me. It maybe was a bit too much. And the next time I will really look a lot of information up, because I didn’t the first time. I think you experience a place best if you know things about the place and the history. About events that are going on and the people living there. The culture. So you won’t miss put on anything. You haven’t really been there if you don’t know anything about it or what happened there. Taking some photos and going to the next place isn’t enough. I think that is important.”

Interviewer: “How was it for you to come back home after traveling?”

Participant: “It was very difficult both times. I was looking forward to it, it is a very special moment. The moment comes closer and closer and then suddenly the adventure is over and you come home and that is very emotional. You’re happy to be home, but you don’t really want to be home at the same time. Sleeping in your bed the first night is really great, but then you wake up and you’re like: “now what?”. You can’t really share your story, because no one really understands it, because they have not been there. I felt a bit lonely. When I came home from India I had someone to talk with it about because she was there the whole trip. It was easier.”

Backpacking behaviour

Interviewer: “Why do you prefer hostels?”

Participant: “Mostly because of the price I would say. You are travelling for a long time, so you can’t afford a hotel. Sometimes I do it to treat myself with a luxurious hotel for one night because I like it. But of course, you also choose a hostel because it is a very sure place to meet other people. You’re all in the same boat, all want to meet other people. I would never stay in hotels my whole trip, because you don’t meet other people there. You go to a hostel because it is social.”

Interviewer: “What do you think are the negative aspects by being in hostels?”

Participant: "If you're in a big room, then everyone comes in at different times. Actually I don't get that much sleep. I am very bad with noises so I really don't sleep well. I am not a big fan of the big dorm rooms, so when I can I stay in double rooms with the one I just met. And then it is fine. It is not the most comfy place, or the most clean place, but that is okay, you get what you pay for. But I really need my rest, I cannot sleep with 20 other people. I did it of course, but it is not my favorite, so that is a big negative thing."

Interviewer: "What are the criteria that you choose a hostel by?"

Participant: "The price and location in the city, because you don't want to be far out of the city centre. And of course it is nice if it is clean, but mostly you are not staying for that long, so if it is not a clean place then I just stay for one night and then move on. You can't really tell in advance. Mostly I call them and ask if they have a room available, and I search around on the internet to see if they look nice, but it can always be different when you arrive. But if it is the only option then it is fine. Wi-Fi is also important so you can contact home if something is wrong. They say everywhere that they have it, but it isn't always the case. I tend to leave sooner if it isn't working. That is always the case, if you're not satisfied, then you just go to the next one, because there are so many to choose from"

Interviewer: "Do you always book a hostel in advance?"

Participant: "In India I actually did, I don't know why. But I always had the Lonely Planet with me, and then I just called around. Maybe because in India you don't want to end up in the evening and not having a place to stay as a girl. In Thailand I didn't book, I just went, and if it was full I just went to the next. Then it was very much from recommendations from other travelers, they said: "oh, you should go here", and then I am like: "okay I'm gonna try that one". I always think that if the backpackers say it, then it must be good."

Interviewer: "How do you find and book your hostel?"

Participant: "Mostly I found them through Lonely Planet and sometimes I looked them up on my laptop, but I never booked that way. And I didn't book ahead either. Only when it was full moon party, then everything is booked weeks in advance, and I knew that I was going to go there, so then I booked ahead. But it kind of felt weird, it is more normal to just drop by."

Interviewer: "What is the first thing you do/ask about when you arrive at the hostel?"

Participant: "First, I always check the room if at least everything is working, like the shower or the toilet. And then I ask for the Wi-Fi."

Interviewer: "How do you use the hostel?"

Participant: "I don't really actually. I like to be out and go out to eat, so I don't hang around that much. But of course it is very different from hostel to hostel. Some are very inviting, and if you see people hang around in the common room then you would want to do it too to meet some people."

Interviewer: "Do you join in on the hostel activities?"

Participant: "Not so much, actually no."

Interviewer: "Do you notice the information about it?"

Participant: "Yeah, I see it. Actually one time I did it, I went hiking which were organized of the hostel. When you walk into a hostel you see the flyers and you want to see what there is to do and see. I always look, but mostly I just like to do it myself like walking tours and that kind of thing. So I'm not that active with activities."

Interviewer: "How do you seek information about where to go or what to see?"

Participant: "Mostly from other backpackers. You get so informed just talking to others. And then you tend to do it. Especially if there are more people³ telling you to go. And I also use the staff of the hostel if I want something nearby. But I like to hear from other backpackers more because you sometimes hear that the staff has connection some places, so you're not completely sure if it is good or if the staff get something out of recommending this place. So I trust other backpackers more. But in Europe for example I would trust the staff just as much as the other backpackers. Other places you often just think that they are trying to sell something. Then I prefer listening to other backpackers, they just always know what you want, because they want the same. You want to explore things and you want to meet other people, and everyone wants that. They know the best places to go because they just went there."

Interviewer: "How important are the hostel staff for your experience?"

Participant: "It is nice if they are nice, because it gives you a better feeling of being there. But it is also okay if I don't see them. I don't use them that much."

Use of digital devices

Interviewer: "Which digital devices do you bring on your trips?"

Participant: "Both times I brought my laptop, in India I had to because I had my internship. I was in Thailand in 2012, and I am not sure if I brought a smartphone or just a normal one. It was between high school and university. I probably brought a smartphone, knowing myself. And in India I definitely brought it. I mainly used the phone to contact other backpackers through text or Facebook or Whatsapp and I called home through Skype or Whatsapp. In India I had a local number so I could just call around because it is easier. In Thailand I just used Facebook and Whatsapp to make contact."

Interviewer: "How do you use your laptop in Thailand?"

Participant: "I used it to Skype home, to write my blog, cause people at home really wanted me to. I don't really like it but my mom really wanted me to so she could follow everything. Actually you are surprised of how many people who read it. I sometimes had 10,000 readers and it really wasn't interesting, haha. And I even wrote it in Dutch."

Interviewer: "What is the first thing you check when entering Wi-Fi at a hostel?"

Participant: "Whatsapp and Facebook, to stay in touch with people at home mostly, because you want to stay connected with them. I am always afraid that if I stay away for a long time, that everything has changed and that everyone has new friends. So I like to let them know that I am still here. My priorities all is about getting connected with people and stay in touch. I don't do it all day, but I like to let people know that I am okay. I also like to be offline for a few days, I enjoy that. It is also one of the nice things about being away. You get away from your usual habits. I have one friends who has gone travelling, and she is like posting 10 things a day on Facebook, and I was like, how is that possible? I wouldn't be interested in doing that at all. I wouldn't prioritize it. Travelling is about being away. But actually now that I have a boyfriend I want to stay in contact with him every day."

Interviewer: "What can make you download an app?"

Participant: "If I feel like it can add something to my travel, if it would make something easier, then I would definitely download it. It is always easy to download something, right? But if it is not working then you can always delete it, and I do that a lot. It isn't a big step to download something, but it should also work properly. Be fast and add something, otherwise it just takes up space on my phone. Mostly I often just give an app one chance, and then I delete it if it doesn't work for me."

Interviewer: "Which apps do you use when travelling?"

Participant: "Not so many actually. I think it is during the last couple of years that there has come so many options to your phone. I'm not sure that they were there when I travelled. I was very late with having a smartphone, so I am not even sure that I knew what an app was when I was in Thailand. In India I just used Whatsapp, Facebook, Youtube, Spotify to listen to music, email, Snapchat, my bank account app that is also a good one, and then the news app to stay updated."

Interviewer: "So it has not been too different from the ones you use when you are at home?"

Participant: "No it is exactly the same."

Interviewer: "Could it be because you didn't hear about anything that would be nice to have?"

Participant: "Yeah, I think that the options are much more today than they were when I was away. Maybe the next time I go I will use more travelling apps."

Interviewer: "Is there anything that you wish an app could do, that you do not have already?"

Participant: "Well when I am travelling I would like to know what are the local specialties and what should you try while you are there. Of course you have the other backpackers but if you didn't it would be nice, because Lonely Planet can sometimes be a bit commercial. I want to know what are the real nice places to go and not just the highlights of the place. The highlights aren't always the highlights you know. I use Lonely Planet a lot when I travel and it is good, but there aren't any pictures, and I like to have something visual. I think it can be difficult to decide what to choose when it is all text."

Comundu

Interviewer: "Have you ever heard of the Comundu app?"

Participant: "Yes I have heard about it from some of my friends who went travelling, and I would definitely try it the next time I go."

APPENDIX 7 – TRANSCRIPTION OF NATALIE INTERVIEW

Initial questions to decide if the participant is a backpacker (Pearce's definition, 1990):

Which accommodation do you prefer while travelling? - *Natalie:* "Hostel"

Are you interested in meeting other travelers? – *Natalie:* "Ja"

Is your travel schedule flexible when travelling? – *Natalie:* "Ja"

How long have your trips been? – *Natalie:* "3-6 måneder"

Are your primary activities informal and participatory? – *Natalie:* "Ja"

What label would you put on yourself when you travel? – *Natalie:* "Backpacker"

General information

Name: Natalie

Age: 27

Nationality: Danish

Gender: Female

Occupation when not travelling: Arbejder hos EF

Interview start

Interviewer: "Jeg sidder her med Natalie, og vil du lige starte med at præsentere dig selv?"

Participant: "Ja, men jeg hedder Natalie, og jeg har selv backpacket i Asien i flere måneder og så har jeg arbejdet på et hostel hvor jeg har været rådgiver, travel agent, i et års tid, så jeg har snakket med rigtig mange backpackere og har lyttet meget til hvordan deres behov har været for at rejse. Så jeg har en meget stor indsigt i hvordan det er at rejse som backpacker og også hvordan andre tænker at det er at rejse som backpacker, at se det lidt fra et andet perspektiv end bare mit eget."

Backpacking general information

Interviewer: "Hvor mange gange har du backpacket?"

Participant: "Faktisk ikke så mange gange, men det afhænger også af hvordan man definerer at backpacke. Jeg har nok haft to store ture. Jeg har været i USA og backpacket rundt der efter jeg havde læst, og så var jeg i Asien efter gymnasiet, hvor jeg tog mange forskellige lande på kort tid, sådan 3-4 måneder hvor jeg km godt omkring. Men ja to store ture, slet ikke nok endnu. Men jeg har også taget alene afsted et par gange tilbage til Asien hvor det har været af kortere varighed for at opleve lidt selv"

Interviewer: "Hvor lang tid var du i USA?"

Participant: "Et halvt år. Jeg læste i 3,5 måned og så rejste jeg rundt derefter, hvor vi boede på hostel. Vi var flere veninder der havde studeret i hver vores stat og så endte vi med at mødes og tog rundt og boede på hostels. Det var nogle fede hostels og det var faktisk også det eneste man kunne bo på derovre som ikke var alt for dyrt. Men det var en helt anden type hostels end hvad man er vant til i Asien, men også super fedt."

Interviewer: "Hvorfor blev det lige Asien du valgte at backpacke i?"

Participant: "Vi havde en fascination af at opleve noget helt andet end vi var vant til herhjemme fra. Jeg har altid været fascineret af USA og jeg burde nok bare være taget dertil, men det var også fordi at vi ville gerne nå meget på kort tid og opleve en helt anden verden. Min veninde og jeg vi havde den tanke at vi ville gerne ud og backpacke, vi ville gerne ud og vandre og vi ville gerne ud i junglen, vi ville gerne opleve nogle bounty strande, vi ville gerne opleve det hele på en gang men også i vores eget tempo. Og det hørte vi fra andre at så var Asien bare det oplagte sted for det, der kunne man få det hele på én gang. Vi ville selv styre det og ikke have nogen til at hjælpe os. Vi havde Jysk Rejsebureau som arrangerede vores flybilletter men vi ville ikke have andet."

Interviewer: "Og I boede primært på hostels?"

Participant: "Ja vi boede primært på hostels. Det er nemt når man er to, for så kan man bare få et værelse sammen i stedet for at bo på dorms. Vi boede også nogle få gange på hotel, men vi fandt os bare bedre tilrette når det var sådan lidt lousy og lidt anderledes. Vi søgte også menneskene mere end vi søgte at det skulle være et lækkert sted, og vi følte os mere behagelige når vi kom til et sted der var plads til at man kunne slappe af og folk kunne være der i stedet for at det hele skulle være så opstillet. Så det fandt vi ud af at hostels var mere vores stil."

Interviewer: "Hvad vil du sige er den største forskel på at bo på hostels i Asien og i USA?"

Participant: "Jeg vil sige at mentaliteten var anderledes. Men i Asien er de også bare så enestående med den måde de er på. Selvfølgelig er der nogle steder i Asien hvor de er meget vant til turister og hvor de godt ved det. Det har jeg også sagt til mine gæster, at det er ikke rigtig Thailand, men skal ud til de andre steder. Fordi Thaier er de mest hjælpsomme og gavmilde mennesker, de er søde og de er oprigtige. Det er især det jeg tager ud at bo på hostels i

Thailand især, det der med at selvom man ikke giver så mange penge for at være der og man ved at det deres levebrød. I USA kunne man mere mærke at det er en forretning. Jeg går også meget op i at jeg vil hellere støtte de lokale og købe kaffe hos dem i stedet for at gå på Starbucks. Det gjorde jeg også meget i dengang jeg boede i Bangkok. Men altså det er nok den store forskel. Det var stadig hyggeligt og de gjorde også noget for fællesskabet men det var bare meget mere en forretning. Og det var også nogle andre mennesker der var der.”

Interviewer: “Når du har backpacket, har du så altid været meget opsøgende for at møde andre backpackere?”

Participant: “Nej faktisk ikke, da min veninde og jeg tog til Asien der var vi jo os to og vi havde det så fint i os selv, men vi mødte også en masse mennesker. Det var helt på vores præmisser. Vi gjorde også det helt klassiske med at snakke med nogen på et hostel om hvor de skulle hen og så mødes med dem der senere. Da jeg selv var afsted i et par uger sidste år der opsøgte jeg det slet ikke, først egentlig til sidst. Jeg tog ned på en Thailandsk ø på den første del af turen og det var lidt et lavpraktisk hostel-resort og jeg havde ikke interesse i at lære andre at kende og jeg nød det. Jeg havde ikke lyst til at være social. Jeg skulle bare koble af fra alt hvad der hed arbejde. Selvfølgelig snakkede jeg med nogen, men det var helt på min præmis. På den anden del tog jeg så til Bangkok hvor jeg skulle mødes både med venner hjemmefra og mine Thai-venner fra da jeg boede der. Men jeg har lært at være meget mig selv og jeg nyder det også. Jeg tror at af at jeg har arbejdet på et turistbureau, så har jeg snakket med så mange fantastiske mennesker og etableret venskaber med dem og de vælter ind og ud, så går man nogen gange lidt tør i det fordi man gerne vil holde dem ved lige og man orker næsten ikke at blive ved med at møde nye og nye, man vil også gerne holde fast ved nogle af dem man har. Man ville ønske at man bare kunne samle dem alle ét sted. Men ja det er meget efter hvad præmissen for min rejse er, hvor meget jeg gerne vil engageret mig med menneskerne.”

Interviewer: “Vi har snakket lidt om det, at du har rejst alene og du har rejst sammen med nogle venner, men hvad har fordelene og ulemperne været?”

Participant: “Uh der er mange. Men når man rejser alene, så kan man selv bestemme. Man skal ikke gå på kompromis med nogen. Jeg er god til kompromisser, men så skal jeg også have sat mig op til tingene. Jeg elsker at man ikke skal tage hensyn til andre og at man kan slappe af i uet. Jeg prøvede engang hvor jeg besøgte en veninde i Philadelphia hvor at vi tog sammen til Washington, og det var noget at jeg bare altid gerne havde villet. Og hun var bare ikke i det bedste humør, hun var ikke i øjeblikket. Vi var ude og se alle de her monumenter og jeg var helt oppe at køre men hun var bare ikke med mig. Så det endte med også at ødelægge min rejse lidt fordi jeg hele tiden skulle være opmærksom på hende og følte at jeg hele tiden skulle skynde mig videre for hendes skyld. Så det er en hel klar fordel for mig selv at kunne bestemme. Da jeg boede i Bangkok tog jeg også til Chiang Mai alene og var ude at vandre alene og det er en ting som jeg førhen ellers ikke ville have gjort. Men hvis der er noget man gerne vil, så er det det at man må gøre hvis der ikke lige er nogen at tage med. Fordelen ved at rejse i grupper det er at man har nogen man kender at dele det med og man får nogle minder sammen. Man lærer hinanden at kende på nogle andre områder og styrker forholdet. Og det er også ulempen ved at være alene om det, at du har alle minderne alene. Men jeg er ikke fan af at rejse mange sammen fordi jeg synes lidt at det ødelægger det med at møde andre og at der aldrig kan tages en beslutning uden at det skal diskuteres mellem så mange mennesker.”

Interviewer: “Har du nogensinde følt dig utryk ved at rejse alene?”

Participant: “Nej aldrig. Det er sjovt fordi sidste år da jeg rejste i Thailand alene, så tog jeg en bus med til Ko Chang, og den var fyldt med par og familier. Så er der et par der sådan kigger lidt mærkeligt på mig og de spurgte om jeg rejste alene og de var sådan helt: ”ej det kan man da ikke” og ”er du okay, er du tryk?”. Og det kom bag på mig fordi jeg var jo vant til det, jeg havde også sendt så mange gæster afsted der skulle rejse alene og selvfølgelig kan man da rejse alene. Jeg er også single og har ferie på skæve tidspunkter pga. mit arbejde, så det er svært at koordinere med veninder, så hvad skulle jeg så? Lade være med at tage af sted? Det handler bare om at finde de hostels hvor der er de gode sociale, primært i Lonely Planet. Men det er også fordi at nu kender jeg Thailand og thaierne så godt, så jeg har aldrig følt mig utryk. Jeg overvejer lige nu at tage til Indonesien f.eks. og hvis jeg ikke kan få nogen med, så må jeg jo

gøre det alene, men der kan jeg godt mærke at der skal jeg ud af min komfort-zone og får det der før-rejse nervøsitet og kriller i maven. Men man skal bare ud i det altså, det er ikke farligt.”

Interviewer: “Har du nogensinde syntes at det var svært at komme i snak med nogen?”

Participant: “Nej, men jeg er også en at der har meget nemt ved at snakke med folk. Og så bliver jeg tit også venner med personalet, det kommer sig nok af at jeg også selv har arbejdet i den branche. Men nej jeg har aldrig været bange for ikke at have nogen at snakke med. Så har jeg min bog. Det er ikke det der gør at jeg ikke rejser. Men jeg har kunnet mærke på mine gæster at det er det som de har været ret nervøse for, så det var derfor at de brugte mig rigtig meget.”

Interviewer: “Hvor meget bruger du selv personalet på sådan et hostel?”

Participant: “Ikke vanvittig meget. Da jeg var afsted alene der brugte jeg dem til at spørge hvor der var nogle steder man skulle tage hen, og generelt bruger jeg dem hvis jeg har nogle spørgsmål. Men jeg er nok ikke den der hænger ud i baren eller tager i byen med dem. Jeg er nok typen der holder mig lidt for mig selv og så er jeg på når der lige er noget.”

Interviewer: “Hvordan kommer man i kontakt med andre gæster på et hostel?”

Participant: “Jamen man har bare altid noget til fælles og det er grundlaget for hvad end man gør. Og så er der jo også arrangementer på hostellet, de arrangerer tit de her pubcrawls hvor man let kommer til at snakke med mange mennesker over alkohol, også selvom man måske er den generte type. Det synes jeg altid er en god ting, selvom jeg måske ikke altid synes at man skal hylde alkoholen. Men det er en god starter for det sociale. De her arrangementer er altid god for at styrke det sociale, for nogen gange har folk bare brug for et skub. Selvfølgelig er der også nogen der er rigtig gode til det af sig selv, men andre gange er det bare rart at der er en tovholder der ligesom sætter tingene i gang. Men man skal bare altid snakke om noget man har til fælles og det har man altid på et hostel. Man skal italesætte det og selv være opsøgende.”

Interviewer: “Hvordan oplever du at hostels markedsfører deres aktiviteter og får det ud til deres gæster?”

Participant: “Det er meget gennem flyers og så italesætte det over for deres gæster. Og så brugte vi også Instagram en del da jeg selv arbejdede der. Generelt så drejede det sig meget om de personligheder der solgte budskabet, og der hvor jeg var, var der nogle rigtig gode nogen der var gode til at engagere folk.”

Interviewer: “Da du rejste første gang, det er vel ved at være en del år siden, der havde man vel ikke telefoner med?”

Participant: “Nej på ingen måde, på det tidspunkt gik man på internet café, og for mig var det virkelig fantastisk. Det er en anden tid i dag. Da jeg arbejdede kunne jeg virkelig se hvilken forskel at telefonerne gjorde for deres rejse. De er helt væk og snakker slet ikke med hinanden. Det gjorde vi dengang jeg rejste, eller også sad man og spillede kort. Det er en kæmpe kontrast og jeg er glad for at have oplevet at rejse før smartphonens tid. Det er en kæmpe ændring. I dag er folk sure hvis ikke der er Wi-Fi. Men jeg vil så sige at når jeg rejser alene, så ville oplevelse være helt anderledes hvis jeg ikke havde min telefon. Jeg bemærkede helt sikkert at det var den jeg hev op når jeg spiste alene.”

Interviewer: “Hvad synes du er den største ændring ved rejsen efter smartphonens indtog?”

Participant: “Folk er blevet meget mere asociale. Jeg synes det er bekymrende at det decideret er blevet en tendens at man sidder med sin smartphone alle vegne, også i fællesrummet, hvor man efter min mening kun bør sidde hvis man ønsker at engagere sig i andre. Man bør komme ud og opleve, det er det der er meningen med rejsen og det hæmmer telefonen lidt fordi du har det sociale liv på telefonen i stedet og ikke opsøger det så meget fysisk mere. Vær i nuet, det er sundt at bare sidde og observere. Vær åben. Jeg synes virkelig at det tangerer et problem og ødelægger selve

charmen ved hostellivet. Jeg har observeret at folk meget sidder med deres telefoner eller computere og arbejder og det gør altså noget negativt ved atmosfæren som jeg ikke synes jeg oplevede førhen.”

Interviewer: “Hvorfor backpacker du?”

Participant: “Fordi jeg synes det er en helt anden måde at rejse på der skiller sig ud fra alt det andet man ellers gør. Men jeg synes faktisk også at det er blevet for normalt. Jeg vil rigtig gerne nogle steder hen der ikke er så berørte endnu, og derfor drømmer jeg blandt andet om at komme til Burma. Jeg kan få spat af alle de mennesker der bare tager den præcis samme rute og alle ligner hinanden. Der er ikke den der rigtige backpacker-følelse over det. Jeg søger derfor også andre måder at rejse på, fordi backpacking er blevet så normalt. Det er en standard-ting som alle gør efter gymnasiet. Så jeg synes ikke at det er det samme længere. Nu har jeg leget med tanken om at komme ud og vandre i Norge bare fordi det er anderledes. Måske for at få lidt af den gamle backpacker-følelse tilbage. Backpacking er ikke så autentisk mere, så skal man måske mere ud og bo ved de lokale i stedet for de der overfyldte hostels. Jeg vil nok fremover søge efter noget mere autentisk.”

Backpacker behaviour

Interviewer: “Hvorfor foretrækker du hostels?”

Participant: “Det er mere “everyday-life” hvor du kan relatere til det. Jeg slapper mere af i det når det ikke er så pudset og poleret og gennemtænkt det hele. Jeg føler mig nemt hjemme på et hostel. Og så synes jeg også at hostels er tættere på den lokale kultur og giver en oplevelse af den destination man befinder sig på. Det at rejse det er at komme tæt på kulturen. Jeg vil hellere bo i et lille skur så jeg kan mærke det sted jeg er. Det får man ikke på et hotel. Men en anden ting er, at jeg vil heller ikke betale for et hotel. Jeg bruger meget hellere mine penge på oplevelser og god mad i stedet for at betale for hvor jeg bor. Jeg synes også det er meget federe at støtte de lokale og nogen hvor det er deres eget. Hvis man kan hjælpe en thai med at holde forretningen kørende, så vil jeg da hellere det end at støtte en eller anden kæmpe koncern hvor det ikke engang føles som rigtige thaier der arbejder der. Ellers så kunne man jo ligeså godt have taget hvor som helst hen.”

Interviewer: “Hvor meget bruger du hostellets faciliteter?”

Participant: “Det er meget forskelligt afhængigt af hvor jeg rejser. I USA brugte vi det meget med køkkenet og selv kunne lave mad. I Asien var der faktisk slet ikke mulighed for det på de hostels jeg rejste på. Men generelt så foretrækker jeg at komme ud og finde en lokal cafe og virkelig bruge det at stedet byder på.”

Interviewer: “Hvordan finder du og booker hostels?”

Participant: “Vi brugte Lonely Planet og vi bookede faktisk aldrig før. Der var der heller ikke sådan noget booking.com så der gjorde man det slet ikke på den måde. Vi havde Lonely Planet, og så fandt vi det vi synes så ud til at være et okay sted. Men når det står nævnt i Lonely Planet så ved man godt at det så er dyrere når du når dertil, så vi brugte det mest på den måde at vi indkredsede det område vi havde lyst til at bo i, og så gik vi fra hostel til hostel indtil vi fandt noget der var ledigt. Kun hvis vi vidste at der var travlt i byen så ringede vi i forvejen, men det var jo dengang. I USA bookede vi lang tid forinden fordi vi var så mange der rejste sammen, men det var så heller ikke mig der havde ansvar for det. Jeg er mere sådan “vi finder ud af det”. Jeg tror jeg har svært ved at forpligte mig til noget bestemt. Men jeg synes faktisk at hele processen lidt er ødelagt af alt det her med smartphonen. Det er blevet virkelig svært bare at droppe forbi et hostel fordi alle er begyndt at booke i forvejen over nettet i rigtig god tid. Og det er slet ikke sikkert at de ved hvad de skal og så aflyser de, og det skaber bare rod i det hele. Der er ikke det er med at man kaster sig ud i det og tager chancen. Charmen ligger i at planlægge efterhånden på rejsen og have frihed til at blive længere et sted hvis man forelsker sig i det. Og det bliver frataget af sådan som det er blevet. Det er som om at folk hele tiden skal være i kontrol og så synes jeg bare at man ender med at gå glip af mange ting der kunne være sket hvis man lod

nogen ting være op til tilfældigheder. Man skal som backpacker ikke planlægge hele turen på forhånd, det synes jeg er synd. Men jeg kan godt se at man kan være fristet af det fordi det er så nemt og man kan få det til den rigtige pris. Så jeg kan godt forstå det, men jeg foretrækker stadig at være mere gammeldags.”

Interviewer: “Hvad er det første at du gør eller spørger om når du kommer til et hostel?”

Participant: “Jeg spørger hvertfald aldrig om Wi-Fi. Grunden til at jeg kommer til at tænke på det er fordi at jeg har en veninde der gør det. For mig der drejer det sig mere om sådan at finde ud af hvor ting er, hvor hostellet ligger i forhold til alting. Hvor det tætteste et eller andet er, f.eks. 7-11 eller convenient store. Jeg kan godt lide at komme ud og opstøge det selv også, men jeg tror at jeg ofte får spurgt om sådan noget. Også med hensyn til transport, i Bangkok ville jeg spørge om hvor den nærmeste Skytrain lå.”

Interviewer: “Hvor vigtig er Wi-Fi blevet for rejsende fra dit synspunkt?”

Participant: “Sindssygt vigtigt. Det var number 1 klage da jeg arbejdede på hostellet. Jeg kan huske at der var flere cafeer der lavede sådan nogle skilte med at de ikke havde Wi-Fi, fordi de gad det ikke. De ville gerne have at folk lavede noget andet når de sad på deres cafe. Men jeg kan godt se at når jeg selv rejser, så i og med at man bruger telefonen så meget, også til praktiske ting, i stedet for at kigge på et kort, så kigger man på Google Maps, så forstår jeg godt at man tænker ”fuck hvad gør jeg nu” når ikke det virker. Men du kan altid spørge folk og det gør jeg virkelig meget. Jeg spørger altid når jeg er i tvivl. Det er som om at folk glemmer det, så det er virkelig et kæmpe kæmpe problem når ikke at Wi-Fi virker.”

Interviewer: “Nu hørte jeg jo at du meget bruger hostel personalet når du er i tvivl om noget, men er der andre måder som du bruger til at finde information?”

Participant: “Jeg læser Lonely Planet, også online. Jeg kigger også på Tripadvisor og ser hvad folk har skrevet, men jeg lader mig ikke definere af hvad folk skriver, fordi jeg ved at alt er en smagssag. Jeg læser nok og også kigger på kort. Jeg har altid været sådan at jeg vil gerne vide hvad der er vigtigt for den by jeg skal være i. Jeg vil ikke gå glip af noget. Jeg vil ikke risikere at have været to uger i en by og så jeg ikke har gjort det jeg skulle gøre. Jeg spørger meget når jeg er der, sådan for at høre hvad der er fedt. Også med andre backpackere. Word of mouth er jo sindssygt vigtig. Det er så vigtigt at have nogen at spørge men jeg tror faktisk at det idag foregår meget online. Man læser meget anmeldelser og går meget op i Trustpilot fremfor ligesom at forhøre sig der hvor man er. Mit formål da jeg arbejdede på hostellet var jo også at få opbygget en tillid fordi så tror de bedre på en. Folk er virkelig skeptiske hele tiden i dag og det hader jeg. Nogle gange kan folk virkelig godt bare være gavmilde uden at der er en bagtanke med det. Men altså det helt ultimative tillidsboost der er jo når man har en referel som anbefaler det. Så det vigtigste er altid af ens gæster er glade, for det der bliver fortalt videre, godt eller dårligt er alfa og omega. Én dårlig anmeldelse kan virkelig ødelægge. Det fede ved det er jo også hvis så hostellet gør mere ud af det hele og deres behandling af gæsterne. God omtale betyder at folk kommer igen og god omtale får man kun via gode oplevelser.”

Use of digital devices

Interviewer: “Hvordan bruger du din smartphone når du rejser?”

Participant: “Når jeg har rejst alene så bruger jeg den mere end når jeg rejser med andre. Første gang jeg rejste er jo så lang tid siden at det var uden telefon, og det var så fantastisk. Ingen forstyrrelser. Jeg hader telefoner når jeg rejser og det kan jeg også mærke når jeg rejser i dag. Men altså jeg kæmper også min kamp, også herhjemme, med at jeg ikke skal være så meget på Facebook. Alt det der ligegyldige tidsfordriv. På rejsen bruger jeg den egentlig mest til lige at tjekke ind på de sociale medier, lige se hvad der sker. Men altså generelt så vil jeg slet ikke forstyrres, jeg har ikke engang min mail på telefonen, for jeg gider det faktisk ikke. Men selvfølgelig har jeg kontakt med dem derhjemme,

især når jeg er alene afsted. Men jeg bruger den mindre, og jeg er også ret dårlig til at svare folk når jeg er afsted, for jeg gider faktisk ikke.”

Interviewer: “Hvilke apps bruger du når du er afsted??”

Participant: “Jeg er nok lidt gammeldags, jeg bruger kun Instagram og Facebook. Og Snapchat.”

Interviewer: “Sådan generelt, hvad kan få dig til at downloade en app?”

Participant: “Ofte hvis det har et eller andet socialt element. Jeg kan ikke have så meget på min telefon, men jeg kan da se at det jeg så har prioriteret, det er nærmest alt sammen sociale medier. Jeg har faktisk slettet mange af de ting som jeg i stedet kan ordne på nettet som f.eks. Momondo for så at have plads til Twitter og LinkedIn. Men det er et kompromis hver gang så der skal nok ret meget til at jeg beholder det. Der skal jeg nok virkelig blive fanget sådan at jeg får sat mig ind i det og synes at det er spændende. Men Det er ofte noget med communities, det kan jeg generelt godt lide. Hvis jeg kan mærke at det beriger mig på en eller anden måde, så kommer jeg helt sikkert til at bruge det. Jeg kan mærke at jeg på Facebook synes der er begyndt at være så meget ligegyldigt, og jeg er mere begyndt at søge efter folk der har nogle holdninger og det kan jeg ikke længere få på Facebook. Derfor har jeg nu downloadet Twitter, for jeg tror at det vil kunne berige mig mere i den retning. Men jeg skal lige have tid til at sætte mig ordentligt ind i det, så det er den forstå forhindring. At det kræver at jeg lige engagerer mig. Jeg skal kunne se et formål med det for at jeg beholder en app, så det ikke bare er ligegyldigt tidsfordriv.”

Interviewer: “Er der noget at du har tænkt at du ville ønske at en app kunne gøre når du rejser?”

Participant: “Jaeh, det kunne faktisk være fedt hvis der var sådan en slags nyhedsapp for det område man var i. sådan lidt AOK-agtigt, hvor man kan følge med i hvad der sker der hvor man er. Sådan at de kunne sende en notifikation om at ”det sker der i dag”. For der sker jo så mange ting rundt omkring som man ikke når at høre om. Det kunne være fedt hvis man ikke gik glip af noget på den måde. Så kan man selv vælge til og fra.”

Comundu

Interviewer: “Nu ved at jeg at du har lidt kendskab til Comundu i forvejen, for du arbejdede faktisk på det hostel i Bangkok hvor Comundu lavede sine første tests. Men hvad er egentlig dine tanker omkring det?”

Participant: “Det der er fedt ved Comundu det er at den sørger for at folk er sammen, for de sidder bare og sumper i sofaen med deres telefoner, og Comundu danner fællesskab og sørger for at de kommer ud.

Desværre har jeg ikke været nogen steder hvor de brugte Comundu, men jeg kunne ellers godt tænke mig at prøve det. Jeg kan godt lige tanken om at jeg kan møde mennesker på min egen præmis gennem Comundu. Jeg kan vælge det til når jeg har lyst og stadig holde øje med hvad der sker. Så kan jeg se at der sker noget i aften, også ved jeg at jeg har hele dagen til at lappe af og så kan jeg gå ud og møde mennesker om aftenen. På den måde kommer man ikke til at stå til rådighed for nogen. Det kan jeg allerede nu se at jeg ville bruge. Generelt så er det jo bare fedt at have alle muligheder foran én og så kan man vælge til og fra hvad man har lyst til. Så kan man selv være selektiv i hvornår man har lyst til at være social og ikke.”

Interviewer: “Okay, jamen tusind tak for hjælpen, det var faktisk det”

Participant: “Det var så lidt, håber du kunne bruge det”

Interviewer: “Helt sikkert”

APPENDIX 8 – TRANSCRIPTION OF MICHAEL INTERVIEW

Initial questions to decide if the participant is a backpacker (Pearce's definition, 1990):

Which accommodation do you prefer while travelling? – *Michael*: "Hostel"

Are you interested in meeting other travelers? – *Michael*: "Yes"

Is your travel schedule flexible when travelling? – *Michael*: "Yes"

How long have your trips been? – *Michael*: "6 months"

Are your primary activities informal and participatory? – *Michael*: "Yes"

What label would you put on yourself when you travel? – *Michael*: "Backpacker"

General information

Name: Michael

Age: 24

Nationality: British

Gender: Male

Occupation when not travelling: Sales

Backpacking general information

Interviewer: "Which places did you go backpacking, and why those places?"

Participant: "Australia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Hong Kong. Mainly it has been a coincidence. I had talked to my friend and we both wanted to go those places, but then I missed out on doing a whole trip with him because I was still in the university. So he went earlier and went to a lot more places than I did. I joined the second half of the trip which was in Australia and South-East Asia. So It was a little bit by change than I went to those places. It was the route that my friends had set. So I rather joined it than picking the places myself. They had chosen the countries they were going to and then I just tagged along basically."

Interviewer: "Would you have chosen differently if you could have had some influence on the choice?"

Participant: "No, I wouldn't have done that. Before I went backpacking I had heard that those were the places to go."

Interviewer: "Why did you decide to go backpacking in the first place?"

Participant: "I guess that the first time it crossed my mind was at the university. I was coming towards the end of my studies and didn't really know what I was going to do after. Then I had heard of people going travelling and it sounded like an awesome thing to do, to see some other countries. It was also kind of a step after the university instead of going straight into a job. I knew that I didn't want to go straight from the university and into work. I wanted to do something else. So yeah, I had heard of other people going travelling and going to Thailand, and amazing things about Australia as well, so I definitely wanted to see that before going into a permanent job."

Interviewer: "In what kind of accommodation did you stay mostly during your travel, and why did you chose this type of accommodation?"

Participant: "We stayed in hostels and the main reason was probably price. It is always cheaper to stay in a hostel. Yeah when I started backpacking it was definitely price, and then the further along we got then we weren't looking for the cheapest anymore, we were looking for a social place to stay where we could meet other people to go out with. It started off because it was the cheapest I think because I didn't really have any previous experiences with hostels, except from with school and that was a youth hostel, and that is completely different from a backpacker hostel."

Interviewer: "How did you find the hostels you were going to?"

Participant: "We used hostelworld.com at the time. And as we were travelling we met a lot of people at the time. Especially in Australia we met a lot of people coming down the East coast and we were going up, and if they suggested somewhere to stay in the next place we were going to then we would just choose that hostel because they said it was really good. So if we were recommended a place to stay then we would choose that one, but if we hadn't met anyone then we would use hostelworld to find one and go by the ratings and reading comments. It was mainly the comments that was deciding where we were going to stay. We were looking for more sociable and well not part hostels but livelier hostels. So if the comments said that this one is great for that kind of thing then we would choose that place."

Interviewer: "Did you always book ahead?"

Participant: "No. In Australia we didn't book ahead that much. That was where we met a lot of people and got recommendations, so we'd just show up to the place. But then when we went from Australia to Thailand, we did it once where we didn't book ahead and we ended up sleeping at a train station, because there wasn't anywhere open when we got there that had places to stay, so after that happened we booked ahead in Thailand so we didn't have to sleep in more train stations."

Interviewer: "So you always booked through an app or?"

Participant: "Yeah, even with recommendations we would still find it at hostelworld and book it."

Interviewer: "So when was it that you went backpacking?"

Participant: "2014"

Interviewer: "And you were travelling with some friends?"

Participant: "Yeah I was travelling with two of my friends"

Interviewer: "How was it to backpack with them?"

Participant: "It went really well most of the time. 6 months is a long time to spend with two friends. One of them was more my friend's friends than mine, I guess. I was difficult because we had two different approaches to how we wanted to go. We went a lot more structured and not that flexible because that's how he wanted to do it. We only had a certain amount of time in each country. If it had only been me and the other guy, then I guess that we wouldn't have cared so much when we left, we probably would have left when we had to leave or when we got bored of the place. But he wanted to be certain to go to all of the places and had certain places that he wanted to go to in those countries. So there were a few disagreements about that, but then sometimes we did it his way and other times he had to do it our way. We especially had disagreements about staying in the train station, he really hated that."

Interviewer: "Did you look to get in contact with other travelers or were you fine with your group?"

Participant: "It was not that we didn't enjoy the time that we spend together the three of us, we just had a really good time everytime we met up with people and did things with them in the place we were. So we were kind of always looking to meet other people and do some of the social stuff at the hostel."

Interviewer: "Were these things arranged by the hostel or?"

Participant: "No not necessarily. In this one place in Cambodia there was a pool table, and we just started a little competition and that's always a good way to meet people that you otherwise wouldn't have talked to. It's a bit harder to meet them when they are just sitting at the bar. A pool table makes it easy to just socialize with them. But we always also tried to go to the things arranged by the hostel. In Sidney they had a quiz night, things like that. And pub crawls. So yeah we always try to go out."

Interviewer: "How did you find out about these activities?"

Participant: "Mainly at the reception. Sometimes they would tell us about things when we were checking in. Other times we were wondering about what we should do or if there were something arranged by the hostel so we went and asked the reception. There was one cool place in Australia where they had this pin board where everything was listed and there was pictures of the things you could do there. It was cool."

Interviewer: "So it has been very easy to find out about these things?"

Participant: "Well most of the times we did go and asked the reception, so I guess that you also have to seek it out yourself. I guess that it might have been advertised on boards and flyers but, I myself never picked up a flyer or starred at the board. We just always asked the receptionist, it was easier. It's easier listening to them telling us what they would suggest we should do."

Interviewer: "How was your contact with the people at home?"

Participant: "Maximum once a month I think. I think I contacted my dad maybe three times during the whole trip. We talked on Skype on my phone at the hostel. I talked to my friends on Whatsapp."

Backpacker behaviour

Interviewer: "Why do you prefer hostels?"

Participant: "There is more of an atmosphere in a hostel, I guess. There's people who have already done the trip that you want to do. So they got genuine recommendations for you cause you're kind of following the same trail. You get to find out about things that you otherwise wouldn't have, I think. You're meeting a lot more people. I don't think that I've ever stayed in a hotel and met people. You would never go and ask other hotel guests what they had been doing for the day or if they'd fancy going out for a bite. It has mostly been about the social atmosphere for us in choosing hostels."

Interviewer: "What are the negative aspects about staying in hostels?"

Participant: "Sometimes you have to put up with weird people. You can wake up at night and there's someone starring at you or something. But it is an experience that you wouldn't get anywhere else. It's weird at the time but it is a funny story later. I'm also a bit concerned about my valuable stuff. In Sidney I was staying with 28 other people in a dorm, and it was impossible to find something if it went missing. It is always in the back of your mind if your stuff is safe, even if you lock it under your bed. That's probably it about the negative aspects, security and stuff being stolen. But I guess that could happen in a hotel as well."

Interviewer: "What is the first thing you do or ask about when you arrive at the hostel?"

Participant: "Hmm, that's a tough one. I guess that if we turned up to a place and we didn't really know what to do there. If we maybe had heard that it was a good place to go to but didn't know anything else, then we would ask where we should go or if there was something happening tonight. I guess mostly about what is going on basically. Or maybe the Wi-Fi password, but they normally give you that though."

Interviewer: "How do you seek information?"

Participant: "We use the reception a lot to ask about stuff, sometimes they have leaflet that you can read. For Australia I used Lonely Planet, but actually most before I got there, and I used it for Sidney. After that it was more recommendations from other guests and the staff. It was okay for the main attractions."

Use of digital devices

Interviewer: "Which digital devices do you bring on your trips?"

Participant: "My phone and my iPad. My phone I used for social media and news to find out what was going on back home. My iPad I had mainly for reading and playing games on long journeys."

Interviewer: "What is the first thing you check when entering Wi-Fi at a hostel?"

Participant: "I go to Facebook, it's shameful, I know, but it's true."

Interviewer: "What can make you download an app?"

Participant: "I guess if I was going to benefit from it or if it had some kind of practical use. I guess the only reason I downloaded hostelworld was to book hostels. To yeah practical benefits. I downloaded a currency converter as well. Really practical use."

Interviewer: "Does it take a lot for you to delete them again or what are your thoughts on that?"

Participant: "Well if it didn't work or if it wasn't what I thought it was. If it didn't work the way I thought, it would. If it didn't serve the purpose and didn't meet my expectations."

Interviewer: "Which apps do you use when travelling?"

Participant: "I use maps quite a lot. Currency converter, Facebook and Twitter. Youtube came in handy during the slow days. And Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger."

Interviewer: "Is there anything that you wish an app could do, that you do not have already?"

Participant: "When I was away I guess I didn't really consider that there would be apps for travelling. So no ideas really."

Comundu

Interviewer: "What would you think that Comundu would contribute to your travels?"

Participant: "It would have made the whole process about what to do at the hostel easier. Instead of having to go to the receptionist, it provides a much easier way to find out what is going on. And also, meeting other travelers who want to do the same things that you want to do, like going to a bar, get drunk or go see a sight. Even though the hostel is a social meeting point it can still be quite hard to find those people. If the social situations don't exist where you get to talk to these people rather than approaching them when they are sitting down with their phone or reading a book even. It is a lot easier to send them a message or even just put out there that you are going to a bar, and then people can join and meet you somewhere. It's less intrusive and I think that it would happen a lot more often. We didn't always meet people at the hostel, at huge party hostels it still can be quite difficult to get into those situations where you feel comfortable enough to approaching them. It sounds a bit weird, I know, but it would make it a lot easier to just put it out there that you're up for something, and then it is easier to for people to join in, I think."

APPENDIX 9 – TRANSCRIPTION OF LUKA INTERVIEW

Initial questions to decide if the participant is a backpacker (Pearce's definition, 1990):

Which accommodation do you prefer while travelling? – *Luka*: "Hostels"

Are you interested in meeting other travelers? – *Luka*: "Yes"

Is your travel schedule flexible when travelling? – *Luka*: "Yes"

How long have your trips been? – *Luka*: "1-4 months"

Are your primary activities informal and participatory? – *Luka*: "Yes"

What label would you put on yourself when you travel? – *Luka*: "Backpacker"

General information

Name: Luka

Age: 31

Nationality: Australian

Gender: Male

Occupation when not travelling: Business consultant

Backpacking general information

Interviewer: "How many times have you been backpacking so far?"

Participant: "I do it a lot, every year, so maybe a dozen. Some have been short trips, like a week and other times three or four months."

Interviewer: "Which places did you go backpacking, and why those places?"

Participant: "I've been all across Europe, Asia, North America, and South America. I haven't really been backpacking in Australia cause that's where I come from. So kind of all of the typical backpacking places and some more."

Interviewer: "Why did you decide to go backpacking?"

Participant: "Well there's a lot to it, but for me backpacking gives you a sense of complete freedom and independence. And you meet a lot of people and most places you get a feeling of community. But I really like that I can do whatever I like during the day and then I can join people later if I want to. It's not an organized tour, there's nobody but me who decides what I am doing. The places I choose to stay in are cozy places, not party hostels, cause when you are travelling alone you don't wanna go clubbing every night. I like to see and explore. And I like that backpacking is cheaper."

Interviewer: "Why do you chose to stay in hostels?"

Participant: "It's cheap and it's a lot more affordable than other options. But mainly because I want to meet people and it is the best way to meet them. It is also the best way to find out what is going in around the city and I like to join event like social nights rather than sitting alone in some hotel room. Basically I think that it is more fun."

Interviewer: "Have you been travelling alone or with friends?"

Participant: "I have mostly been travelling alone. But when I have been travelling for a longer time I can have friends joining me of different stages of the trip. But I think that I do like travelling by myself and meeting people. When you are travelling with friends everyone has a different take on what they want to do and you tend to stick in that group. I think I get a bit bored in that way, I like to meet new people."

Interviewer: "So you do that a lot, you meet new people and then spend time with them?"

Participant: "Yeah I do, I don't have friends that travel as much as me, so I tend to just book my own holiday and just go, and if it happens that someone else is going to be around at some point, then awesome, otherwise I don't want to be trying to coordinate anything with anyone. I'll just do what I want."

Interviewer: "What are the criteria that you choose a hostel by?"

Participant: "Well, reviews go a long way, but if there were a couple of hostels that were rated the same way I would choose by a good location and if it is not a too loud and crazy hostel. I like it more friendly and loose, like a friendly-community kind of vibe."

Interviewer: "How do you find and book your hostel?"

Participant: "Through hostelworld, their app. I think it is the easiest way to search the city and sort by ratings. I always read a couple of review to get a feeling of what the place is like. Usually I can rely on the fact that people has really liked it, so I don't really have any issues there."

Interviewer: "Do you always book ahead?"

Participant: "Mostly, but usually it is only one or two days beforehand. It's only when I'm really certain that that's where I'm going. But I never book it months ahead."

Interviewer: "But you never just go to a hostel and see if it is available?"

Participant: "No, I like being able to just go in there and knowing that this is where I'm staying."

Interviewer: "How did you get in contact with fellow travelers?"

Participant: "If there are people in my room I am pretty open about it and just ask them where they are from. Otherwise many places I stay at tend to have a bar so it is easy enough to just get a drink and join a table. I have no problem with pushing my way in and saying hello. I think that it is harder to get to talk to people in really large hostels rather than the small ones. It's harder to get a sense of whether people want to talk or not."

Interviewer: "Has it always been that easy for you, or is it that way because you are much more experienced now?"

Participant: "It is definitely easier now, I have tried to stay on both sides so I know what it is like. I tend now to just be the person approaching because I know how difficult it can be if it is a really quiet hostel or whatever. But yeah, it is a lot less awkward now, I just break the silence."

Interviewer: "What is the first thing you do or ask about when you arrive at the hostel?"

Participant: "I usually ask about if there is something going on that night. Because I like that the first thing is just to drop off my luggage and walk around the city. I like to explore and be by myself at that point and then I would know if there's anything that I need to be back for that night."

Interviewer: "Do you find it difficult sometimes to get to know about hostel activities?"

Participant: "No not really, if it is a good hostel or at least the ones that I have stayed at, they always have a board saying what is happening tonight or during the week, but you never really know how many people are going or who's going. So I guess that it is a bit hard knowing if it is still on or how many people are going."

Interviewer: "How do you seek information?"

Participant: "Honestly I'm a bit bad at during research about the places. I think I used to be better but know I'm too lazy. But usually the hostel will give you a map and point things out, but a good advice is probably what I follow the most, but for me I like to just walk around the city and finding the cool places for yourself. It's part of it. There have probably been things or places I have missed because of it, but for the most part it typically comes up in conversations at the hostel if there something you must see. People use a lot of time exchanging notes, and that is a great way to find out where you should go."

Interviewer: "Which digital devices do you bring on your trips?"

Participant: "I bring my iPhone."

Interviewer: "What do you use it for?"

Participant: "Everything. I use it to book my hostels and find out where I am going. I use the map and the GPS, it is really handy to get around so I don't get lost. I use it for Facebook o talk to my friends. But the main use is probably the music player. I like to walk around by myself and just listen to music."

Interviewer: "Which apps do you use when travelling?"

Participant: "Hostelworld for booking, Tripadvisor if I want to find a decent restaurant nearby, Skyscanner to find flights.. I probably don't use too many apps, just enough to get by I guess."

Interviewer: "What is the first thing you check when entering Wi-Fi at a hostel?"

Participant: "I probably open the map first so it can load and tell me where I am and I can get a quick scan of the city. I might check my messages, but I am pretty hopeless in sending messages, so I probably won't send anything. I guess there's nothing really important that I feel like I have to do. I usually only use like 5-10 minutes before I feel like I am done."

Interviewer: "When was the first time you went travelling?"

Participant: "I would have been 2002."

Interviewer: "So it was way before the smartphone."

Participant: "Yeah I must have been around 20 and since then I've been travelling like I said almost every year. In Australia we get four weeks off every year, and I don't see how people shouldn't want to spend it overseas somewhere."

Interviewer: "How would you say that the backpacking experience has changes since you first started?"

Participant: "It's tricky cause I think it depends a lot on the places you go. But I think that it is very clear that when you walk into a hostel and you see someone sitting by themselves then they are on their smartphone. I don't remember people being that occupied with anything like that before. Maybe a book or something, but I don't think it's quite the same. And I feel like when I was younger I met a lot more people that where travelling solo, whereas now you meet a lot of pairs or groups."

Interviewer: "In your opinion, do you think that the backpacking experience has changes for the better or the worse?"

Participant: "I think it's better in a way, because it bigger and more well known. The hostels have become better and there are more options to choose from. The hostels have become competitive and that has benefitted the backpackers. They also have to be good now because everyone can write and read reviews, and they matter a lot."

Interviewer: "So I guess that you have heard about Comundu?"

Participant: "Yeah I have, they are okay."

Interviewer: "Have you tried it during your travels?"

Participant: "No unfortunately I have not. The places I have been to since I heard about haven't had it, but I would like to use it."

Interviewer: "What would you think the benefits would be?"

Participant: "I think that it would be a lot easier and a lot quicker to get to know people at the hostels and to organize things. It can be terrifying and overwhelming for some people to approach other people, so it would be an easy way to find people who would want to do the same as you. And instead of just meeting one person and doing something with that person, you can potentially meet more people and do something as a group."

APPENDIX 10 – TRANSCRIPTION OF HELENA INTERVIEW

Initial questions to decide if the participant is a backpacker (Pearce's definition, 1990):

Which accommodation do you prefer while travelling? – *Helena:* "Hostel or guesthouse"

Are you interested in meeting other travelers? – *Helena:* "Yes"

Is your travel schedule flexible when travelling? – *Helena:* "Yes"

How long have your trips been? – *Helena:* "2-6 months"

Are your primary activities informal and participatory? – *Helena:* "Yes"

What label would you put on yourself when you travel? – *Helena:* "Backpacker"

General information

Name: Helena

Age: 23

Nationality: Danish

Gender: Female

Occupation when not travelling: Student

Backpacking general information

Interviewer: "Hvor mange gange har du backpacket?"

Participant: "4 gange. Gennem Europa, Asien Cuba og Afrika."

Interviewer: "Hvorfor valgte du lige de steder?"

Participant: "Det har været meget tilfældigt. Jeg startede med to måneder i Europa hvor jeg tog på interrail med en veninde og så derefter tog vi til Syd-Øst Asien fordi det var det klassiske backpacker-valg når Australien var for dyrt. Det har været meget tilfældigt, man har hørt godt om et sted og så er det typisk der du tager til."

Interviewer: "Hvorfor valgte du at backpake?"

Participant: "Fordi det var den billigste måde at komme ud og opleve verdenen på. Og fordi at man oplever det hele på en anden måde fordi de lokale ser på en anderledes når man har sin rygsæk end hvis man var turist. Man bliver

mere lukket ind og ind i deres hjem og man kan komme til at smage lidt på deres hverdag. Man kan komme til at hjælpe med at lave mad og man kommer meget tættere på kulturen end hvis man bare var på hotellet og spiste fra deres buffet. Det er en mere autentisk måde at rejse på.”

Interviewer: “Hvorfor er det at du foretrækker at bo på hostels når du rejser på den måde?”

Participant: “Fordi at man møder mennesker. Egentlig kan jeg bedst lide at bo på guesthouse fordi det er mere privat, og jeg er ikke god til de store dorms fordi jeg er meget lydsensitiv. Men det er på hostels at du får de gode fif fra folk som har taget den omvendte tur af en selv. Jeg rejser meget spontant rundt og så er det på hostels at du får anbefalingerne til hvor du skal hen næste gang og hvor du ikke skal tage hen. De folk jeg møder på hostels har kæmpe indflydelse på min tur.”

Interviewer: “Har du altid rejst med en ven rundt, eller har du også rejst alene?”

Participant: “Jeg har også rejst alene, men de fleste gange har jeg haft en ven eller en kæreste med. Halvdelen af Cuba-turen rejste jeg alene. Min kæreste var med den første måned, og så da han skulle hjem og arbejde tog jeg videre selv.”

Interviewer: “Hvad vil du sige er fordelene og ulemperne ved at rejse selv eller sammen med andre?”

Participant: “Der er en større tryghed ved at rejse med andre og det er fedt at have nogen når du kommer hjem at dele oplevelserne og minderne med. Men når du er alene så styrer du det hele selv hvordan det hele skal gå og det er også helt vildt fedt. Desværre så er Cuba bare ikke et særligt backpacker-venligt land så det blev mere sådan tæt med de lokale familier. Jeg kan nok bedst lide at rejse sammen med nogen så du har nogen at dele alle de gode men også de frustrerende ting med.”

Interviewer: “Hvordan kommer du i kontakt med andre rejsende på hostels?”

Participant: “Jeg bruger meget de events som hostellet arrangerer. Der kommer man helt automatisk i snak med folk. Og så er det også bare nemt at smalltalke med folk på et hostel.”

Interviewer: “Bruger du meget de faciliteter som at der er på hostellet?”

Participant: “Ja baren og fællesrummet bruger jeg en del, også fordi det typisk er der hvor der er Wi-Fi.”

Interviewer: “Hvilke kriterie vælger du et hostel ud fra?”

Participant: “Der er ikke rigtig noget kriterie. At det ikke er for dyrt. Og så at det ikke er alt for klamt. Der var den ene gang i Thailand hvor det var virkelig klamt. Det var det første sted vi kom til og den eneste gang nogensinde at jeg havde booket forud og da vi ankom så var det bare det mest ulækre sted med kakerlakker på væggene. Jeg booker aldrig forud igen. Vi blev der kun en nat og så tog vi videre den næste selvom vi egentlig havde booket tre nætter.”

Interviewer: “Hvordan finder du hostels typisk?”

Participant: “Jeg plejer egentlig bare at tage det efterhånden. Tit har hostels kæder som så kan booke det næste for dig hvis du syntes at det var et fint sted at være. Og ellers så får man anbefalet det fra andre og så plejer jeg egentlig bare at tage direkte til det sted, og jeg har egentlig aldrig prøvet at der ikke er plads, på nær måske til fullmoon party.

Interviewer: “Hvordan booker du?”

Participant: “Gennem en app på telefonen, hostelworld.”

Interviewer: “Hvad er den første ting at du spørger om når du ankommer til et hostel?”

Participant: "Wi-Fi. Jeg vil altid gerne hurtigt ud og udforske byen og der finder jeg steder gennem Tripadvisor og sådan noget. Og så også for at skrive eller Skype hjem."

Interviewer: "Hvilke digitale hjælpemidler har du med?"

Participant: "Jeg har altid rejst med min iPhone. Jeg tror ikke jeg ville kunne have gjort det uden."

Interviewer: "Hvordan bruger du den på rejsen?"

Participant: "Jamen det er egentlig mest sådan til at samle informationer. Man kan hurtigt lige slå de ting op som man får anbefalet og kan bedre vurdere tingene. Jeg bruger den meget som backup til at få bekræftet det andre siger. Så sammenligner jeg det de fortæller med det der står på Tripadvisor. Så er det nemmere at finde ud af om det er et godt tip. Og så bruger jeg selvfølgelig også telefonen til at tage billeder."

Interviewer: "Er det dit indtryk at telefonen fylder meget på rejsen for folk?"

Participant: "Ja helt vildt meget. Men på Cuba der er der hverken Wi-Fi eller noget som helst, så jeg har også prøvet at rejse uden, og det er bare en stor udfordring for du aner ikke hvad du kommer til. På hostels er folk virkelig optaget af deres smartphones. Men mentaliteten på hostels er at selvom man sidder meget med telefonen, så er man stadig klar til at tale med folk."

Interviewer: "Hvordan har din kontakt være med folk derhjemme?"

Participant: "Da jeg rejste i Asien, der kontaktede jeg dem rimeligt ofte. Der havde vi en gruppe på Facebook og så lagde vi billeder ud og sådan så de kunne følge med. Men på Cuba kunne vi slet ikke kontakte nogen. Så da min kæreste tog hjem måtte han ligesom forklare hvordan forholdene var. Men jeg bruger Facebook og Skype til det."

Interviewer: "Hvordan finder du information om hostel aktiviteterne?"

Participant: "Det er oftest at de skriver det på en tavle ved baren. Det er ikke noget jeg planlægger, det er mere spontant hvis jeg ikke har noget at lave en aften. Det er det der er friheden ved det. Det er fedt at man bare at kan vælge til og fra som det passer en."

Interviewer: "Hvor meget bruger du hostel personalet når du er på et hostel?"

Participant: "Stort set ikke, kun til booking af de næste hostels hvis det er. Og eventuelt ture eller busser. Og generelle praktiske spørgsmål."

Interviewer: "Hvis nu vi snakker helt generelt, også herhjemme, hvad kan få dig til at downloade en app?"

Participant: "Hvis den tiltaler mig. Hvis det er noget jeg kan bruge så downloader jeg den."

Interviewer: "Hvad skal der så til for at du sletter den igen?"

Participant: "Ikke meget. Jeg er meget hurtig til at slette den igen hvis jeg ikke får brugt den. Jeg må ligesom prioritere de apps jeg har på telefonen for der er ikke så meget plads."

Interviewer: "Hvis så vi snakker online communities of sociale medier, hvad er det at der gør sådan et fedt?"

Participant: "Det for mig der tiltrækker mig ved sociale medier er at man er bange for at gå glip af ting hvis ikke man følger med. Hostels er også begyndt at bruge Instagram og Facebook meget, så kan man se hvad der sker af aktiviteter og folk kommenterer på opslagene og sådan. Så bruger jeg også meget at klikke på hashtagget for hostellet, for så kan man se hvad andre har slået op at der er foregået der, og så kan man vurdere hostellet på baggrund af det. Jeg er

begyndt generelt at kigge mere på hostellets Facebook side end deres hjemmeside. Der er man sikker på at det er helt opdateret og der er jo også der at folk er, så jeg kan godt forstå at de har opdaget den måde at kommunikere med deres gæster.”

Interviewer: “Hvad er dine tanker omkring backpacker kulturen? Hvad er det der gør backpacking specielt?”

Participant: “Det er åbenheden omkring mennesker. Folk er ikke bange for at snakke med fremmede og give komplimenter. Herhjemme går vi bare rundt i vores egen verden og har nok i sig selv og folk kigger mærkeligt på en hvis man snakker til dem. Backpackere er åbne og tager åbent imod alle. Backpacking er et fællesskab man har skabt ved at være fælles om det at rejse i en anden kultur end man er vant til.”

Interviewer: “Hvor meget kontakt har du med de lokale når du rejser?”

Participant: “Meget for det er hele meningen med min rejse. Det er den største grund til at jeg gør det. Alle er meget mere åbne end man er vant til herhjemme. Jeg vil opleve så meget som muligt når jeg er et sted og det gør jeg bedst gennem at møde de lokale og se hvordan de lever.”

Interviewer: “Hvordan ser din typiske dag ud som backpacker?”

Participant: “Jamen når jeg træder ind på et hostel så spørger du om der er et værelse ledigt og så siger de oftest ja. Så kommer du op og pakker lidt ud og går ned i fællesrummet for at gå på Wi-Fi. Så kan man lige tjekke Facebook og de andre sociale medier for at se om der er noget man er gået glip af. Og så senere er der måske et arrangement på hostellet eller du skal videre på en tur eller du er sulten så du skal ud og finde noget at spise. Jeg kan mærke når jeg rejser at jeg bruger min telefon i højere og højere grad. Førhen ville jeg bare have gået ud og have fundet noget streetfood et eller andet sted, men nu kan jeg godt se at jeg ofte tjekker efter det på nettet før jeg går. Efter jeg havde spist ville jeg nok komme tilbage på hostellet inden man måske skal ud og aftenen, eller også bruger jeg aftenen på at researche: hvad skal der ske de næste par dage, hvilke ture skal jeg på, hvad sker der i den her by, er der noget jeg skal booke, er det noget jeg skal bruge til det jeg gerne vil opleve, vil jeg tage på et homestay? Og så er man klar til de næste dage.”

Interviewer: “Det kan godt lyde som om at du bruger meget tid på organisering og planlægning, føler du at det optager meget tid?”

Participant: “Både og, det er netop også en del af rejsen fordi det er det du snakker med folk om og det er det emne man ligesom mødes omkring. Så det bliver en del af det sociale.”

Interviewer: “Hvad for nogle ture tager du typisk på?”

Participant: “Det er meget med at komme ud i naturen: bade i blå laguner, se vandfald, trekking i naturreservater. Jeg går meget op i dyrevelfærd så jeg tager ikke ud og rider på elefanter eller ser tigere. Jeg prøver meget at komme ud til det lokale samfund i stedet for at tage til alle de der turistfælder. Men jeg besøger the- eller cigarplantager og deltager i ceremonier hvis jeg kan komme til det. I Afrika deltog jeg i et bryllup. Hvad der nu end lige passer til kulturen. Og så ofte også noget riverrafting eller skydiving.”

Comundu

Interviewer: “Så vidt jeg kunne forstå, så har du prøvet Comundu og kender lidt til det?”

Participant: “Ja jeg prøvede det på en af mine rejser, men jeg downloadede den ret hurtigt igen fordi jeg manglede plads på min telefon.”

Interviewer: “Kan du huske hvor du var?”

Participant: "Det har helt sikkert været et hostel i Asien, men jeg kan ikke lige huske hvor. Måske Vietnam? Eller Thailand? Det var hvert fald en storby."

Interviewer: "Kan det måske have været i Bangkok?"

Participant: "Ja det kan helt sikkert godt passe."

Interviewer: "Hvorfor downloadede du dengang?"

Participant: "Jeg synes at det lød helt vildt smart det der med at hvis du nu ikke faldt i snak med nogen, så kunne man gå ind og se hvad folk skrev om og om der var noget man kunne deltage i. Jeg hørte om den fra en eller anden på et hostel og det lød bare så smart. Men så mødte vi nogen og rejste ret hurtigt videre og så fik vi slet ikke brugt den, så jeg slettede den igen."

Interviewer: "Hvad synes du om den, det du nu fik prøvet?"

Participant: "Altså jeg synes at det var en vildt god ide, men samtidig så kan jeg også godt synes at smartphonen fylder meget i forvejen på rejsen, man er lidt for afhængig. Og jeg arbejder selv på at slippe den når jeg er afsted. Måske at den også vil begrænse den kontakt til andre, fordi man så ikke behøver at spørge dem face-to-face. Det ville være ærgerligt. Og så får man også bare tit forklaret tingene lidt bedre mundtligt end hvis det er på skrift. Så det er en god ide, men jeg er også lidt imod det fordi jeg synes at folk skal huske at komme ud på egen hånd og kaste sig ud i nogle ting. Jeg tænker nok bare at hvis man finder oplysningerne gennem en app så er det også kun highlightsene at du ser, så finder du stadig ikke ud af de små steder, de små detaljer som virkelig gør stedet spændende. Det kan du kun finde af gennem mundtlige fif, for hvis det står skrevet nogle steder så bliver det bare typisk det alle gør, og så er det ikke lige så fedt eller autentisk mere."