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# Self Discovery and Backpackers: A conceptual paper about liminal experience

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Little is known about 'liminoid', the state of 'suspension'. However, every backpacker definitely passes through it, to journey from one transitional state of mind, to arrive at the next level of social status; Crossing the threshold between childhood to maturity, peace to war, singlehood to marriage and from being spiritually lost to found. Inspired by Victor Turner's (1969) significance of the 'betwixt and between' level which he named *liminal*, this paper aims to explore the process of backpackers' self-discovery by seeking the means of travel through states of cultural rituals, transcendental meditation, adventure and recreational activities. Findings in the literature suggest that these philosophical questions form the foundations which push young backpackers to embark on personal self-actualization journeys to destinations which they perceive to deliver a sense of inner-acceptance, whilst promoting spiritual divined growth, which therefore, elevate a backpacker's status in the perception of society.

**Key Words:** liminoid, rites-of-passage, self-discovery, spirituality, backpackers.

## Introduction

Over the years, the tourism industry has experienced continuous growth and an intensifying variation of diversification, to become one of the fastest emergent economic segments in the world (UNWTO, 2014). According to Forbes (2013), in 2012, \$217 billion of the \$1 trillion of tourism income spent worldwide derives from the expenditure of young tourists. The director of the World Youth Student and Education Travel Confederation (in Forbes, 2013) states;

*Young travelers (sic.) today want more than ever to enrich themselves with cultural experiences, to meet local people and to improve their employability when they return home.*

Therefore, the reason to travel becomes more personal and more significant for this emerging market of young adult backpackers (Cohen, 2010). This evolving young generation is engaging in forms of travel based on their past experiences, their upbringing or lifestyle. When people turn their holidays into life journeys, they become a segment of a very important personal journal of experiences, which is added to each time an individual summons a trip - to conquer or to develop his / her self-concept (Foucault, 1980). In the present day, the experience to better one's self is awarded a great perceived value for general society. The well-

travelled personality is seen as one who is knowledgeable in the art of life's many offerings (Foucault, 1980). A well-travelled person is portrayed as prestigious and valued in society (Foucault, 1980). Travel produces the idea that this individual has seen much of the world, in return, is therefore more knowledgeable in the textures of culture and understanding (Cohen, 2004).

Exploring this idea, this research paper is based on the theory of *liminality* (Van Gennep, 1960; Turner, 1969) and is supported by studies on backpackers by the likes of Richards & Wilson (2004a), Cohen (2010) and Noy & Cohen (2005). Graburn (2001) as cited in Bui, Wilkins and Lee (2014) states that international travel assists in developing the distinction between the daily mundane at home and the sacred period of travel away from home.

Every individual passes through at least one liminal experience at some point in his/her life. In this paper, the focus is on backpackers, who travel through personalized spiritual focused journeys, entering into the liminal stage whilst participating in a liminal tourism - passing through out-of-the-norm states of mind both ritually and physically. Using path analysis, Reisinger and Movondo (2004) found that the causal relationships between values and activities in the youth travel market become major psychographic factors that

construct the perception of the traveller. This argument alone, leads to the suggestion of backpacking as a liminal experience. The Liminality is even more evident when combined with the evidence of Turner's (1969) and Reisinger and Movondo's (2004) studies which identify rituals and/or tourist activities as important forces in constructing an individual's post-perceptions. The question here is to identify the need to link anticipation with self-construction. As a result, we question whether young adult backpackers are seeking a more meaningful insight after visiting a destination; in addition to questioning what destinations can offer that will contribute to the visitors' personal perception of values as the end result, after a journey is completed (Rokeach, 1973).

This research examines the stereotyping of backpackers that crowd the streets of popular backpacker destinations in South East Asia. Stereotypes create a lever regarding the expected actions of what a tourist should be in the eyes of society. Additionally, it gives the research a model to be compared against. How backpackers contribute socio-economically as opposed to other young modern adult travellers is of equal importance. Backpackers are tourists that seek more than an experience of just traveling to a new place (Cohen, 2003). This genre of travellers usually seeks local interaction and authentic life-altering experiences (Cohen, 2006). People take external actions (travelling) to gain inner meanings in return.

### ***Problem Statement***

The search for identity has encouraged the younger generation (mainly 18-35 year olds) to discover backpacking (Pearce, 1990) for self-conceptualized travel (Cohen, 2011). A person's identity is formed through the events in their life, through the process of differentiation from 'other'. Backpacking, where one experiences cultures contrasting to one's norm for long periods of time, can be regarded as a social practice that reconstructs identity. In the anthropology of tourism, there are results presented on backpacker research which indicate that one's identity (Cohen, 2004) can be transformed through the course of travelling.

The problem in this research asks whether 'backpackers' who set out on personalized journeys, travel to a location in Southeast Asia for the specific notion of self-discovery through liminal cultural and

social rituals not of their own nature, return home with post-journey alterations to their persona.

### ***Purpose of Study***

This study's objective is to achieve a better understanding of the immediate post-liminal experience of Western backpackers who travel to Bali on their search, to partake in a local ritual, to gain self-identity. The objective is to discover how '*liminality*' changes an individual; how a person alters after she/he has travelled to this region to find self-actualization (Maslow, 1943, as cited in Hirschorn & Hefferon, 2013), acceptance, self-conflict, knowledge and existentialism.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Definition of Backpackers***

In academic terms, recent backpacker literature has been explored primarily, and demonstrates variations, between socio-anthropological based and market-based backpacker tourism research (Richard & Wilson, 2004a). Many studies have been undertaken to establish the value of research regarding backpackers. Bell (2002), Binder (2004), and Noy (2004) have conducted studies to understand the meaning of backpacking whilst Hannan and Diekmann (2010) have explored backpacker mobilities as a crucial characteristic leading to different constructs of understanding identities and relating to destinations. Noy and Cohen (2005) add to the literature not only by surpassing the speculative evidence that backpacking can extend into a way of life, but developing the concept of backpacking as a form of lifestyle travel in broader discussions of the social sciences, relating how physical mobility affects and/or challenges the ways an individual experiences themselves and places over time (Welk, 2004).

Today, popular backpacker enclaves are geographically located primarily in exotic destinations in Southeast Asia and India (e.g. Hottola, 1999; Maoz, 2004). Over the last thirty years, backpacking has emerged as a mainstream global phenomenon, and backpackers have been considered as the epitome of post-modern traveller (Richards & Wilson, 2004a). Much of this literature builds on the work of Pearce (1990), who made the term 'backpacker' known to tourism research, with a social definition comprised of five key social and behavioural characteristics / criteria:

- Low budget accommodation
- Social interactions with locals and other backpackers
- Flexible itinerary
- Longer period of stay rather than brief get-aways
- Participation in informal travel activities at destination (Pearce, 1990)

Destination choice is the process by which a backpacker chooses a destination that will fulfil their current travel-related needs and in this case, where they will gain more insight that will contribute to their personal growth (Beatty *et al.*, 1985). The journey is then personalised to meet the expectations of the backpacker. Hwang, Gretzel, Xiang and Fesenmaier (2006) suggest that backpackers generally follow a funnel like concept that consists of:

- Recognition of destination
- Personal objectives (Yoon & Uysal, 2005)
- Similar or general alternate set destinations
- Destination choice and judgment (Hwang *et al.* 2006.)

The decision is then followed by the act of travel, and then, the post-consumption anticipated results of the journey experience relative to expectations. The three key attributes, which influence destination choice are:

- (1) The ability to satisfy backpacker needs;
- (2) The social agreement, which is, the backpackers inclination to agree in accordance with their social group's previous opinions on the destination, and;
- (3) The accessibility of the destination (Um and Crompton, 1990).

### **Backpacker Theory**

Over the last twenty years with mass tourism in its prime, backpacking has been viewed socially as quite an unusual element of travel and very different from the standard ways of leisure travel. The term 'backpackers' was introduced by Pearce (1990), to describe how these individuals differ from other travellers: choosing budget accommodation instead of luxury five-star hotels, seeking a flexible itinerary, socializing with other backpackers and locals, staying longer, and emphasising adventure and participatory activities at destinations (Cohen, 2010). Backpackers

are typically: 18 - 35 years of age; adventurous; adaptable; seek out cheaper budget travel; like social interaction with locals and fellow backpackers; are independent, knowledgeable and flexible with travel time; put much emphasis of being a part of local culture and; yearn for participation instead of by-standing observation (Pearce, 1990).

In the last decade, it is seen as a 'rite of passage' for many young adults, mostly Europeans, Australians, a small amount of North Americans and emerging cosmopolitan Asians to travel around Southeast Asia as 'backpackers', which is recognized by many as the preferred destination for Western backpackers (Westerhausen, 2002, in Bui *et al.*, 2014). Although the majority of recent backpacker research has focused on Western backpackers and their encounters with Asian hosts (Winter, Teo & Chang, 2009), research on Asian backpackers has emerged since the early 2000s with Teo and Leon (2006) analysing their geographical travel experiences, while their ethnographic performance has been measured by Muzaini, (2006). The notion of backpacking has been well recognized as a liminal experience amongst Western backpackers, however, Bui *et al.* (2014) have begun to explore the socio-anthropological angle of Asian backpackers in their work on *Liminal experiences in this market* (2014). Acknowledging the increasing East Asian travel trend in regards to *liminality* and its application, Bui *et al.* (2014) explore how such experiences are demonstrated in the East Asian backpacking context.

Backpackers are known in popular terms as 'drifters' or 'global nomads', 'explorers' to 'budget tourists'. These particular titles refer to individuals who are: described demographically as young, aged between eighteen years of age to late thirties; possessing average qualification of tertiary education; from average earning families and; have a desire to explore countries from a local point of view whilst enjoying the company of similar cultured young adults in a local destination (Cohen, 2003, 2006).

These adventurous, long-term travellers revel in explorative adventure and entertainment. They have no strict time schedule or itinerary, they travel on a low budget with very low intentions to experience luxury hotels or services. They are culturally involved and want to 'participate' than just be an 'observer' or a bystander during socio-cultural events. They are also popularly involved in nature, local culture and localities. Other popular terms associated with this type

of tourist are ‘eco-tourists’, ‘anti-tourist’, ‘neo-nomads’ and ‘flash-packers’ (Richards & Wilson, 2004a).

Most backpackers will describe their push factor as having experienced a ‘life crisis’ prior to their journeys (Maoz, 2007). This form of tourism is related to the drifters of the 1960s and 1970s whereby ‘drifter’ was described a cultural phenomenon of ‘alienated individuals roaming the world alone’ (Cohen, 2004). Often seen in that era as a form of teenage anxiety, travelling was a means to get away from Western society; many adolescents were perceived as rebellious and wanting to turn against societal enforcements. Nowadays, travel is depicted as a form of education, which is intended to increase one’s worldliness, social awareness and sophistication (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995). Although a majority of backpackers inevitably intend to rejoin the workforce when they return to their home society (Riley, 1988), and re-aggregate into the lifestyle they are original from (Sorenson, 2003), a few individuals break away from society and view travel as a ‘feasible indefinite alternative to a ‘normal’ career’ (Cohen, 2004).

Travelling has become a way of life, as Elsrud (2001, cited in Cohen, 2010) states: ‘backpackers perceive their travels as a time out from their normal life-path and / or . . . self-imposed rite of passage’ (Graburn, 1983; Maoz, 2007 cited in Cohen, 2010). Backpacking as a form of travel is undoubtedly evolving into the mainstream, becoming a popular form of tourism. It has been a separate tourism niche entirely on its own for the past forty years and still is. Backpackers strive to reject the popularity of ‘mass tourism’. In content, however, backpacking is now so widespread that it is has become a form of ‘mass tourism’ from the travel industry’s perspective. The fact that backpackers find the need to struggle against the common way of indulgent travel, presents them with a sense of self-pride and adventure. Indeed, the foundational characteristic of backpacking involves ‘spiritual growth’, engaging with remote places (Sorenson, 2003), and unfamiliarity. Today, this is disputed as these elements no longer hold as much significance. Young adult backpacking tourists were originally portrayed as engaged in the vice scene, seeking self-indulgent and hedonistic consumption whilst those original backpackers might consider their modern ‘mass’ equivalents as ‘fake’ or ‘commercial’ backpackers (Maoz, 2007).

Although many modern backpackers frequent local party scenes or nightlife, a new genre of backpackers is emerging. These new backpackers are culturally involved in ritualistic self-altering enlightenment activities, on holiday that are perceived to contribute original experiences to the participants’ self-concept. The normality of backpacking is a search for the ‘authentic’ (MacCannell, 1999). This quest forms the basis of travel patterns involving places of remote serenity, and undiscovered locations that are not popular for mass tourism (Cohen, 2004; 2011). Originally, backpackers wanted to discover new places, which were less popular in the mass market. However, this was a psychological motivation, adapted to fulfil self-knowledge, prestige, pride, and self-confidence; experience was the new form of social elevation (Cohen, 2003).

The backpacker market has developed over the years and perhaps now requires further sub-types that derive from the popular term (Sorenson, 2003). Although research has gained insight regarding the manner in which backpackers’ travel for a longer period of time and has developed the term ‘contemporary backpacker’ (Noy, 2004; O’Reilly, 2006; Sorenson, 2003; Uriely et. al, 2002), Cohen (2004) has suggested that there is another category, often compared to backpackers (or can be backpackers at some point in time), who do not fall under the category of ‘contemporary drifters’ – those who seek to distance themselves from the mainstream backpackers. In the same way that backpackers themselves denounce their similarities to tourists, this group (drifters) believe that in order to preserve the freshness and spontaneity of their experience, their travels must be deliberate, without either itinerary or timetable, without a destination or even a well-defined purpose (Cohen, 2011). The ‘original’ drifters (Cohen, 2003) may have had this ideal image of their ‘trip’ - which many youths were attracted to - but only very few succeeded to travel with such authenticity; many end up taking their main post-journey recollections from enclaves rather than from the ‘real’ local source of culture (Cohen, 2011).

## **Backpacker Lifestyle and Activities**

### ***Backpacker Enclaves***

Backpacker ‘enclaves’ have become an essential part of the ‘scene’ of the tourism economy. The word ‘enclave’ has been applied in the tourism phenomena to spaces of suspension, such as the ‘tourist

bubble' (Judd, 1999) of cruise ships (Weaver, 2005) or the beaches of Goa (Saldanha, 2002). The idea of 'enclaves' revolves around the idea of relative uniformity or as Edensor (1998) deems it, temporary special tourist spaces. Enclaves can be located at intersectional, crossroad and not just geographically defined meeting points where backpackers socially interact with locals or fellow backpackers. They can be located in chaotic metropolitan cities with commercial districts (Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur and Khao San Road, Bangkok) or rural paradises with low accessibility (Ubud paddy fields, Bali) or scenes of temporary gatherings (Rainforest music festival, Kuching) (Lonely Planet, 2014). Locals are a large part of 'the scene' whilst visitors are not entirely alienated from the world outside. Many backpackers come across fellow tourists who are from the same country of origin. Therefore, the enclave welcomes the visitor, embraces the contact with 'real locals', on the secure basis that 'home' is not far away. Backpackers may differ over the years; therefore, the focus should distinguish between different kinds of backpackers, rather than defining specific types of backpackers (Elsrud, 1998 cited in Hirschorn & Hefferon, 2013). Cohen (1973) suggests that 'outward-oriented' backpackers are those that seek faraway, un-disturbed locations and homestays; while 'inward-oriented' backpackers primarily seek the company of their own kind in enclaves (Cohen, 1973 cited in Bui, Wilkins & Lee, 2014). Interestingly, when relating to 'people' they have met on their journeys, backpackers generally talk about other backpackers rather than locals (Elsrud, 2001; Murphy, 2001 cited in Muzaini, 2006).

The function of the enclave is to comfort, and encompasses a 'safe haven' whereby backpackers can retreat in order to increase their level of control and counter the 'culture confusion' that reigns right outside the 'bubble' (Hottola, 2005). The unfamiliarity of a destination might come as an overwhelming culture shock to many young backpackers. Therefore, the pressure of the host culture forces backpackers to congregate in enclaves for comfort, companionship, support and to gain information from fellow backpackers. Hottola (2005) stresses the fact that although many backpackers desire to experience local culture, often, it is not achieved, as barriers are often too great (i.e. language, comprehension). Westerhausen (2002:69) refers to enclaves as 'a cultural home away from home' where a temporary 'home' comes into existence via the presence of other backpackers and the local hosts. The enclave therefore acts as a 'period'

where the notion of 'time' tends to be suspended for the backpacker who is trying to avoid 'Western' societal restriction of time - often by discarding their watches and switching off communication devices (Amin & Thrift, 2002, in Wilson & Richards, 2008).

### *State of Liminality*

This paper is grounded in an ethnographical approach to the study of backpackers' post-liminal experiences in the context of tourism. Van Gennep (1908) was the first to introduce the term 'liminal' into anthropological studies, primarily in reference to 'spatial transition from central to peripheral space in the ritual ceremony' (Bui *et al.*, 2014).

The liminal period which is also known widely by the phrase 'rite of passage', is recognized by scholars from the French anthropologist Van Gennep's study of significance through rituals that accompany the transitional stages of an individual's life (Turner, 1967). The state of 'rites of passage' has become an important part of anthropological literature since the publication of *Les Rites de Passage* in 1909. A ritual encompasses the period whereby there are 3 stages: pre-liminal stage (separation), the liminal phase (transition) and post-liminal phase (reincorporation) (Van Gennep, 1960). The liminal state in the rite of passage is when the individual is removed from his/her point of origin/status, and secluded from the rest of society; in effect, going through a transitional period - a state of 'limbo'; 'betwixt and between' or spaces of suspension (Turner, 1967).

Derived from the Latin work *līmen*, liminality (Thomassen, 2009) means 'threshold' - uncertainty, unfamiliarity or ambiguity that occurs during the stage of a ritual when the subject is no longer maintaining the position they held in a pre-ritual state but yet, has not begun the transitional process to the status they will hold when the ritual is complete (Van Gennep, 1960). During the state of liminality, the participants are suspended in a 'space' neither here nor there, between their previous identity, time, knowledge, consciousness, social status, or society, and a new self which will be established when a ritual is complete (Van Gennep, 1960).

In tourism terms, liminal experiences are explored through activities on holiday. These activities are many and varied, ranging from extreme sports (skydiving, swimming with sharks) to holistic experiences (praying, meditation, religious rituals) or arts and

performances (music, and staged cultural plays). These temporary yet very present activities happen in almost every new destination visited by backpackers. Activities on holiday act as a contrast to every-day life, and serve to remind the tourist they are out of normality (Turner, 1967).

In this paper, Turner's concepts of *liminality* are adapted in a tourism context and adapted to the chosen tourist group - backpackers as they seek a sense of identity through rituals during a journey, for the possibility of gaining new perspectives (Turner, 1967). Graburn (1977, 1989, 2001) states that the notion of sacred travel and profane home can be interpreted in a tourism context (in Bui *et al.*, 2014). Graburn also claims in his work (2001) that the temporary structure of the secular ritual is applicable to all forms of tourism. Backpackers leave home because there is something they need or want to get away from; detachment from the norm, which acts as the pull factor. On the other hand, they choose to travel to a particular place because they will experience or receive something positive there that they cannot experience or acquire at home. The term 'travelling' itself is an entity regarded as a vessel for escapism, as a tourist withdraws from the dimensions of time and place as experienced in social norms; the very structure of everyday 'life' is temporarily suspended (Cohen, 2003). Spatial suspension takes place when a backpacker is suspended between two cultures in a backpacker enclave that combines elements of both the norm and the 'other', and is neither 'here' not 'there' (Noy, 2004b).

Common travel activities such as chanting at a temple, climbing a mountain, exploring the jungle, become rituals to backpackers as they in a sense add to their personality and develop their self-concept (Foucault, 1980). Grosz (1995) states that the self is 'a work in progress'. A step beyond social norms offers a person the opportunity for self-concept advancement, the milieu for 'third space thinking', to capture and individualize personal meanings and experiences (Grosz, 1995).

### ***Self-discovery***

*Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom* (Aristotle, 384 - 322 BC).

Self-satisfaction is the on-going battle for every person in everyday life; the purpose, which drives the individual to live, breathe and wake up to face the

modern expectations of daily society. Cohen (2004) states that backpackers concentrate on identity and personal growth in socio-psychological relationships as an emphasis for their journeys. Ateljevic & Doorne (2004), Richards & Wilson (2004b) and West (2005) have dealt with conceptual analysis of backpackers usually featuring attributes such as: rites of passage, identity markers, pilgrimage, liminoid and spirituality.

After the regular day-to-day systematic social routine, exhaustion takes over and life becomes a chore devoid of passion. Therefore, people seek deeper inner meaning in their lives, who they are to become and what their lives mean to themselves. As individuals they grow in self-awareness. As a result, self-satisfaction becomes an element of priority for backpackers in deciding the value of how post-journeys may add to their identity (Richards & Wilson, 2004b).

As Turner (1973) explains, through submersion in the host culture, backpackers may find and experience communal spaces of the enclave - areas where cultural difference is clearly present, but not to the extreme imagined when leaving home. Tourists, therefore, are contemporary pilgrims on a quest for authenticity. Although the central dilemma of tourism is people seeking something different from everyday life but having limited abilities to deal with the differences. Thus, sight-seeing is motivated by a desire to live life as it is really lived, yet, it is often not accepted as perceived (MacCannell, 1999).

### ***Identity***

Today's generation of young adults, particularly, men and women born after 1980, face difficulty undertaking the search for self-conception to define meaning for their lives in this contemporary setting. How is a human being's life measured? How does one individual contribute to the world in terms of identity? These are the core fundamentals of personal identity. It is mythical, and pertains to the subject of how one sees the value of his / her existence, while simultaneously separating him / her from another beings' existence in life. Travelling acts as a spatial suspension, whereby managing personal contradictions come into a context that emerges from shifting identities (Bell, 2002). Entering the 'host culture', backpackers may engage in behaviour that challenges the normality of their home environment, such as trying new food, engaging in foreign cultural activities and rituals.

The concept of personal identity is theoretically the philosophical confrontation when people deal with images of themselves with the ultimate question: 'who am I? Why am I here? What is the meaning of life? What is my purpose?' In distinguishing the changes a persona goes through in various stages of their lives, a criterion of personal identity through time is given to develop a person's image. Motivations to travel are ideally surrounded by the idea of excitement, difference, experience and relaxation. Backpackers themselves identify their choices of travel destination by exploring other cultures, searching for knowledge and excitement (Richards & Wilson, 2004a).

One popular belief in philosophical history by Plato (Taylor, 2011) and a number of world religions is that persons are immaterial souls or pure egos: persons' bodies are only dependent on existence, not necessarily so they can live after bodily death (Plato, cited in Lee, 2011). This thought brings fear to many and opposes certain religions or spiritual predilections (Taylor, 2011). Another interesting view adopted by Woolhouse (1997), states that a person's identity is a matter of psychological continuity. This means that in order for person A to survive a particular event, or adventure, it is necessary and sufficient that there exists, at a time after the given event, a person B who has psychologically evolved out of A. This view describes the terms in which overlapping chains of direct psychological connection, causal and cognitive connections between elements of human emotions such as belief, memory, desire, character, and so forth, develop an individuals' personality traits. Although our beliefs, memories and intentions are vital to us, those elements are not always necessary for our continuous persistence through time (Woolhouse, 1997).

### **Authenticity**

When tourists attend a play or a local cultural performance of some sort, it is usually assumed that the tourists already have a certain mind-set of expectation, a sort-of idea how the performance will therefore affect them post-experience, thus, it is important to realize it is a performance nonetheless (Goffman, 1959). The question here concerns the authenticity of the 'real' travel experience and therefore asks another question as to how backpackers perceive a self-discovery event, when the 'real' experience is somewhat staged / fake. In his general work, Goffman (1959) observed that the 'self' is that collection of performances that take place in specific locations for the purposes of portraying the

characters of social constructed perceptions of the authentic 'self'. 'When one's activity occurs in the presence of other persons, some aspects of the activity are expressively accentuated and other aspects which might discredit are suppressed' (Goffman, 1959). The 'front region' displays the expected character of appearance, and usually after the 'performance' the individual retreats to the 'backstage' or 'back region' to his / her authentic appearance / characteristics (Goffman, 1959).

To demonstrate in terms of tourism performance, locals display or 'perform' in their traditional long-house in Sabah, wearing a Malay batik cloth around their lower body whilst making tea over an open stove on the floor. As tourists visit this long house, the local gets ready to perform as an 'authentic' local, to deliver the experience of the tourists' expectation (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). Yet, in many situations, the everyday lives for the locals do not involve such traditional measures; it is all to preserve the perceived tourism image. Tourists play the role of 'tourists' and the locals play the role of 'locals'. In most cases, the 'authenticity' of certain cultures may never be revealed to foreigners in its original status. Although, it is unreasonable to state that tourism authenticity (MacCannell, 1999) does not exist. Every part of a backpacker's journey experience is built on the implications of experience that will undeniably be considered as an idea of realism, and, will therefore be an influence regarding the individual's post persona (Giddens, 1991).

Spirituality has been found in many forms of touristic journey. Many people travel to places in hopes of finding meaning to express their faith or that of a certain religion and / or belief; many other backpackers embark on journeys to get closer to their personal perception of spirituality (MacCannell, 1999). In this context, it must be taken into consideration that spirituality does not equal religion. In some and most modern cases, people do not get involved in the teachings of a religions aspects or the belief of a creator (Plato in Lee, 2011). Although this genre of tourist strives more than the 'ordinary' tourist to reach places and people that are truly 'authentic' (Richards & Wilson, 2004), MacCannell's (1999) conceptualization of a tourist embarking on a quest for authenticity as a secular pilgrim, often as not falls prey to the staged frontier of their obliging hosts. It is common to see backpackers on spiritual quests, which may induce them to spend time in an Indian ashram or Balinese temple (Richards & Wilson, 2004).



## Conclusion

This article sets out to explore the liminal affects of travel rituals on backpackers' identity developmental (Richards & Wilson, 2004b). In response to the first research question: 'Liminoid' experiences evidently contribute to represent self-alteration events of identity for backpackers' ritual adaption. By entering into a travel ritual, backpackers are invoked voluntarily into the *liminoid* (Turner, 1974) to seek developments of personas within local cultures, with the anticipation of gaining authentic experience that will enhance self-discovery (Cohen, 2004).

Rituals form a link between being an outsider searching for a remedial experience and a host community / culture (Turner, 1973), and are often used to relieve a personal sense of distress. van Gennep's (1960) masterpiece 'Rites of Passage' expresses the solitary notion of an individual or a social group passing through a threshold from one status to another. Such rites are often recorded as ritual passages through time and space felt by each liminal character (backpacker). In their liminal phase, the backpacker is in a 'state of limbo', neither the person he / she was prior to entering into the *liminoid*, yet, not yet the re-aggregated persona he / she will self-adapt to be post-liminal experience.

Participants display very personal emotions that convey many identity-related experiences, expressing 'faith, belief and hope' immediately after a ritual. This defines the post-aggregation rites and confirms the linkage that *liminoid* does influence self-change.

Consuming tourism activities that invoke liminal experiences, including disposition and acquisition, play major roles in the restoration of one's persona to a satisfying self-concept (Giddens, 1991). Personal rites of passage (van Gennep, 1960) accompanied by life altering events and / or moments aid in lost or rejected identities through constructive identity play (Turner, 1974), and in the incorporation of new components deemed more attractive of the extended self (Turner, 1974). Backpackers seem to place more emphasis on the journeys, rather than the destination itself. They want emotional experiences, as this is an element of their perception of authenticity (MacCannell, 1999). Authenticity in all its forms is 'nevertheless alive and well in minds of many tourists' (Belhasen & Caton, 2006).

While journeying in a physical environment, whether as a soul-seeker or pilgrim; backpackers are aware that they are surveying the landscape of the soul, the emphasis is on finding 'self', linking the spiritual invisible and the material visible (Paranjape, 2012). Tourist destinations are avidly attracting self-constructive backpackers who desire to travel not just for leisure or pure indulgence, but to find personal fulfilment and philosophical meaning (Reisinger, & Mavondo, 2004). These personalized itineraries are carried out through foreign rituals (Bell, 1997) by people who seek mental or psychological transformation to better or contribute to their current identity (Cohen, 2003). *Liminal* phases and *liminoid* breakages (Turner, 1974) are present during transformative experiences that encourage backpackers to try new paths contrasting, with their traditional affiliations with specific cultures or religions.

*'Liminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection'* (Turner, 1967:105).

The three stages of *liminality* discussed earlier are fundamental in formulating the persona (van Gennep, 1960). However, it is imperative to appreciate that the momentum of heightened personal journeys within the physical journeys of backpackers that result in epiphany memoirs emerge from *liminoid* travels that fundamentally alter self-identities (Giddens, 1991). Thus, this psychological play entwined with physical travel generates an internal-focused travel phenomenon much more powerful for the individual than any manufactured product of the tourism industry, which simply focuses on new products for mass audiences / travellers (Crompton, 1969).

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