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ENGELSK TITTEL: Understanding the Decision-making Process of Millennial Solo Female Backpackers

FORFATTER			VEILEDER:
Kandidat- nummer:	Student- nummer:	Navn:	
5558	250125	Ingvild Johanna Framheim Hansen	
			Fifi Kvalsvik

Abstract

Backpacking was first mentioned by Cohen (1972, p. 168) as catering to drifters and explorers and has since developed into a popular travelling style. Solo female backpackers are a particularly interesting segment as travel trends for women have changed in the twenty-first century with increasing numbers for leisure travel (Khoo-Lattimore & Gibson, 2018, p. 194). This article focuses on the decision-making processes of millennial solo female backpackers both precedent (pre-travel) and in situ (during), looking at how they research and book accommodation and transport, as well as their decision-making in regard to travelling alone, destination, time away, budget and use of excursions. The study was conducted with the use of qualitative semi-structured interviews with ten female backpackers who had different levels of experience. Results show how female backpackers make decisions based on previous experiences, perceptions, different motivational factors, and possible constraints.

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Understanding the Decision-making Process of Millennial Solo Female Backpackers

1.0. Introduction

Sørensen (2003, p. 851) says “backpackers are characterized as self-organized pleasure tourists on a prolonged multiple-destination journey with a flexible itinerary”. By studying the culture emerging amongst backpackers, Sørensen found that backpacking is a social phenomenon with heterogeneity, and scholars question the notion of backpackers as a distinct and homogeneous group. The main purpose of this study is to understand millennial female solo backpackers’ decision-making process by focusing on precedent and in situ decisions, but as previously stated this includes individuals with different characters and backgrounds.

Solo travel is amongst the fastest-growing segments in the tourism industry, and studies suggest that the pandemic crisis will likely increase tourists’ preferences for independent travel (Wen et al. 2021, p. 82). A global travel survey from 2019 shows that 76% of the respondents had travelled solo or planned to, regardless of gender, age, or nationality (Fah, E. G, 2020). Solo-travel differs from traveling with others by solo travellers being less restricted when travelling at their own speed and not being required to make collaborative decisions (Bianchi, 2021). They are also a cost-effective and desirable market segment for tourism managers, although their drivers may differ with experience. In spite of this, little research has been made on why tourists continue solo travelling, and if repeat travel changes behaviour (Tan & Wu, 2016, p. 218). There is also a lack of research into female accommodation experiences and preferences, and what women seek from a supply point of view, especially in regard to budget properties (Khoo-Lattimore & Gibson, 2018, p. 192).

This study focuses on millennials, also known as Generation Y and digital natives, as they are the generation that uses the internet the most for travel planning. Due to this characteristic, and backpackers usually participating in long-term travel and visit multiple destinations, these backpackers are online while being on the road (Veríssimo & Costa, 2018, p. 8). The millennials now take up a large percentage of the marketplace. They prioritize culture and enjoyment, prefer open communication and flexibility, and have been exposed to more different cultures, people, travel opportunities, and information compared to previous generations (Kurian, 2017, p. 7). Previous studies often focus on younger or older women, as women between the ages of thirty and fifty usually fall under studies related to family travel (Jordan & Gibson, 2005, p. 197) or girlfriend getaways (Khoo-Lattimore & Gibson, 2018). By categorizing the solo backpackers as short-term and long-term backpackers with varying degrees of experience this study shows how their precedent decision-making influence their in-situ decision-making. Various experienced backpackers make different decisions in situ based on their previous experience and backgrounds. The finding from this research can help destination- and tourism managers to better understand the millennial solo female backpacker and customize their marketing strategy to reach them.

This paper is structured as follows. First, the literature review gives an understanding on the main topics of the paper, defining backpackers, backpacker culture, solo female travellers and long-term and short-term travel. This is followed by the methodology section, which presents qualitative data gathered from ten interviews. In the results section the ten women interviewed have been divided into groups of short-term and long-term backpackers, and we look at how the different groups make decisions precedent to and during their backpacking journeys. This is followed by a discussion of the results and a conclusion to the findings.

2.0. Literature review

According to Hannam & Diekmann (2010, p. 2), the majority of the backpacker tourism market consists of younger, less affluent people who spend their time in institutionalized backpacker enclaves in “traditional destinations”, though Sørensen (2003, p. 851) claims that the only commonality between backpackers is that they are travelling on multi-destination journeys, and that even this can be discussed. It is somewhat possible to locate groups within the backpacker segment on the two opposing ends. “The flashpacker” is older, has more expensive equipment, varies accommodation depending on location, has greater disposable income, and still engages with the backpacker culture (Hannam & Diekmann, 2010, p. 2). The “lifestyle traveller” is like the earlier drifter and spends the majority of their life indefinitely on the road, but still engages with the backpacker culture (Cohen, 2011, p. 1536). The backpacker culture is explained by Sørensen (2003, p. 854) as social structures, norms and values founded in the interactions among the travellers, which in turn affects norms, values, conduct and social behaviour. When it comes to backpackers, this concept of culture provides a framework, especially since most spend their time with other backpackers.

2.1. Solo female backpackers

Solo female backpackers are tourists who choose to travel on their own (Bianchi, 2021). Backpackers differentiate from other tourist groups as they are more motivated by making their own choices, empowerment and being challenged (Wantono & McKercher, 2019, p. 20; Bianchi, 2021). Studies on female solo travellers are consistent on findings of empowerment, which can be contributed to their gendered context (Khoo-Lattimore & Gibson, 2018, p. 193). Female backpacker tourism experiences are frequently constrained by male-dominated cultural values and attitudes, though the backpacking experience can be liberating as they gain the freedom to express their identities. It is argued that gender and age are important factors in the study of backpackers (Hannam & Atljjevic, 2008, p. 157-187)

Some studies show that perceptions of women in certain areas are shaping the women's travel behaviour, and that even amongst backpackers there are cultural conditions that sometimes dictate behaviour (Wantono & McKercher, 2019, p. 26). In terms of inter-gendered differences, men and women select tourism destinations using different criteria (Ryan, et al., 1998), and solo women will also seek other destinations than those chosen by couples, families, or groups of travellers (Heimtun & Abelsen, 2012, p. 434).

2.2. Short-term and long-term travel

Short-term travellers spend a long time planning their trip in advance. They search for the best-looking accommodation within their price range and a good location as they want to be right where it happens. They tend to have a list of must-sees that is the reason for the trip. There is no time for laundry, so you pack for every day. Budget wise they tend to have more to spend as the next paycheck is just around the corner. Timewise, they will use every moment of their journey to the fullest, and rest when they're back home.

Long-term travellers tend to plan as they go, often using word-of-mouth for recommendations and might spend a day to research for the upcoming weeks. They mostly book the same day or the day before and will avoid partaking in "touristy things" and rather opt for the free option of wandering around the town. They pack the bare minimum, mostly because they have to carry the backpack. Every dollar counts, and they look at how much things are worth. They have time to relax, take care of their health and do things "in their own time" (McCabe, 2016).

3.0. Method

3.1. Study method and research instrument

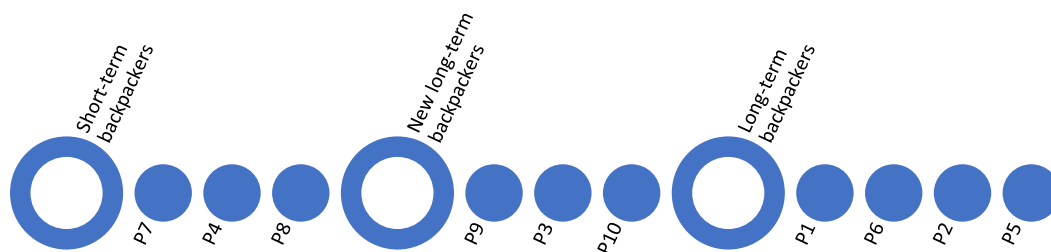
This study is based on qualitative analysis of the experiences and decision-making processes of the participants. A qualitative interview guide was designed, and the data used for the

research were collected from semi-structured interviews. Participants were encouraged to talk about their travel history and how they would make decisions precedent and in situ, regarding traveling solo and choices about accommodation, transportation, and excursions.

The interviews were divided into three sections. The first one was introductory, focusing on the participants' demographics and previous experiences traveling alone. The second was related to their travel style, pre-travel booking, their identity and their philosophy regarding backpacking. The third section focused on researching and booking of accommodation, transportation, and excursions.

Thematic analysis was the method used for analysing the interviews. Oral answers were recorded with the women's consent using a voice recorder, after they were made aware that the data would be used for academic purposes only. Interview data was transcribed using the open-source software TranscriberAG and categorized manually in google docs.

Figure 1.0. Timeline showing different groups of participants.



With the assistance of a timeline, we can observe that the participants were divided into two groups of long-term and one group of short-term backpackers. The timeline is the same whether we put it up as time backpacked alone or combined. Furthermore, the group of most experienced travellers are divided into post- and pre-covid. P1 and P2 are grouped as long-term pre-covid backpackers who have worked while backpacking, P5 and P6 are grouped as post-covid backpackers who have worked while backpacking, P3, P9 and P10 are grouped as

post-covid, pleasure-seeking backpackers, and P4, P7 and P8 are grouped as short-term, pre-covid, pleasure-seeking backpackers.

After the initial two interviews the interview guide was revised. There were initially more questions on excursions, but the answers contained little information about choices. It was not deemed relevant to the study, and the answers given were not used for analysing.

3.2. Data collection and sample profile

The sample was based on female backpackers born between 1977 and 1995, who'd backpacked alone. The interviewer first carried out a test of the interview guide with a millennial male backpacker in Norway. This followed by a convenience sampling made up of two female backpackers the researcher had met while backpacking. The male backpacker started a snowball sampling where the respondents provided the researcher with names and emails of possible participants (Braun & Clarke 2013, pp. 57). Requests were also sent to a larger acquired backpacking network through social media, who along with the convenience sample were all encouraged to voluntarily contribute to the study by providing the targeted participants. Due to the geographically dispersed sample, the interviews were completed via online meetings. Those who wanted to take part in the study were reached by the interviewer through email, with more details regarding the interview including a consent form they were asked to read before meeting and agree to on recording.

The interviews were conducted between March and April 2022 on ten women. The final sample consisted of ten women between 30 and 37 years, the average being 34. Of them, 40% were European, 40% were Asian and 20% came from North and South America. The length of the time backpacked varied from 3-4 months to seven years, with a span of four and a half years between the most travelled (P5) and second most travelled (P2). The continent's most participants had backpacked alone was Asia and Europe (8/10), followed by North

America (5/10), and the least visited was Africa (1/10). Regarding the number of continents backpacked alone, three women had travelled two continents, five women had travelled three continents and two women had travelled four continents, the latter also being the two most travelled backpackers.

All the participants are child free, which is a segment that travel abroad more frequently (Khoo-Lattimore & Gibson, 2018). They all either had higher education or are in the process of finishing higher education. Three have a master's degree, five have a bachelor's degree, and two are in the process of finishing their bachelor's degrees. Of the ten participants, five had backpacked during covid which has had an impact on their decision making, especially concerning their choice of destination and their booking time frame.

4.0. Results

4.1. Identifying the backpackers

By using a timeline to divide the participants into different groups, we can use Sørensen's (2003, p. 851) description of backpackers as a tool to explore the similarities and differences within and between the groups. This is a way of picking up some similarities, but Jordan and Gibson (2005, p. 197) says that as female tourists are not a homogeneous group, classifying them as such would be to overlook differences in background, culture, and character.

4.1.1. Short-term backpackers

The short-term backpackers are similar in the way that they all have done multiple destination travel in Europe, they all set out with a starter kit, meaning they have planned and booked more than plane ticket and initial accommodation, they are all pleasure seekers, meaning that their travel is time off from work, and they all have constrictions when it comes to time.

Within the group, they differ in the way that P4 have made longer trips than the others, giving her a more flexible itinerary, P7 uses excursions which questions the self-organization, and while she is social the others describe themselves as “introverted”.

Table 1.0. Identifying the short-term travellers

	Have a starter kit	Flexible itinerary	Have time	Is self org.	Seeking pleasure	Social	Multiple dest.
P4	x	x		x	x		x
P7	x				x	x	x
P8	x			x	x		x

4.1.2. New long-term, post-covid backpackers

The new long-term backpackers all started traveling during the Covid-19 pandemic and are therefore similar on many of Sørensen’s (2003, p. 851) parameters, as well as being similar in time travelled and decision-making process due to covid-constraints. According to the backpacking parameters their similarities are that they all have flexible itineraries, have time, are all pleasure seekers, and have all done multiple-destination journeys. None of them set off with a starter kit when leaving home.

Table 2.0. Identifying the new long-term, post-covid backpackers

	Have a starter kit	Flexible itinerary	Have time	Is self org.	Seeking pleasure	Social	Multiple dest.
P3		x	x	x	x		x
P9		x	x	x	x	x	x
P10		x	x		x	x	x

Where they differ is on the social parameter, where P3 enjoys her own company more while traveling and says she spends about 80% of her time alone, compared to P9 who says she is 40% alone and P10 who says that in 1 ½ year, she spent 4 days alone. They also differ on the self-organized parameter, as when asked about excursions P10 says “I joined several”, P3 says “I try to do everything on my own” but admits to joining a few when it’s difficult to reach the destination on your own, and P9 says “I try to avoid them, it’s cheaper”.

4.1.3. Long-term backpackers

The experienced long-term backpackers all started travelling pre-covid, but two continued travelling during the pandemic, and they are therefore divided into two sub-groups. The first group are the pre-covid backpackers. Their similarities are a flexible itinerary, time, and that they are social. None set out with a starter kit, they use excursions, and they work while traveling. They differ on the multiple-destination parameter, as P1 mostly travelled through one country.

Table 3.0. Identifying the long-term, pre-covid backpackers

	Have a starter kit	Flexible itinerary	Have time	Is self org.	Seeking pleasure	Social	Multiple dest.
P1		x	x			x	
P2		x	x			x	x

Table 3.1. Identifying the long-term, post-covid backpackers (Continuation of table. 3.0)

P5		x	x	x		x	x
P6		x	x			x	x

The second group is similar; they have a flexible itinerary, have time and are social. None of them sets out with a starter kit either. They differ from the first group by both having travelled multiple destination journeys, and while P6 enjoys excursions, P5 says it’s “not

really my thing”, and “I don’t think it’s traveling if you do all of this”, making her argumentatively the most self-organized of the long-term travellers. The group of long-term travellers is also the most social group, with an average time spent alone of 32,5%.

4.1.4. Similarities and differences

As we can observe, the biggest differences are between the short-term backpackers and the two groups of long-term backpackers. The short-term travellers are the least social, with an average time spent alone of 63%, compared to all the long-term backpackers on average spending 37% of their time alone. They also have more constraints when it comes to time and flexibility, meaning that they need to plan more precedent to travel which is evident in the fact that they leave home with a “starter kit”.

While the two groups of long-term backpackers have this time and flexibility, they differ on the pleasure-seeking parameter as the more experienced long-term travellers have done some sort of work while backpacking. New long-term backpackers also appear to be more self-organized, as they don’t join excursions as much as the other group.

4.2. Identifying the precedent decision-making processes

4.2.1. Destination

The short-term backpackers all originate from Asia and their multi-destination backpacking journey took place in Europe. P4 chose Europe because it was her ‘ideal destination since childhood’ and because of the different culture, architecture, people, and food. Both P7 and P8 say their destination choice originated from movies, books, and social media, along with places they have heard about. P8 says she is a ‘very visual person’, and P7 says she has seen pictures of places and have then put them on her ‘bucket list’. P8 studied philosophy and architecture, which influenced her destination choices. All travelled on shorter trips in India, two due to proximity as they are Indians, and the third because of fascination with the culture.

Of the new long-term travellers, two are European and one is American. All had travelled Central- and South America alone, and one of the Europeans was still traveling, but now in Asia. Her original plan was to go to Asia, but when she started her travels in late 2020, Asia was closed due to covid restrictions. Both P3 and P10 started their travels in Costa Rica because they ‘googled which countries had less corona restrictions’ (P10). All had been to Mexico and Colombia due to less restrictions. As P10 says ‘Costa Rica was never on my bucket list. It was also never my plan to go to Colombia, but it was a nice surprise’, and she ended up staying for three months, as ‘they are the friendliest people’. P3 also had non-covid related reasons for her destination choices; price, language, places of interest and ‘places I haven’t been’. P9 and P10 say they ended up in Colombia due to recommendations from other travellers.

Among the more experienced long-term backpackers, one European-Asian (P5) and one Asian (P6) had backpacked during covid. P5 have been living in Morocco for a year as the restrictions are minimal. P6 had travelled Turkey and Georgia during covid for the same reason, and because she was eligible for visa on arrival in these countries, which differs depending on what country you originate from. Excluding covid related reasons, P5 would choose her destinations from what she could learn or experience and from what she had heard from other travellers. P6 says she went to South America because she ‘wanted to see anaconda’. The two who had travelled pre-covid were European and American. Both had been to Australia because of the somewhat easily obtained “Working Holiday Visa” and chose to travel in Asia because of the different culture, people, and food.

4.2.2. To travel alone

The participants have different reasons for backpacking solo the first time. Some mention a lack of travel companions, as P6 says ‘you might have to wait forever if you want friends or

family to join you'. Others had started with a partner. P2 started with a friend but continued alone and both P9 and P10 continued alone after their boyfriends left. Two participants said they started because they 'needed a big change'. The common denominator when asked why they travel alone is to meet new people, and the words "freedom" is mentioned by most and "flexibility" is mentioned by half.

The short-term backpackers differ somewhat in their reasoning for traveling solo. While two are quite independent and spend most of their time alone, P7 says 'I'm quite social, I always end up making friends', which is why she prefers staying in hostels. They all agreed on one factor for traveling alone; P4 says 'You don't have to care about others', P7 says 'I cannot abandon my fellow traveller [...] When you want to take time to yourself there is nobody to account for', and P8 says that alone 'you don't have to explain'.

Of the new long-term backpackers, P9 says she started with her boyfriend which was 'the push I needed', but she had been planning it before and had gotten the idea to 'leave everything behind' three years earlier. P10 also started with a boyfriend, but then travelled alone to get a different connection to the country, explaining that 'if you travel with a friend, it's hard to get in touch with the locals.' P3 considered having 'a gap year' for some time but got pushed into it as covid made her lose a job opportunity abroad.

Of the more experienced long-term backpackers, P1 mentioned the self-development aspect (Bianchi, 2021) of 'doing it alone', but she talks about starting out in a country where she knew the language and had a network to reach out to. P2 says 'it's easier to meet people alone' and 'you can go wherever you want, whenever you want'. P5 says there is 'no reason, I just wanted to travel', and P6 says she didn't choose to travel alone the first time, but nobody could go with her.

4.2.3. Time away

An important factor in decision-making is time, which can work as a constraint for short-term travellers, while giving the long-term travellers more flexibility and freedom. Of the participants, 30% were short-term backpackers. Although they had shorter traveling time, freedom and flexibility were often mentioned as motivational factors. Of the short-term backpackers, P4 has had three trips over the span of four months, giving her more flexibility in her in situ choices. P7 and P8 have both had shorter trips, but more of them. P8 says her average time away is 10 days. P7's longest trip spanned over 21 days.

The new long-term backpackers had travelled from 10 ½ months to one and a half years. This traveling happened during covid. P9 and P10 are finished traveling, while P3 was interviewed while still traveling. Three of the more experienced long-term travellers have backpacked from two and a half years to three years and five months and were all in their home countries when interviewed. The most experienced traveller left home seven years ago and has been living in Morocco for the last year.

4.2.4. Budget

While all the participants answer that they have a budget, they range in level of organization, with P5 saying she has 'not a specific budget' and P9 saying 'I'm quite organized with my finances', offering to send the specified budget.

The short-term backpackers have budgets and go for cheap options. P7 says she will spend less on accommodation to be able to spend money on a nice restaurant, being 'a foodie'. She also says, 'the reason I backpack is in some ways due to budget constraints', because she wants to travel a lot. The other short-term backpackers also try to "minimize the amount". P8 says 'it depends on where you are', and that in certain places she will spend more on accommodation due to safety concerns. What separates the short-term from the long-term

backpackers are statements like ‘it’s just a budget, I’ll just over budget it’ (P4), and ‘I tend to be a bit extravagant and go over budget’ (P7).

The new long-term backpackers were quite clear on their daily budget, ranging from 10 - 40 euros a day depending on the country. All had saved up as P3 says ‘quite a bit of money’, but chose budget options, ate in local places, and travelled in “cheap countries”. About experiences, P9 mentions that ‘if there is something I really want to do, I’ll do it even if it’s off budget’, and P3 says ‘if I fancy a Piña Colada, I do buy it’, but also says that because she budgets herself, she then appreciates the experience much more.

Of the experienced long-term backpackers, P6 is different than the others as she is just now learning how to budget. This is due to previous experiences of running out of money and having to borrow. The other three backpackers all say they “spend like a local”, after asking the locals how much they should be paying. They agree with P8 as it ‘depends on the country’, but all try to find the cheapest options and use public transportation.

4.2.5. Excursions

Of the ten participants, only five answers that they use excursions. P2 is one of these but says that ‘while I don’t like feeling like a sheep, it’s a good way to see the places that you would miss.’ P3 is not one of these as she tries to do everything independently to save money but has used a couple of multi-day excursions when ‘you can’t go by yourself’. Of the participants that don’t participate in excursions, their reasoning is (P4) ‘I am more myself person. I am also shy’, (P5) ‘I don’t like organized things [...] I don’t think it’s traveling’, (P8) ‘I try to avoid those, I don’t like the format’, and (P9) ‘I try to avoid them [...] it’s cheaper’.

Of the short-term backpackers, only P7 uses excursions. She says, ‘It’s a nice way to get to know somebody’. Amongst the new long-term travellers, P10 is the only one that ‘joined

several excursions.’ She says that once, she stayed in ‘an empty town because of corona’ which was known for being “an adventure place”. ‘During the day I did some excursions [...]. I had [...] some other people sometimes, but even the excursions were really empty.’

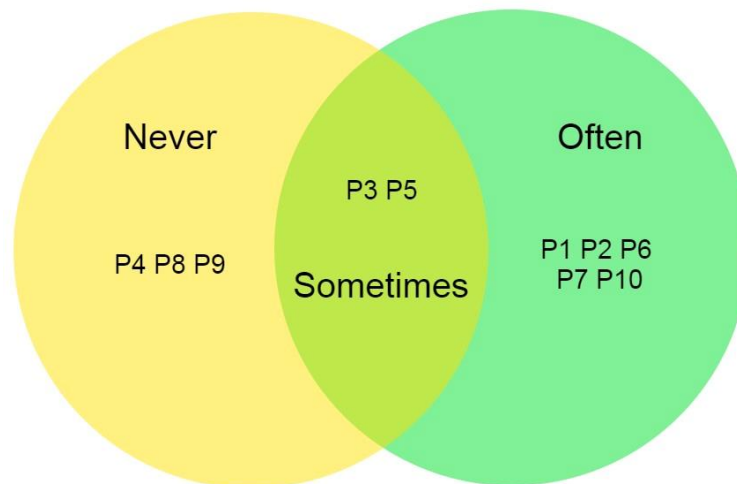


Figure 2.0. Venn diagram. Use of excursions

Of the more experienced long-term travellers, three use excursions. P1 says she does city tours and that her Open Water Course included some excursions. P2 says she does city walking tours and has also done ‘touristy’ excursions because she wanted to experience certain places. Like P7 she says, ‘Excursions are a good way to meet people and make friends’ (P2). P6 uses city walking tours, visits museums and once joined an excursion because ‘[...] you are too tired to see so many things on your own [...] they know exactly where to take you.’

4.3. Research and booking

The focus of the study has been on the participants research and booking history, both precedent to travel and in situ, looking at excursions, accommodation, and transport. We can observe the similarities and differences in the participants regarding booking by using Venn-diagrams.

None have booked excursions precedent to traveling, but three participants have pre-booked courses; P3 and P4 have done Yoga Teacher Training Course, and P10 did a language course.

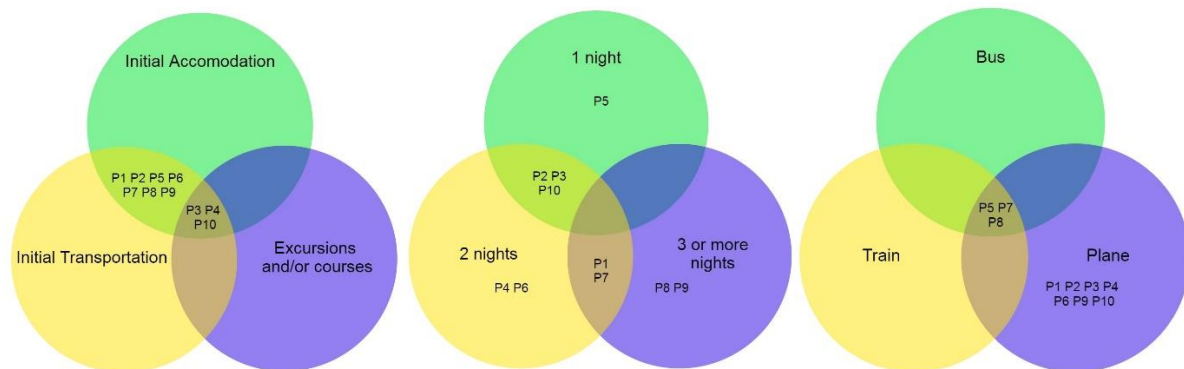


Figure 3.0. Venn diagrams. Diagram 1: precedent booking of initial accommodation, transport to the destination and excursions and/or courses. Diagram 2: number of nights booked at initial accommodation. Diagram 3: transportation mode used to reach initial destination.

Six had booked two nights or less for their initial accommodation because (P3) ‘It might be crap’, (P4) ‘I didn’t stay long in each place’, or (P10) ‘I would extend in the reception to save money’, due to OTA’s taking ‘taxes, or commissions’. The ones who booked more nights were two short-term backpackers with time constraints, and two long-term backpackers who were relatively new to long-term backpacking, both of these from Latin America. All had used plane to reach their initial destination, and trains and busses were used by the most experienced backpacker and two of the short-term backpackers.

4.3.1. Accommodation

When researching accommodation, two of the three short-term backpackers both researched and booked accommodation precedent to travel, up to two months in advance. Both used OTAs as booking.com, hostel.com and Hostelworld. P8 said she stopped using Hostelworld because ‘there is a lot of fine print’, like taxes. In situ, P4 would usually book the day before due to her more flexible itinerary. Her accommodation on arrival is usually for two nights.

The preferred accommodation for P7 and P8 is hostels, while P4 says ‘I care about my safety, so I prefer a hotel’. When using a hostel P4 prefers female dorms, as ‘men can be rough sometimes [...] it’s a bit loud and it smells’. P8 uses mixed dorms with a maximum of four beds, but she always books with a cancellation policy in case ‘it feels off’ or she needs to share with only men. P7 prefers using mixed dorms and thinks female dorms are for those who ‘maybe [...] feel unsafe or doesn’t feel comfortable’. P7 and P8 also use a lot of private rooms in guesthouses or homestays, that ‘functions like a hostel as they are keen to give you information’ (P7).

Two of the short-term backpackers relied heavily on reviews when researching. P8 would filter guesthouses ‘by solo female backpackers, to see what they have said’. P7 says she is ‘looking for a good balance between ratings and good reviews.’ P4 says her criteria has changed over time as she ‘first looked for price, then came atmosphere, then less people, then comfortability’. All short-term backpackers say they choose a place that ‘looks nice’.

The long-term backpackers all booked initial accommodation precedent to travel, P9 being the only booking the second accommodation ‘because of the pandemic [...] I wanted to be safe and tell them [at the boarder] “See, I have accommodation, I’m gonna stay for longer”.’ Except P5 who prefers guesthouses or private rooms, all others prefer hostels. P6 says about hotels ‘I don’t like to sleep alone in a strange hotel [...] I don’t feel safe’.

P2 is the only long-term backpacker who uses female dormitories, and only sometimes.

When she does, the reason is she ‘doesn’t want to be social’. The reasons given for not using female dorms are (P10) ‘they are dirtier [...] long hairs’, (P9) ‘they are more expensive [...] absurd that they take advantage of the need of women to feel safer in an environment’, or (P6) ‘I hate female dormitory [...] females are so messy’. When asked why female dorms exist, most say they think it’s for security, comfortability, or privacy, and that maybe the ones

using them are younger or new to traveling. P1 sums it up by saying ‘we all have different beliefs and cultures.’

When researching for accommodation, all the long-term backpackers except P5 say that they rely on reviews found on OTA’s. P5 relies on word-of-mouth and prefers to spend a day looking around at the destination herself, as she has the time. All the long-term backpackers talk about word-of-mouth being a decision-making factor. P10 says ‘When you’re traveling you meet people, and they have some recommendations that are usually very good’. P1 said about why she stopped staying at Airbnb while traveling alone: ‘when you’re alone, you don’t have people to go around [with] or make questions [to]. And that’s the most important [thing] when you’re backpacking alone. That’s how you research basically’. Another much used source of information was ‘people that works at the hostel’ (P6).

About booking, P2 says she sometimes ‘just show up [...] can check out if I like the vibe’. P3 says she does about 50/50 pre-book and drop in. P6 says ‘sometimes I don’t book at all’. P10 says she has ‘walked around and looked first’, and P9 says ‘once in Colombia I just went and tried to find something’. When not booking directly at the accommodation provider, the long-term backpacker’s book either through their preferred OTA’s, or some ‘prefer to book directly with the owners through the hostel website’ (P3), often to ‘avoid paying the taxes’ (P10) on OTA’s.

Amongst the different criteria for hostels, the most important attributes for all participants were price, cleanliness, and spaces for socializing, followed by location, security and having a kitchen. Some of the participants would stay at party hostels ‘in the cities’ (P10), or if they are ‘in the mood’ (P9). Some avoid staying at them, but like P3 ‘goes and visits them’.

Privacy and comfortability were mentioned by a few, but not as highly important criteria. P3 and P6 prefer hostels with curtains on the bunkbeds for privacy, and regarding comfortability

P7 said that if things are not working properly ‘In a way, when you decide to backpack, those are the things [...] you can expect’, and P2 said ‘some place doesn’t have a shower, and that’s ok [...] that’s just how it is.’ She also said that ‘Price matters because that’s not where I want to spend my money’.

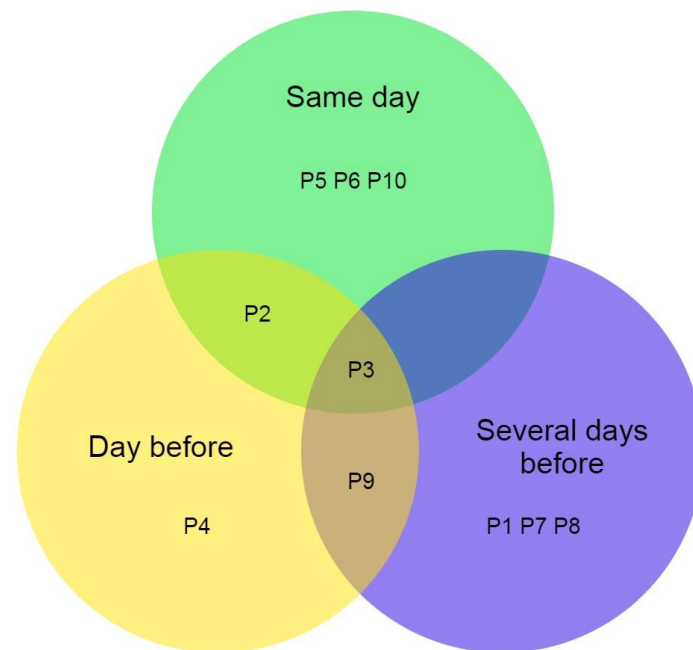


Figure 3.1. Venn diagram. In situ booking of accommodation

When it comes to time of booking, P1 and P9 are the only long-term traveller who answer: ‘never in the moment’ and ‘I usually book it before’. P1 books a few days in advance, and P9 one to five days in advance. Most of the others say: ‘I’m not a planner’ (P2), ‘I don’t pre-book unless I’m in a country where you pre-book’ (P3), ‘It’s not being on holiday, it’s living. So, I can spend a day to research’ (P5), ‘Day of traveling’ (P6), and P10 said ‘In advance?’ and then laughed. She then went on to say she would perhaps ‘book when I sit on the bus to the location’, which also a few of the other long-term backpackers mentioned they would do.

4.3.2. Transportation

Short-term travellers’ main mode of transportation while backpacking has been ‘train’ (P4), ‘flights’ (P7) and ‘metro and train’ (P8). P7 has also used trains in Europe and says, ‘trains

are such a great way to get around [...] also in India’ but admits to mainly using flights inland in India. She says, ‘in my circumstance it doesn’t make sense [to take a long train or bus journey] due to time constraints’. When they look for transportation, P7 uses the hostel website to find information, P4 asks locals as ‘locals have practical information [...] it’s easier’, while P8 uses OTA’s or other websites that give information on transport. When asked what they would do if they couldn’t find any public transportation, P8 says she once was in that situation and had to car-pool in Germany. It was an official car-pooling system where the cars were tracked but she says, ‘I wonder why I took that risk.’ P4 says she would ‘just give up, I’m that kind of person’, and P7 says she would get together a group of people and carpool ‘if the place is special there’d be a lot of people that also want to go’.

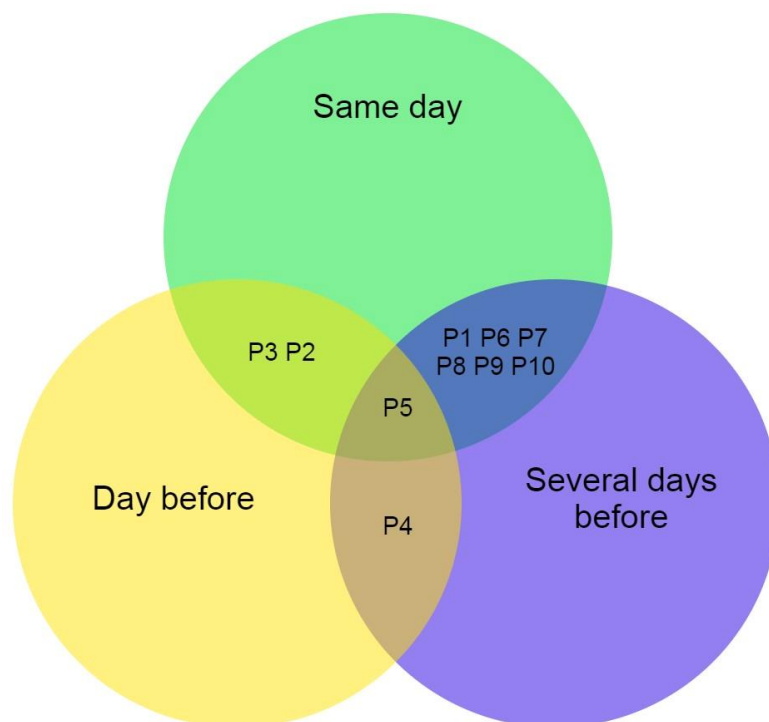


Figure 3.2. Venn diagram. In situ booking of transportation

Long-term travellers’ main mode of transportation is the bus. All the new post-covid long-term backpackers answered that they had used the bus the most, the longest journey being 18-hours. P3 who is still traveling says she uses buses for long trips two to four times a month.

P9 says 'I don't love 12-hour journeys on a bus. If I can stop in the middle, I usually will do it'. About researching and booking, P9 says 'you cannot book in advance in America, [...] go to the station and buy the ticket', she also says 'you never know when the buses are leaving [...] the next bus in 30 minutes or tomorrow.' P3 likes going 'to the bus station to plan it out' as she 'goes with the flow'. P10 complains that the night buses are cold, but she still 'likes them a lot', and spends the time talking with locals or other tourists if she can't sleep. P3 and P10 also hitchhikes, but with different levels of experience. P10 met some people and 'got a hitchhiking lesson' about do's and don'ts while solo backpacking. P3 has been hitchhiking 'more than 700 cars', having 'said no twice'.

Of the more experienced long-term travellers, P1 is the one that differs the most from the rest as her most used mode of transportation is car-pooling. She travelled one country over the course of two years while working and living in hostels, where she had time to get to know the owners of the car before deciding to go with them. The other three all answer that the bus is their most used transportation mode but have used a wide array of other modes as well.

Public transport or 'everything that is convenient in the area' (P6), that is both within budget and fast seems to be the main criteria. P2 says about public transportation 'it's a good way to see places.' P5 says that once, she rode for 68 hours in one go on trains and buses to reach her destination. 'Now I think I'm not gonna do this [...] it was a budget idea. I value my time more now. I can take the plane and pay a little more' (P5). She asks 'what is the aim? To see something on the way, or to go there and to be there?'

When long-term backpackers are asked what they would do if there were no public transportation, all the more experienced backpackers answered that they would 'ask the locals.' For P5 and P6, this includes hitchhiking. P5 says 'sometimes hitchhiking is faster than public transportation.' P1 says 'first time I'm in a country, I will pay for official

transportation [...] a secure thing.’ P6 says she’ll take a taxi ‘if I’m tired’, and P2 says ‘you’ll find a way to get there.’ Of the new post-covid long-term backpackers, P3 says ‘there is always a solution’ and would rent a bike or a private car. P9 would try to get a taxi or an Uber or see if there was some sort of shuttle service, and P10 says she has rented a car in some cases. P3 and P10 would also hitchhike and P10 says she would ‘ask the locals.’

4.3.3. Excursions

Three participants said they researched and booked courses precedent to travel. P3 and P4 have both done Yoga Teacher Training courses in India. When asked about how they obtained information, P3 says a friend recommended her to do the course, and another friend recommended the course provider, while P4 had friends in India that she specifically asked for help regarding finding a good provider. P10 also booked a course when she first started her journey alone. She booked a language course in Costa Rica with accommodation with a host family to learn Spanish faster.

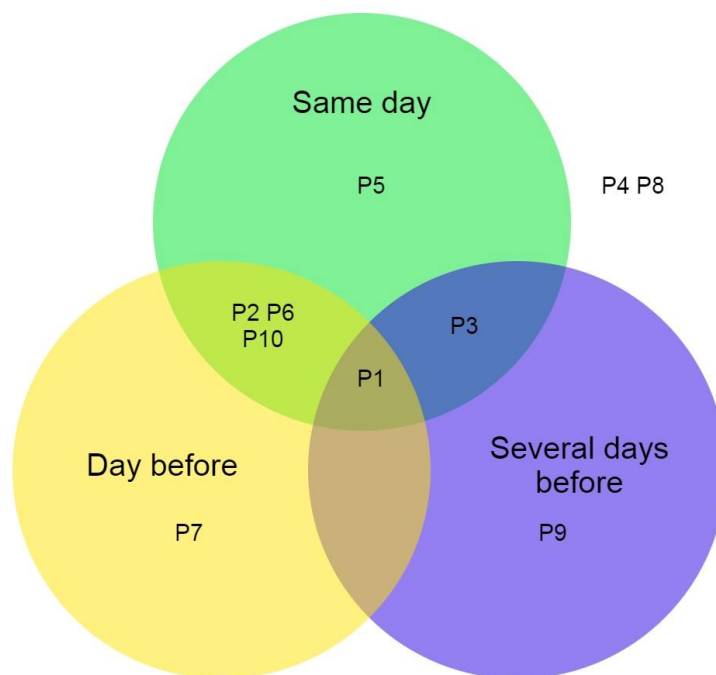


Figure 3.3. Venn diagram. In situ booking for excursions

During their backpacking, those who use excursions mostly book them in the moment, the same day, or the day before. P7, the only short-term backpacker who uses excursions, says she obtains information ‘the moment I arrive at the hostel, at the reception checking in’, and that she books them ‘the day before’. She says, ‘I have no problems going alone’, but ‘if I bump into another backpacker, I might mention what I’m planning to do [...] “What are your plans today?” [...] usually they will join you.’

Of the new long-term backpackers, P3 says she researches ‘about 90%.’ She obtained information from the hostels as well, along with going to agencies, asking people, google, TripAdvisor or travel blogs. She tries to do everything independently but says ‘if I have good contact with the owner [...] I say, “I’m a budget traveller, can I have it cheaper?”’. P9 also says she does most on her own because of price but looks online for things to do. P10 says about her research and booking ‘the hostel offers something, or you hear about it at the hostel’, meaning through other backpackers.

From the long-term backpackers, we see the same; they obtain their information often from the hostels: ‘tourist boards at the hostel’ (P1), at the hostel ‘hear them talking about it and ask to join’ (P6), or from word-of-mouth like ‘random people I meet’ (P2). They also mention signs on the beach or street, locals telling you about experiences, or looking it up online. They all booked in the moment, the same day, or the day before, except P1 once when a family member came to visit. P5 did one excursion ‘when I met my mom on my travels’, and they went directly and booked it spontaneously at an agency.

4.4. Philosophy

When analysing the results of the philosophy questions, similarities are found between culture rather than between time backpacked. When asked what they thought about when they heard the words “female backpacker”, the two Americans used words like “brave”,

“strong character” and “explorer”. When asked what they thought a “typical backpacker” was, they said ‘I wouldn’t picture a woman traveling alone’ (P1) and ‘the female type is not what people think the typical backpacker is’ (P9).

The Europeans thought about female backpackers as ‘Open and curious’ (P2), ‘independent and confident’ (P3), and ‘I never thought about it [...] it’s completely the same’ (P10), meaning compared to male backpackers. The European-Asian said ‘anyone with a backpack’ (P5), and the Asians said ‘very common [...] nothing special’ (P4), ‘women are full of power [...] they can do anything’ (P6), ‘if you say male backpacker in the same sentence [...] no biases’ (P7) and ‘unconventionality [...] the country where I’m from it’s not so common for women to travel alone [...] safety is a word that comes to mind’ (P8).

About “typical backpacker” most of the Europeans and Asians agreed with P2’s statement ‘I don’t feel like there is a typical backpacker, because everyone is so different’. The Europeans said: ‘I think the social bit is a part of it’ (P2), ‘they are younger. They have a plan. I didn’t’ (P3), and ‘there are three types of backpackers – the short-term, the long-term and the digital nomad’ (P10). The European-Asian, who is the most experienced traveller said, ‘some people jump from one place to another and if I think of backpacking, that’s the idea that I have’.

The Asians said, ‘the backpackers are more open, more socialized, like meeting people, like chilling-culture’ (P4), about typical hostel-backpackers; ‘it’s a place where people that always stay young hang out. Everyone is like a teenager, but actually they are old. Like funny clothes, do funny things, eat at midnight, and sleep until evening’ (P6). P7 says her idea of a typical backpacker is ‘somebody travelling for six months’, and P8 says she thinks of someone ‘hitchhiking, moving from place to place’.

4.5. Fear, risk, and constraints

Although the study did not question risk, fear or constraints, the findings suggest that we cannot interview backpackers in a gendered setting without touching on these subjects. The respondents were extremely diverse in how much security and constraints had an impact on their decision-making, ranging from difficulty in finding sanitary products to not travelling to certain areas because they are deemed unsafe. Two also talked about experiences they had that one said: ‘made me stronger’ (P3), and the other said ‘didn’t scare me’ (P10).

One European participant mentioned that she would not travel in India alone. The researcher re-contacted the participant, as five others had travelled India alone, two of them being from India. One of the Indian participants had mentioned risk or constraints in regard to public transportation in India. It turned out from the woman’s response to the question put to her post-recording that her perception about public transportation in India had been shaped by the media, and with public transportation being a big part of the backpacker travel style, this participant had the understanding that using public transportation in India was ruled out as men would ‘be handsy’ and not respect her as a woman.

Some participants talked about constraints that weren’t necessarily “female” as well. When asked if she would recommend backpacking to others, P1 said that although she had backpacked Europe ‘there is a war in Europe now’. She also mentioned that ‘before the pandemic it’s one world. I don’t know what the world is gonna be when we’re going now’. Other constraints mentioned were ‘political instability’ (P3), ‘some countries are rough’ (P5), and ‘people have a stigma about solo backpacking [...] we don’t have any friends’ (P8).

Of the women interviewed most had travelled Europe and Asia. Two of the short-term solo backpackers had been to the US, three of the long-term backpackers had been to Australia. Five of the long-term backpackers had travelled South America. P2 and P5 mentioned Africa,

and P5 was the only one who had travelled in Africa solo. Northern Asia was not mentioned by any participants.

5.0. Discussion

The participants interviewed are extremely diverse in their travel style and experiences. As the researcher was completing the interviews, the initial research question developed from “do millennial female solo backpackers require certain amenities?”, to “do female backpackers make more spontaneous choices with experience?”. This hypothesis was based on the findings in the interviews but had also been noted before in the researchers’ personal experiences and pre-perceptions.

This hypothesis fits with Kleins’ (1998) recognition primed decision-making model (RPD) of naturalistic decision-making. The RPD-model states that with experience, the decision-maker recognizes the situation and make decisions based on previous experiences. If the situation is recognized as untypical, more energy is needed to diagnose the situation. This model is usually used in regard to jobs like firefighters or paramedics as they need to make quick decisions, but I will argue that it also applies to the decision-making process of backpackers. The long-term backpackers are proof of this theory, as they make more spontaneous decisions than the ones who are newer to backpacking or do short trips, and they base their decisions on recommendations that they decipher as valuable or not (Klein et al., 1993, p. 138).

The findings have been divided into three main groups of travellers: the short-term pre-covid backpacker, the new long-term post-covid backpacker and the more experienced long-term backpacker. We look into the main decision-making moments for the solo backpacker, both precedent and in situ, and link the findings to their experience level.

5.1. The precedent decision-making processes

Precedent to traveling, some decisions are made that influences further decision-making in situ. This includes destination, traveling alone, time away, budget and if you plan on joining any excursions or courses. Covid has also affected the precedent decision-making. Debatably, the short-term backpackers and the more experienced group of long-term backpackers can be seen as “the norm” when people return to making non-covid related decisions, although two of these participants also has travelled during the pandemic and were not asked specifically to differentiate between the two travel situations.

The short-term backpackers all made some of their destination decisions based on wanting to experience a different culture. As they are all Asians, they all mention the different culture they experienced when backpacking in Europe, and two have visited the US. Derived from P7’s statement ‘we grew up thinking people can’t travel alone and that it’s not safe. I’ve always been a bit rebellious and wanted to go against the grain’, this could indicate they are drawn to areas where female backpacking is looked upon as more common.

When it comes to the new long-term post-covid backpackers, their destination choices were affected by governmental restrictions in the time of traveling. Although some have a “bucket list”, most of these plans are unfulfilled. Of the experienced long-term backpackers, their pre-covid destination choices also stemmed from wanting to experience different cultures. The South American (P1) and the European (P2) and the European-Asian (P5) all talk about Asia, and P1 says ‘The point of traveling is to have cultural experiences that are so different to yours that you actually change in the process.’ As the final experienced backpacker is Asian (P6), she has backpacked in South America and Europe.

Some of the participants travel alone because they prefer it, it’s more convenient and they are independent people who want to make their own choices. A few mention that it comes from a

lack of having a travel partner. Wantono and McKercher (2019, p. 23) found in their research on Asian backpackers that by choosing shared accommodation and the backpacking style of travel, the solo travellers found it easy to meet new people. The ease of meeting new people is echoed by the participants in this study along with previous findings of motivation for solo travel, like self-development, pleasure, novelty-seeking, and escape (Bianchi, 2021).

Interestingly, only two of the post-covid backpackers mentioned flexibility as a motivation factor for going solo, while four out of five of the pre-covid backpackers did. Of the short-term backpackers, two say they went alone because they ‘wanted to have freedom’ (P4). The third says ‘I call myself a trapped gipsy soul [...] for that I’m just gonna go off by myself’ (P7). The short-term backpackers say that travelling alone is more convenient as it gives you more independency. The long-term travellers agree, although they say it helps you getting in touch with the locals, therefore creating a more immersive travelling style. Most of the long-term backpackers also say they travel for the social aspects of the backpacking experience.

When it comes how the long-term backpackers first started travelling alone, P3 and P5 say they ‘wanted to’ (P5). Three started with another person, and two of them knew someone or had a network at their starting point. With more experience, the need for familiarity and a safe environment diminishes, and all the long-term backpackers now want to travel alone.

The time available for each trip also makes a huge impact on decision-making. Short-term backpackers take time off from work and book transport for return. Long-term backpackers have only booked the transportation that takes them to their starting point. The time constraint for the short-term backpackers makes them explore a smaller area, while the long-term backpackers have the time to explore and stay longer in a place they like. This questions if it counts as backpacking, with P5 staying for a year in Morocco and P1 staying two years in Australia, although all the more experienced backpackers have worked while travelling.

Because budget is personal, the participants were just questioned on how they budget. We are therefore not able to make any conclusions based on budget size. What we can read from the data is that the short-term travellers choose somewhat expensive destinations like Europe and the US, and some cheaper destinations like India. The new long-term travellers chose “cheap countries” and had clear daily budgets, indicating that they are trying to make their savings last as long as possible. P10 also said that staying longer in a country meant spending less. The more experienced backpackers say they spend like locals after receiving information on proper cost and haggling.

Amongst the excursions chosen by the participants, the three that pre-booked wanted to develop a skill. The social aspect is mentioned by many; ‘Joining excursions is a good way to meet people’ (P7). Of the excursions chosen in situ, the backpackers usually find information and book through the hostel, and they do sightseeing in cities and in places where they have time constraints. Trekking and hiking are popular excursions, one had joined activity-based excursions like parasailing and rafting, one had snorkelled, and one did a diving course. Two new long-term backpackers avoid excursions, but as P10 talk about empty “adventure places” because of covid, this could cause the others to not participate. If we argue that the pre-covid long-term backpackers are “the norm”, the post-covid long-term backpackers should be joining excursions with time and travel experience, at least some city walking tours or city sightseeing.

5.2. Research and booking

5.2.1. Accommodation

When it comes to researching accommodation, the short-term backpackers had different criteria, but all relied on online reviews for information. P7 chose hostels from the social aspect and choose guesthouses because of easily obtained information via word-of-mouth. P8

chose hostels from a budget viewpoint and just looks for ‘a place to crash’. P4 prefers hotels because of security, while P6 says she chooses hostels for the same reason, showing different perspectives on safety. The short-term backpackers also mention decision-making changing with age, having less criteria for accommodation when they were younger.

Among the long-term backpackers the main criterion for accommodation is price. Most rely on information obtained via word-of-mouth from other travellers or online reviews, making the social influence the main factor for their buying behaviour. Although most use hostels, they all avoid using female dormitories to some extent. One would assume these dorms should be catering especially to the female participants, but their main reason for not using them is higher price, and them being dirtier. Some participants think that when both genders are in the room, people act more consciously and keep their area tidier. This could possibly be attributed to age as well, as some mention they believe the female dormitory clientele are younger. Their answers are in opposition to Wantono and McKercher’s (2019, p. 24) findings on Asian women backpackers that they prefer female dormitories for convenience, comfort, and hygiene, although some also mention price difference being a factor for not choosing it.

The long-term backpacker with the least experience is the one who books accommodation the furthest in advance, with most of her solo backpacking done in Australia. The most experienced backpacker will usually walk around and look for herself, and the other long-term backpackers mostly book spontaneously or on the day of travelling. One short-term backpacker would book in situ as she had the time and flexibility to do it, while the others book everything precedent to travel.

5.2.2. Transportation

The short-term backpackers would research transportation precedent to travel and sometimes book transit. P4 pre-booked ‘Euro Rail pass’, to move around Europe more easily. P8 says

her main transport mode is the metro, which along with the time constraint factor backs up the findings of the short-term backpackers moving shorter distances in their journeys.

The most common denominator between the long-term backpackers is that they all travel by bus and only book initial transportation to the starting point of their journey in a new country, all having used plane followed by train and bus. The desire to experience different cultures might be the reason why when asked about booking the Americans prefer having schedules easily at hand, while the Europeans 'show up at the bus station' (P3). This could also be attributed to experience, as the long-term backpackers are quite spontaneous in their booking.

Six out of ten of the participants have done some form of hitchhiking, all being part of the long-term segment. While some hitchhike alone often; eighter on long or short trips, for fun and for convenience, a few are new to the concept, some have only done it with others, and some have hitched rides with "motor guys" in Asia.

5.2.3. Excursions

Because of the diverse answers given by the participants regarding excursions, we can conclude that motivation to join excursions depends on other factors than experience or time travelling. None of the participants booked excursions precedent to travel, but three booked courses to develop a skill, and studies show that solo travellers prefer enjoyment or self-development, such as personal growth and learning about culture and heritage (Bianchi, 2021). When they use excursions, most obtain the information at the hostel in the reception or through other backpackers. Although doing excursions questions the self-organization parameter, the social aspect was mentioned as a motivational factor by most (Sørensen, 2003, p. 851). The most social backpackers say they would hear someone else in the hostel planning something and ask to join, or randomly meet other travellers at cafés and join their plans. Booking would eighter be done spontaneously, same day or the day before.

5.3. Philosophy and identity

Previous studies have shown that backpackers are an extremely diverse group (Sørensen, 2003, p. 851). Wantono and McKercher (2019, p. 22) say that in addition to gendered stereotypes, travellers need to overcome cultural and racial stereotypes. Female backpackers are also sensitive to cultural mores for women in other cultures, as P2 mentions 'I don't know if I am behaving correctly'. Attitudes and cultural values towards women travelling alone was sometimes experienced as constraining factors, as other studies as well have found (Hannam & Atjevic, 2008, p. 187).

By asking questions about the participants' philosophy when it came to "female backpacker", what a "typical backpacker" is and how they themselves identify as a traveller, the researcher expected to find similar perceptions. Both Americans assessed themselves not being typical backpackers on the basis that they are from patriarchal systems where society instils fear in women, and where female travel behaviour is judged for appropriateness (Brugulat & Cormina, 2021, p. 642). While they were mostly unanimous about their perceptions on female backpackers, the Europeans focused on their characteristics, while the European-Asian and Asians mostly eluded talking about gender comparison, except P8 who as the Americans talked about societal perceptions. We can observe that some don't identify as typical due to of the view on women in their societies. Some view themselves a type of backpacker, but most talked about "them or they", indicating that they themselves are not included.

5.4. Fear, risk, and constraints

Yang et al. (2018, p. 268) states that taking risks allow women to reconstruct gender identities and modify social beliefs. P6 says 'you cannot live in safety all the time, you will not experience anything.' Looking at travel from a gendered structure, it involves negotiating

issues of risk and safety. Sometimes the need is not only for physical security, but also a psychological sense of security (Khoo-Lattimore & Gibson, 2018, p. 196).

Their perceptions of fear are not necessarily bound in facts, and the participants have developed their own ranking system of what is safe and not (Jordan & Gibson, 2005, p. 202). Countries that are more similar to their own seems safer and easier than going on their own to an unfamiliar location, and the perceptions of danger can be influenced by the participants background, their culture or nationality (Wantono & McKercher, 2019, p. 21). One could question if Europe is familiar to the Asians, but as they mention movies and books being influencers in their destination-choices, Europe then becomes familiar.

It is argued that the experience of solo travel can lead to a feeling of empowerment (Jordan & Gibson, 2005, p. 20), and that the more you face your fears and realize you can overcome them on your own, the more you learn about yourself and become 'fearless' (P6). P3 experienced empowerment after being attacked on a beach. She says she found unexplained power in the moment and got away safe. P10 had a bad experience with a dorm-mate but concludes that this could happen to anyone anywhere as the situation was circumstantial. Most of the participants interviewed say their biggest fear is being scammed or robbed.

Political instability and war are also mentioned as constraints. P1 is not alone about being an American rethinking European travel this year due to the ongoing war in Ukraine (Baratti, L., 2022). When it comes to the participants not mentioning having backpacked in certain areas of the world, the conclusion drawn could be that these areas are perceived as not backpacking friendly, or maybe not solo female travel friendly.

5.4.1. Covid-19

Those who have travelled during the pandemic talks about travel constraints caused by the pandemic. The restrictions in each country could be rapidly changing, like governmental

demands for PCR tests. P3 says she started backpacking as she was not able to start a new job-position due to covid, and P5 stayed in Morocco because it was easier. All the new long-term post-covid backpackers had travelled in many of the same countries, as they were open or had less restrictions. Their transportation booking was mostly very spontaneous due to rapidly changing travel restrictions, P10 saying she booked flights ‘two, three days in advance’, also because the flights were cheap. P6 also says ‘the flights are cheap now’, which the RPD-model indicates should makes it easier to choose plane as a transportation mode.

Conclusion

As Wantono and McKercher (2019, p. 25), this study found that by solo backpacking, the females experience self-development, learn, observe, and understand the world in a new way. Freedom and being able to make your own decisions are often seen as the best part of solo backpacking. Although many research accommodation and excursions beforehand, recommendations from other travellers and from previously used accommodation providers like hostels in the form of word-of-mouth are the most reported decision-making factors, in addition to reading the reviews on OTA’s.

There is a clear distinction between short-term and long-term backpackers, the precedent choice about time away being the differentiating factor, making the short-term backpackers more likely to set out with a starter kit. They almost exclusively use online reviews and book most in advance, while the long-term backpackers put the most trust in word-of-mouth, book transportation spontaneously and book accommodation while in transit to the destination, or directly at the accommodation provider when arriving. All who use excursions decide this at the destination, and word-of-mouth is the main influencer, being from other travellers or from the hostel itself. Hostels and other accommodation providers that cater especially to backpackers should be aware that backpackers are expecting information on excursions and recommendations on similar accommodation providers to be available in the check-in area.

5.5. Limitations and future research

This study used a qualitative method to explore the decision-making of millennial solo female backpackers from anywhere in the world born between 1985 and 1992. It did not focus on people with similar backgrounds, consider the length of time away from home or how far away from home the participants had travelled during their backpacking journeys. Time spent in each location could have been questioned, as some spend longer time at each destination than others. The findings from this study could be used to adopt a quantitative research method and get a larger sample size. Covid has also rapidly changed the way people make travel decisions, and there was limited research to rely on.

Many of the participant did not identify as a typical backpacker. Future research could look into cultures different perception of backpackers and female backpackers. The research is gender-biased, but in this gender-aware age, we need to understand that studies about women are never only studies about women, nor relevant to only women (Hannam & Atljevic, 2008, p. 110). Future research could use a qualitative interview to further investigate the differences in the decision-making processes between short-term and long-term backpackers, and of millennial solo travellers who identify as other genders, to compare the findings.

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Appendix 1.0. Copy of the approval from NSD.

Vurdering

Referansenummer

161065

Prosjekttittel

The decision-making process of Millennial Female Solo Backpackers.

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Universitetet i Stavanger / Det samfunnsvitenskapelige fakultet / Norsk hotellhøgskole

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Fifi Kvalsvik, fifi.kvalsvik@uis.no, tlf: 51831000

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, bachelorstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Ingvild Johanna Framheim Hansen, i.johannahansen@gmail.com, tlf: 45450663

Prosjektperiode

24.03.2022 - 07.04.2022

Vurdering (1)

17.03.2022 - Vurdert

OM VURDERINGEN

Personverntjenester har en avtale med institusjonen du forsker eller studerer ved. Denne avtalen innebærer at vi skal gi deg råd slik at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet ditt er lovlig etter personvernregelverket.

Personverntjenester har nå vurdert den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at behandlingen er lovlig, men du må oppdatere informasjonsskrivet før du starter (se neste avsnitt).

Appendix 2.0. Consent form

Research title

The decision-making process of Millennial Female Solo Backpackers.

Description of the project/Main research question

What is the decision-making process of Millennial Female Solo Backpackers (MFSB), and how do their expectations influence their choice of accommodation, transport, and excursions, both pre-travel and during their trip.

Participant number

Participant name

Interview date

Interview time

- I understand that the participation in this research project is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.
- I have the right to decline to answer any questions or to end the interview.
- I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports when using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.
- I understand that the researcher might publish documents that contain anonymous quotations by me.

- I understand that there are limits to confidentiality; for example, if a participant disclose that they intend to harm themselves or others, the researcher has an obligation to report that to the relevant authorities.
- I have been read the terms and understood the explanation provided to me.
- I agree with the terms indicated above

Appendix 3.0. Participant letter

Dear participant

I am a student enrolled in The Norwegian School of Hotel Management at Stavanger University, and I'm writing my bachelors thesis on millennial solo female backpackers.

I received your name from _____, and I would be most grateful if I could meet with you online. I would like to interview you face-to-face, through your preferred digital medium. I hope you are available sometime in March or April.

I have about 20 questions to ask you about your previous experiences while backpacking, and I'll probably take 45 - 60 minutes of your time.

I appreciate your consideration of my request. The interview is completely anonymous and confidential, and I will be using pseudonyms like "Participant 1" and "Participant 2". The interview will be recorded, but when the interviewing time is over in late April, all recordings will be deleted. I will be the only one handling the information given by you.

If you are available, you may leave a message for me using my information below. Thank you so much and I am looking forward to meeting with you!

Sincerely,

Johanna F. Hansen

Phone/WhatsApp: (+47) 45450663

Email: i.johannahansen@gmail.com

Facebook: Johanna Framheim Hansen

Data protection

You have the right to view the information collected on you and to receive the finished product. You also have the right to complain to the Norwegian data collection authorities if you feel your fundamental rights as an anonymous participants have been violated in any way.

The contact information for the University in Stavanger's head of personal security and data protection is listed below.

Rolf Jegervatn: personvernombud@uis.no

Appendix 4.0. Interview guide

Introduction questions

Determining first questions, used by the researcher to understand if the participant falls within the research segment.

Age

What year were you born?

- >1995
- 1977 - 1995
- <1977

If outside of parameters 1977 - 1995, this is the end of questions.

Have you ever backpacked alone?

- YES
- NO

If NO, this is the end of questions.

Gender

- She/her
- They/them
- Other
- He/him

If They/them or other: Do you identify as female or male in a traveling setting?

If Male, this is the end of questions.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Level of education

What is your highest level of education?

Continent of origin

What is your continent of origin?

Follow up: Country of origin

Travel history

What continents have you backpacked alone?

How many times have you backpacked alone?

What is it you like so much about backpacking?

What is the reason you've chosen to backpack solo?

Follow up: What made you go alone the first time?

Is there something you don't like about backpacking solo?

Do you have a budget when you're backpacking?

Follow up: How do you budget yourself?

What do you think about when I say, "female backpacker"?

IDENTIFYING THE BACKPACKER'S DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Precedent and in situ

If you look back at the previous times you've backpacked solo...

How did you choose the destination/s for your trip/s?

Follow up: "Bucket List" - How did these places end up on your bucket list?

What had you booked before you left home (on your previous trips)?

- a. Air-tickets - how/where?
- b. Pick up/transfer - how/where?
- c. Accommodation - how/where?
- d. Excursions/courses - how/where?

How long have your backpacking journeys been?

Have you ever joined any excursions in your solo backpacker trips?

- a. At what stage in your journey do you book?
- b. How did you get information about the excursions you've been on?
- c. What is the most common way you've gotten information about excursions?

Accommodation

In situ

What type of accommodation have you used while backpacking?

- Do you do any research beforehand?
- On what do you base your decision for accommodation?

Which one of those (accommodations) do you use the most?

When do you book accommodation?

If you could not find a (*most used accommodation*) in the destination you want to go to, what would you do?

Transportation

In situ

What type of transportation have you used for traveling from one destination to another while backpacking? (How do you travel from A to B)?

Which one of those modes of transportation do you use the most?

When do you book transportation?

What if there is no (*most used transport*) that goes to the destination you want to go to, what do you do?

Final questions

Thank you so much for answering all my questions so far. We are almost done; I only have a few final questions to wrap up this interview...

Do you see yourself as a typical backpacker?

1. How would you describe yourself as a backpacker?

Do you really travel alone, or do you travel with other backpackers in groups formed on the road?

1. What percentage would you say when it comes to being alone vs. being with other backpackers?

What backpacking trips would you recommend?