

## *Chapter 4*

# ***Sustainability Research and Backpacker Studies: Intersections and Mutual Insights***

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### **Introduction**

The potential for sustainability research and backpacker studies to influence one another is explored in this chapter. Each area of analysis is considered with a particular focus on the conceptual development and style of the work and its current directions. The questions about the potential for influencing future studies are asked in both directions viz. how can backpacker research contribute to sustainability discussions and how can sustainability analysis shape research into backpacking? It will be argued that there are a number of easily identified contributions in each direction, in particular more studies of the impacts of backpacker behaviour and more studies of the corporate sustainability status of backpacker businesses. The possibilities for mutual influence extend beyond these direct liaisons. In particular the kinds of insights about non-compliance behaviour undertaken in backpacker health offer insights into non-compliance in the sustainability domain. Importantly this kind of work marries two territories of backpacker studies – sociological and utilitarian or market-oriented routes. Additionally the potential to create global archives of studies for meta-analysis and data mining can also be identified as a consequence of considering the intersection of backpacker studies and sustainability research. Overall the mutual insights that a joint consideration of these two areas generates builds the promise of enlivening and even transforming future backpacker studies.

This chapter thus addresses a large and ambitious agenda. It seeks to identify the potential for sustainability research and backpacker studies to influence one another. Two large-scale questions direct this agenda – how

do and can backpacker studies contribute to sustainability discussions? And, conversely, how can issues in sustainability analysis shape new research into backpacking? There are two preliminary discussions that are necessary to prepare for these questions. It is necessary to clarify and contextualise backpacker studies including contemporary directions in this area. A second preliminary discussion requires the style and the diversity of effort in sustainability studies to be established.

### **Backpacker Studies: A Phenomenon Defined and Deconstructed**

In my 1990 social definition of what it means to be a backpacker (Pearce, 1990), a number of key social and behavioural characteristics of budget-based youth travel were identified in an attempt to capture the essence of the emerging backpacker phenomenon. In this socially based definition five criteria are used: the first as a necessary condition and the remaining four as strong indicators of the backpacker phenomenon. The five criteria are

- (1) a preference for budget accommodation;
- (2) an emphasis on meeting other travellers;
- (3) an independently organised and flexible travel schedule;
- (4) longer rather than very brief holidays; and
- (5) an emphasis on informal and participatory holiday activities (Pearce, 1990).

This social definition and labelling was a point of departure from previous budget traveller analyses. It introduced the new term to the academic literature and in a modest way directed government and policy attention to an emerging specialist market. It was also argued that the newly labelled phenomenon of backpacking had echoes of and roots in the hippie/drifter phenomenon, employment-oriented youth travel, physical health and outdoor adventure seeking behaviours, and travel for personal educational growth and development. This social definition approach to understanding backpackers was subsequently blurred by pragmatic government data collection exercises which used an accommodation-oriented definition. As Slaughter (2004) has argued, the differences in the data and the results they produce are minor rather than substantial in studies using the different approaches.

From a more contemporary perspective there is now a broad consensus among academic researchers that there exist multiple market segments or subgroups of backpackers. This differentiation may reside in

the backpackers' nationality, their gender, their independent or group travel style or, yet again, their working, holiday-only or student role (Richards & Wilson, 2004a). Additionally, a variety of motivational and attitudinal segmentations have been emphasised (Richards & Wilson, 2004b; West, 2005). This recognition of diversity in the backpacker market does not negate the value of the original definition but it does draw attention to the purpose and direction of contemporary backpacker studies. Hence, Cohen (2004: 57) argued forcefully that:

Future research should desist from referring to backpacking as if it were a homogenous phenomenon and should pay much more attention to its diverse manifestations... There is also a need for a reorientation of research on backpackers from the currently prevalent concern with their itineraries, travelling style and interactions to a more emic and reflexive approach concerned with the manner in which they themselves construct, represent and narrate their experiences.

As we plot the present course and the future directions of backpacking research it can certainly be agreed that there has been a restricted geographical and nationality range in much of the published literature. Studies of travellers from the UK, Europe, Israel, Australia and New Zealand travelling to South Asia, South-east Asia and Australasia are indeed dominant. While there are numerous North American backpackers in the relevant destinations, the term backpacker itself remains largely unrecognised in the USA, where it is reserved for specialist hiking and wilderness recreation (Manning, 1999). The backpacker phenomenon in its subtly diverse forms is also present in Southern Africa and throughout South and Central America, as well as in Europe itself. Studies from scholars in these areas and about backpacking in these locations are under-represented in the existing canons of inquiry (cf. Visser, 2004).

There is, however, a little more to the exhortation by Cohen to diversify backpacker studies than simply expanding the nationalities and geographic regions of analysis. In particular he argues for a redirection of effort and emphasises emic and reflexive approaches to the backpackers' social construction and narration of experience. This view is also consistent with emerging trends in the theoretical treatment of backpacker research (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004). More generally this attention to emic and reflexive studies raises a fundamental issue in tourism research

overall and one that is clearly manifested in backpacker studies: it is the issue of the two roads or territories of tourism study (cf. Franklin, 2003; Pearce, 2005; Tribe, 1997).

One road in backpacker studies has emphasised and concentrates on the economic contribution of backpacking, an analysis of markets, product design and operational issues in managing this travel style. It is a part of the territory of tourism fully aligned to Gunn's (1994: 3) definition as follows: 'Tourism research, while no substitute for superior management practices, provides objective, systematic, logical and empirical foundations for such management.'

A second road in backpacker studies leading to the second territory of tourism research lies in emphasising the meaning backpackers attribute to their activities and encounters. This kind of work, and it is the kind of study advocated by Cohen, concentrates on identity and personal growth, on social relationships and their consequences for the visited community and environment. It offers a small link to the territory of sustainability, which will be explored presently.

Each style of backpacker research has its own language. In industry- and government-oriented analyses researchers write about market characteristics, product development, market differentiation, information influences, travel, routes, activity participation and expenditure patterns (Buchanan & Rossetto, 1997; Richards & Wilson, 2004a). For the more sociologically oriented territory, researchers deal with conceptual analyses featuring rites of passage, identity markers, pilgrimage liminality, roles and deviance (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004; Richards & Wilson, 2004b; West, 2005).

At this point, I will simply note that this demarcation of the two territories is not absolute but a substantial tension and difference in style does exist. In a later section the argument will be developed that an emphasis on long-term sustainability offers the prospect of aligning the joint contributions of these territories of backpacker (and more broadly tourism) studies.

Many of these summary points about backpacker definitions and the deconstruction of the topic are undoubtedly relatively familiar to backpacker researchers and readers. While there is clearly much current activity in the backpacker study area, as manifested by a number of books, conferences and the forthcoming special issue of *Tourism Recreation Research*, the possibility of injecting new dimensions into backpacker research offers further possibilities for developing the area.

### **Sustainability Studies: Power, Philosophy and Frameworks**

The emergence of sustainability as a key political topic and an area of study and research arose at almost the same time as the early backpacker studies. The defining approaches and the foundation agenda were set in the late 1980s but, as was the case with the backpacker studies, there were substantial roots in earlier formulations. As a major point of departure from backpacker studies, which are in essence studies of a specialist market segment in one sector of the economy, albeit an important one, sustainability studies are generalist and cross-sector and reach beyond markets to enterprises and corporations.

An appreciation of the evolution of public and scientific concern about sustainability can be readily gauged from Table 4.1 where the macro-political stage informing sustainability is presented. In Table 4.2 a sample of some better known authors contributing to sustainability concerns is documented.

The influences on sustainability research are indeed diverse but there is much congruence in the definitions of the topic. The major definitions of sustainability mostly exist as a part of definitions of sustainable development. Two key statements summarise much of the emphasis. The document 'World Commission on Environment and Development. Our Common Future', commonly referred to as the Brundtland report, advises: 'Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCEO, 1987: 8).

In a similar style the World Business Council on Sustainable Development (2004: 1) observes: 'Sustainable development involves the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality and social equity. Companies aiming for sustainability need to perform not against a single, financial bottom line but against the triple bottom line'. The triple bottom line formulation derives from the work of Elkington (1997) and his imaginatively entitled book *Cannibals with Forks*; a metaphor for civilising the excesses and impacts of big business.

Several points implicit in these definitions are worthy of further emphasis. First, there are fundamental notions of multifaceted outcomes in the sustainability definitions and literature. Second, sustainability can be conceived as a moving target, a desired goal for the striving of human effort rather than a well defined tangible state. Sustainability is therefore linked to a position of learned optimism in that small efforts matter and make progress towards a goal (Seligman, 1998). Third, the focus in the

**Table 4.1** Key institutional events guiding the sustainability agenda

1. The reports to the Club of Rome (early 1960s) that stressed a limit to growth approach and quite pessimistic predictions about energy and fossil fuel shortages.
2. The Worldwatch Institute begins publication of annual State of the World reports and Vital Signs report. – In 1981 Brown (the Worldwatch Institute Director and principal author) provided the first definition of sustainability.
3. Reports on international development (such as the 'Brandt' report (Independent Commission on International Development Issues, 1980)) highlighted the growing differentiation between north (affluent) and south (less developed) countries.
4. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1980 established sustainable development as a policy consideration.
5. The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCEO, 1987), known as the Brundtland report, focussed on sustainable economic growth. – Brundtland's definition of sustainability is the base for many modified definitions.
6. Business Council on Sustainable Development, 1993, continued the themes of integrating economic and ecological well-being.
7. The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 with its non-binding resolutions – the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 provided guidelines for regions and businesses.
8. A follow-up Earth Summit + 5 in New York in 1997.
9. The Kyoto Protocol – a United Nations framework convention on climate change in Japan, 1997.
10. The South African Millennium declaration in Johannesburg 2000 outlining millennium development goals – included sustainability as one of the goals (poverty reduction, education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, AIDS/HIV control and business– government partnerships were other goals).

sustainability literature arising from these definitions and roots is on the performance of the organisation, enterprise or corporation. This is in marked contrast to the backpacker literature, where the consumer and the individual, or at least groups of individuals, occupy most research attention. Consumers or customers are not ignored in the sustainability

**Table 4.2** Some early key authors identifying sustainability-linked topics

• Rachel Carson (1962) – popularised the need to caretake ecological systems
• Barry Commoner (1966) – advocate for grass roots environmental movements
• Paulo Friere (1966) – demands for social equity, justice, fairness and educational opportunity
• Garret Hardon (1968) – identified the commons dilemma – resources overused with no responsibility
• Ernest Schumacher (1973) – popularised small is beautiful – rejected unrestricted growth
• Fritjof Capra (1982) – global crisis of world’s resources identified
• Joseph Sax (1980) – argued for the intrinsic value of little altered landscapes
• Ralph Nader (1980) – advocated consumer rights and social responsibility of corporations
• Edward Wilson (1980) – proposed sociobiology – the interdependence of human life and its biological roots
• Stephen Jay Gould (1990) – advocated biological science and humanities as joint paths to understanding human existence
• John Elkington (1997) – developed the triple bottom line approach to sustainability

literature and there is a body of work on ‘green’ consumers, but the emphasis is modest compared to the corporation or business enterprise focus (Dunphy & Benveniste, 2000; Font, 2001).

The achievements of research and analysis in the sustainability literature can be classified under the themes of establishing frameworks, providing reporting standards, developing indicators, constructing codes of practice and identifying pathways and processes to foster sustainability. Additionally there are some subtle contributions and achievements in understanding the communication of ideas that arise from a consideration of this field. Each of these research outcomes will be summarised succinctly. It is notable that the evidence or style of work that has developed these outcomes is largely a combination of case studies, archival work and inductive reasoning. Much of the contemporary state of sustainability writing could be characterised as descriptive and offering frameworks rather than being theoretically or empirically driven.

The first of the sustainability achievements lies in providing category schemes to define the sustainability behaviours of organisations. The work of Dunphy and Benveniste (2000) is a good example of the approach. Six phases of corporate sustainability are recognised and are summarised in Table 4.3

As well as providing a category scheme to characterise the practices of an organisation at any one point in time, these kinds of schemes can also track the evolution of organisations over time. For example, the International Porter Protection Group and Tourism Concern – a network of people with a social justice agenda in the UK – combined to make the rights of mountain porters a hot topic for Western-based trekking companies. This kind of pressure has arguably moved many of the trekking companies from early positions of rejection and non-responsiveness to compliance/risk reduction and in some instances strategic sustainability and ideological commitment.

A fundamental topic in the sustainability literature is the utilisation and development of a variety of reporting systems; that is systems where organisations communicate achievements to their stakeholders not just in financial terms but in sociocultural and environmental dimensions. Such systems include what McIntosh *et al.* (2003) have labelled the Global Eight: The United Nations' Global Compact, International Labour Organisation conventions, the OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises, the International Standards Organization (ISO) 1400 Series, the Global Reporting Initiatives, the Global Sullivan principles, Social Accountability 8000 and Accountability 1000. All these reporting systems have principles and then specific standards. The former are over-reaching values and the latter are sets of benchmarks to be attained. Several types of benchmarks are possible and embrace processes (such as the development of quality assurance management systems), performance standards (what a company should do, such as pay a living wage), foundation standards (such as identifying and establishing best practices) and certification standards (meet the standards established by the sector's leading body).

The development of indicators of performance has been an important part of the work underpinning the Global Fight and, further, the articulation of sustainability indicators has spread to encompass the activities of smaller businesses as well as global corporations. In the tourism field, for example, the World Tourism Organization (2004) has produced a plethora of potential, if at times imprecise, indicators for assessing the sustainable development of a tourism destination. This kind



**Table 4.3** Six phases of corporate sustainability (after Dunphy & Benveniste, 2000)

Phase 1. Rejection
• Environment is regarded as a free good to be exploited
• Hostility to environmental activities
• Production and extraction processes destroy future capacity or damage the ecosystem
• Polluting by-products are discharged
• Employees and subcontractors are regarded as a resource to be used
• 'Lip service' to health and safety issues
• Compliance required of workforce backed up by threats/force
• Little training; few career prospects for employees
• Minimal community concerns
Phase 2. Non-responsiveness
• Ecological environment not considered as a relevant input
• Financial and technological factors dominate business strategy
• Efficiency rules
• Environmental resources wasted and costs not considered
• Training in technical area only
• Wider social responsibility and community concern is ignored
Phase 3. Compliance/risk reduction
• Senior management see the need to comply with environmental laws
• Attempt to limit liability of enterprise
• Obvious environmental abuses eliminated
• Employer seen as a decent employer
• Efforts at safety workplace standards appear
• Organisation practises benevolent paternalism
• Awareness that negative community publicity may be harmful so some community concerns addressed

Table 4.3 (Continued)
Phase 4. Efficiency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor environmental practice seen as an avoidable cost</li> <li>• Review of environmental inputs and waste to minimise expenditure in these areas</li> <li>• Environmental issues that do not generate avoidable costs tend to be ignored (e.g. aesthetics)</li> <li>• ISO 14001 procedure may be in place (International Standards Organisation approach for reporting core environmental management practices)</li> <li>• Coherent HR systems practised</li> <li>• Team work of staff acknowledged and training begins</li> <li>• Funding of community projects with a positive return for the company</li> </ul>
Phase 5. Strategic sustainability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive environmental strategies seen as a strategic advantage</li> <li>• Product redesign to reuse/recycle materials</li> <li>• Environmental outputs are engineered to be useful</li> <li>• Competitive leadership sought through spearheading environmentally friendly products and processes</li> <li>• Workforce diversity sought and used</li> <li>• Intellectual and social capital seen as a strategic advantage</li> <li>• Flexible workplace to maximise talent use</li> <li>• Community-enterprise partnerships to address adverse impacts</li> </ul>
Phase 6. Ideological commitment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisation becomes an active promoter of sustainability</li> <li>• Environmental best practice is espoused</li> <li>• Organisation thinks about sustainability throughout its entire operation and product range</li> <li>• Organisation uses its influence with government to promote positive sustainability</li> </ul>

Table 4.3 (Continued)
• Organisation accepts responsibility for upgrading human knowledge and skill
• Strong promoter of workplace diversity and work/life balance
• Has a corporate ethical position and action plan to pursue human welfare and equitable and socially just practices

of work lies within the ambit of the broader sustainability literature on reporting systems and indicators.

A slightly more sector-focussed approach to sustainability can also be identified in the development of codes of conduct and practice. Typically codes of conduct are self-regulatory rules and advice initiated and sanctioned by a group of businesses or a sector. Codes encourage participating members to both take a leadership role in managing sustainability issues and to build a collective identity of responsibility. The self-regulation works through peer pressure and status determinants, the threat of government regulation and perceptions of business advantages and reduced costs compared to forced compliance or litigation. A criticism of codes of conduct lies in the persistence of some manipulative and promotional claims that are not substantiated by audited assessments of performance. Additionally, self-reports of code implementation may mask practices that are invisible to external stakeholders (Carraro & Leveque, 1999; Lennox & Nash, 2003; Paton, 2000).

A further dimension in the sustainability domain lies in identifying pathways and processes, that is key management mechanisms and ordered steps to promote more viable businesses with more positive environmental and sociocultural outcomes. Examples of such systems include the multiple indicator based system for the chemical industry entitled 'Responsible Care' and the action-oriented but scientifically based systems approach called 'The Natural Step' used particularly in Scandinavian hotels (McIntosh *et al.*, 2003).

On a slightly different level of analysis, sustainability research also directs attention to the sociopolitical dimensions of communication concerning scientific research. Lomberg (2001) notes that in communicating research findings about this whole topic area there is a powerful and all-pervasive litany about the environment and human society. According to Lomberg the litany is that everyone knows the planet is in bad shape and we live in an ever deteriorating environment. Lomberg

argues that while many resources and social systems are troubled, much of the pervasive view is not backed up by evidence. He suggests six points of emphasis that amount to a reminder to all researchers in all areas of activity, including backpacker studies, to process information mindfully rather than mindlessly. Lomberg notes the following important distinctions in his myth-busting approach.

- (1) Let us really look at what the overall statistics say and not focus on one or two cases.
- (2) Let us look at the original examples of the 'evidence' and see how accurate they are, or how limited and circumscribed they were before being endlessly requoted and cited.
- (3) Saying that the ecosystems' and man's lot are improved is *not* the same as saying it is good enough – but being able to establish that things are improving (e.g. fewer people starving) is different and more optimistic and more constructive in terms of work to be done than saying it is all getting worse.
- (4) We need to look at the scientific evidence, not the media reports, as the media is predisposed to report 'news' and negativity.
  - It is the communication of our environmental knowledge which is one core of the problem.
  - It is not being suggested that the primary research in the environmental field is incompetent or unprofessional.
  - The communication of environmental knowledge taps deeply into 'doomsday', overly dramatic accounts of the state of the world.
  - Environmental organisations, Worldwatch Institute, Greenpeace and the World Wide Fund for Nature, individual commentators and the media do exaggerate and distort the evidence.
- (5) The litany, now that it is established, has its own 'life'. It is a social representation, an organised system of shared everyday knowledge, so we 'know' that the environment is not in good shape, making it all the more possible for people to make erroneous claims without evidence. For this reason (our existing social representation) we also tend to be extremely sceptical towards anyone who says the environment is not in such a bad state.
- (6) The efficiency of interventions – what we do – to make enterprises more sustainable should be based on a rational critical approach to the factual data, not on presumed, topical, myth-based news items.

In summary, the sustainability literature has a markedly different character to that of backpacker studies. In particular it is built on many

disciplinary contributions; it identifies in particular the roles of corporations and businesses but less so consumers; it is replete with organising schemes, systems and frameworks; and it is linked to major sociopolitical and communication processes. It is now the task of this chapter to explore how the two areas of inquiry intersect and could benefit each other.

### **Backpacking Research: A Contribution to Sustainability Discussions**

One way to conceive of the contribution of backpacker studies to sustainability discussions is to view backpackers as an indicator group, reflecting global consumer attitudes to sustainability. In the numerous biophysical analyses pertaining to ecological systems, environmental scientists search for indicator species, effectively those organisms which are a touchstone or pulse for revealing the state of environmental well-being. In the social domain backpackers are a globally interconnected group spanning a well defined age range and can be seen as reflecting international public awareness and the practice of sustainability concerns as they manifestly play out a battle between personal pleasure and more civic responsibilities. As Hampton (1998) and Scheyvens (2002) have argued, backpackers can facilitate local development or generate problems for local communities. In their attitudes and behaviours in such domains as willingness to spend money, use of resources, sensitivity to local customs, sexual behaviour and respect for local regulations, backpackers manifest the values of a global young adult culture. The view that monitoring backpacker attitudes and behaviour in different locations and across time as an indicator of the penetration of a global sustainability ethic represents a large-scale opportunity for backpacker studies to relate to sustainability research.

In addition to backpackers being seen as an indicator group, the study of backpackers highlights the importance of the close analysis of meaning in determining actual on-site behaviour. The emphasis of many researchers in the backpackers studies area places a premium on the meaning of self-esteem and ego protection functions arising from social and environmental encounters amongst backpackers and their hosts and settings. This close analysis as an important area of study in business research in general has been boosted by the writing of Pine and Gilmore (1999), whose work on *The Experience Economy* has effectively stressed the value of the sociological and psychological appraisals for contemporary business and problem-solving concerns. The sustainability

literature is limited in its analysis of experience, either of decision makers or consumers. Further, one of the enduring problems in fostering sustainability lies in understanding non-compliance, that is, why people and organisations do not behave sustainably. There are parallel problems in the backpacker literature, notably non-compliance in terms of responsible sexual behaviour and practices. The latter topic has generated a considerable literature driven by the significant medical and public health consequences of sexually transmittable diseases (Clift & Carter, 2000; Clift & Grabowski, 1997; Clift & Page, 1996).

An important achievement of this focus of attention on analysing experience in the backpacker and sexual behaviour arena lies in understanding, through qualitative techniques, the reasons for much non-compliance, especially the lack of condom use, in tourists' sexual encounters. As Black (2000) and Clift and Carter (2000) report, reasons for non-compliant behaviour in this domain are now being clearly articulated, with important implications for changing public communication health campaigns. The predisposing reasons for the non-use of condoms appear to lie in inexperience, disrupting immediate behavioural and emotional sequences, the difficulty of negotiating the use of the product, and reputation and identity concerns (cf. Abdullah *et al.*, 2004; Bellis *et al.*, 2005; Egan, 2001). There is a ready translation of this kind of work, if not in the actual content or findings, to non-compliance in sustainability analyses, raising the prospect of enhancing our close understanding of how to better achieve community and environmental conservation goals. Detailed qualitative appraisals of why people do not comply with desirable sustainable behaviours would appear to be a profitable borrowing from one research domain to the other.

### **Sustainability Research: Shaping New Research in Backpacking**

There is also some reciprocity in the roles sustainability research can play in backpacker studies. It was established in the review of sustainability that there has been a strong focus on organisations in the existing literature. In particular there are clear sustainability reporting systems classifications of organisational performance. There is a ready transfer of this kind of emphasis for backpacker researchers who can develop the somewhat neglected task of assessing how backpacker-linked businesses fit sustainability guidelines. The range and number of backpacker activities and the organisations that provide these settings and experience is extensive and offers considerable scope for regional

studies, benchmarking of performance across subsectors and international comparisons (Becken *et al.*, 2001; Thyne *et al.*, 2006; Visser, 2004). This emphasis reaches beyond backpacker accommodation establishments, which has been one starting point of concern (Firth & Hing, 1999).

A larger implication of the sustainability research for backpacker studies derives from the availability of data informing global reporting and assessment systems (cf. Lomberg, 2001). A particular feature of the sustainability literature, which is being developed, lies in the construction of standards and assessment systems for benchmarking and comparing data. This emphasis was described in the previous review under the discussion of the Group of Eight reporting systems. An implication of this emphasis for backpacking studies lies in the topic of data warehousing and data mining. More specifically, the potential can be seen to create a substantial global archive of data and information about backpackers. This kind of facility would assist scholars and analysts to more readily compare studies, to conduct secondary analyses and to do meta-analytic work. It remains a feature of backpacker studies, compared to sustainability research and even some broader tourism market topics, that the existing resources for researchers are limited to their own primary data sets or qualitative immersion experiences buttressed by occasional forays into national data banks. The concept of a backpacker data warehouse is worthy of more extensive consideration.

A third influence that sustainability studies can bring to backpacker research lies in contemplating the rhetoric of public communication about research. It has already been suggested, following the work of Lomberg (2001), that areas of study can develop a litany of the correct or standard way of summarising findings. Typically these kinds of myth-building assertions take place when researchers justify their interest to others, such as in the context of seeking grants and emphasising the economic importance of their work. This communication dimension, the rhetoric of topic justification, permeates the introductions and summaries of many research papers. It is possible to suggest a line of research concerning this justificatory rhetoric in backpacker studies, as demystification of what is said and supposedly agreed on in backpacker research. This challenge could be enacted upon in a number of ways, one of which might be to sample the levels of researcher agreement with up to 10 statements summarising the achievements and findings of all previous work. As with the sustainability literature, the body of knowledge that we think we share and know is always worthy of mindful re-examination.

## **Conclusions**

The generative power of juxtaposing areas of study and seeking to benefit from their mutual intersection has been the guiding style of this analysis. It can be concluded that aligning backpacker studies and sustainability research has consequences and implications for both areas of activity. More specifically, backpacker research can contribute some special insights for the sustainability domain by viewing backpackers as an indicator group for assessing the sustainability agenda. Additionally, the close analysis of experience and non-compliance existing in the backpacker literature could also be used as a style of research for non-compliance in sustainability analyses. Backpacker research itself might be refreshed by a greater focus on the organisational and business level of analysis. Additionally the prospect of constructing a data warehouse for backpacker studies can be identified by analogy with similar macro-level archival reporting efforts at work in the sustainability field. It is also possible to view an analysis of the public rhetoric and the justificatory communication about backpacker research as a topic of study as in the sustainability field this kind of questioning of the accepted litany has been a stimulating force.

The interplay of these concerns also addresses a further issue – the two territories of tourism and backpacker research. It can be suggested here that the continued existence of both of these styles of work is demanded by the new directions outlined above – both the detailed qualitative emic understanding of the phenomenon and the utilitarian etic assessment of its distribution and consequences are important for the expanded future of backpacker studies considered in this chapter.