What makes Southeast Asia attractive to young European backpackers?

Bachelor Thesis for Obtaining the Degree

Bachelor of Business Administration in

Tourism, Hotel Management and Operations

Submitted to Mr. Daniel Leung

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Affidavit

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor's Thesis represents my own written work and that I have used no sources and aids other than those indicated. All passages quoted from publications or paraphrased from these sources are properly cited and attributed.

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Abstract

Since being firstly introduced in Tony Wheeler's (1975) book "Southeast Asia on a shoestring", Southeast Asia has long been becoming one of the most popular destinations and backpacker trails among backpackers in general and young backpackers in particular over the past 30 years. In order to enhance the understanding of "what makes Southeast Asia attractive to European young backpackers", this exploratory study intends to identify motivators and inhibitors of European young backpackers in choosing Southeast Asia as a backpacking destination. Based on the data collected from in-depth interviews with European young backpackers who were reached using the purposive sampling approach, this study also targets to understand the perceived risk and risk reduction strategies by European young backpackers when they decide to visit Southeast Asia as the backpacking destination.

Abbreviations

SEA   Southeast Asia

UNESCO The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

DMO   Destination management organisation

1   Introduction

Over the past few decades, the prominent growth of tourism in Asia and particularly Southeast Asia (SEA) with its derived benefits has been widely documented in both industry and academic literature. According to a survey by The World Tourism Organization (2013), tourism experts generally agree that the strongest growth of tourism will come from Asia and the Pacific region in general as well as SEA in particular. The World Travel & Tourism Council (2015) recently published an economic impact report focusing on SEA in 2014. This report shows that the direct and total contribution of tourism to gross domestic product along with employment and visitor exports has risen and will continue to rise through till 2025. Most of the countries within SEA rely strongly on the tourism industry as a source of income. With the growing amount of tourism spending that benefits Southeast Asian countries, it is important to understand why people find these countries attractive and why they travel there.

With the travel mode of backpacking gaining popularity over the years, the number of backpackers that travel the world yearly has steadily increased. The youth tourism sector is acknowledged to have grown extensively within international tourism (Cooper, Fletcher, Fyall, Gilbert & Wanhill, 2005 as cited in Hunter-Jones, Jeffs & Smith, 2007; Mintel, 2003 as cited in Hunter-Jones et al., 2007). Approximately 20% of all international travel is estimated to derive from the student travel sector (Federation of International Youth Travel Organizations, 2006 as cited in Hunter-Jones et al., 2007). This increase in numbers is inevitably followed by negative consequences. O'Reilly (2006) observed that the backpacking tourism provokes negative affiliations in certain parts of the world. This effect is amplified especially on well-trodden paths like SEA and Australia. Another negative perception about backpackers is the long-travel duration and low-budget which makes them become extreme bargain hunters and hagglers (Goodwin, Kent, Parker & Walpole, 1998; Bradt, 1995 as cited in Scheyvens,

2001). This, however, has been proven false as Australia and New Zealand found that backpackers spend an enlarged volume compared to other tourists due to the long span of travels (Gibbons & Selvarajah, 1994, as cited in Scheyvens, 2001). The growth of backpacking tourism does have positive effects. Backpackers tend to bring higher revenue to remote areas by travelling off the beaten tourist track and purchasing local products and services (Schevyens, 2001). The Tourism Authority of Thailand also welcomes backpackers as they have recognised that revenue brought by backpackers would lead to higher economic contribution and direct economic benefits to the host population (Westerhausen & Macbeth, 2003; Schevyens, 2006 as cited in Paris & Teye, 2010).

Besides being famous for city tourism, as firstly introduced in Tony Wheeler's (1975) book "Southeast Asia on a shoestring", SEA has since become a popular backpacker trail particularly for young tourists. The evolution of these backpacker trails over the years is key for the understanding of backpacking tourism and its importance in SEA. Indeed, SEA as a destination has huge potential for expansion and growth and the topic of backpackers in SEA provides a valuable opportunity for further research into this specific area. Yet, among the existing literature pertinent to backpacking tourism in SEA, there are three major gaps that have not yet been explored thoroughly yet. The first gap is the topic of why backpackers choose the backpacking travel mode. An article written by Hunter-Jones, Jeffs and Smith in 2007 focuses on the risk of travellers when choosing a destination. The article explores travellers' perceived risk, attitude and behaviour when it comes to risks. The findings of the primary research in this study are connected to this article and show close similarities when it comes to risk assessment of travellers. This study therefore intends to further analyse why young people choose the travel characteristics of backpackers. Secondly, to the author's best knowledge, the European Generation Y backpackers has not never been the studied subjects of existing studies on backpacking tourism in

SEA. The subject of Israeli backpackers and their travel behaviour, motivations and risk assessment has been widely researched. However this travel group does not tend to travel to SEA. Additionally, there is an extensive amount of literature focusing on the older age segment of backpackers but Generation Y has not been one of the studied subjects. Li, Li and Hudson (2013) noted and empirically verified that tourism consumer behaviour varies across generations. It is of necessity to explore whether Generation Y-ers share similar or different ideas on backpacking related issues with Generation X-ers and baby boomers. As this study focuses on the Generation Y backpackers residing in European, the findings are expected to complement the existing literature and try to fill the gap in this research area.

Last but not least, although there is a huge body of research on backpacking tourism and behaviours of backpackers in SEA, the question of "why backpackers choose SEA as their destination?" has not been explored. There is a considerable amount of research focusing on Australia as a backpacking destination, and a prime example is Loker-Murphy's (1996) work titled "Backpackers in Australia: a motivation-based segmentation study". Yet when it comes to SEA as a destination, the existing body of literature is scant. Hampton (1998) is one of the limited researchers who attempted to examine the characteristics of backpackers that travelled to SEA. Based on a case study with backpackers in Indonesia, he highlighted the benefits backpackers bring to the local community and he further attempted to make suggestions for the government to improve the Indonesian economy when targeting and including backpackers. Several years later, Hampton and Hamzah (2010) conducted another study researching the change of backpacker trails in Asia and identifying reasons to explain these changes. Muzaini is another limited author who investigated backpacking tourism in SEA. His article about strategies to "looking local" in SEA, however, focuses on the behaviour of backpackers when they travel to SEA (Muzaini, 2006).

Specifically, this study targets to achieve three research objectives. Firstly, it intends to identify the motivators and inhibitors of European young backpackers in choosing SEA as a backpacking destination. The question of "what makes Southeast Asia attractive to European backpackers" is the core subject of this study. Secondly, this study tries to understand European young backpackers' perceived risks of backpacking in SEA and their awareness of these risks. Lastly, this study aims to identify possible risk reduction strategies employed by European young backpackers when deciding to choose SEA as their backpacking destination. Drawing on the content analysis of qualitative data solicited from in-depth interviews with young backpackers residing in different European countries, the findings of this study are expected to benefit multiple parties. On one hand, the study would benefit the destination management organisations (DMOs) in SEA as the research findings will show the strengths and weaknesses SEA has compared to other backpacking destinations. This is expected to be helpful to DMOs in improving the effectiveness of their destination marketing program towards young backpackers from Europe. On the other hand, the risk reduction strategies advised by interviewees would provide prospective backpackers with hints about precautionary actions they could take prior to travelling, as well as to inform the corresponding DMOs of actions they could take in order to attract backpackers from Europe and also improve their backpacking experience.

After introducing the research background, the following chapter will synthesize knowledge in three areas which are relevant to the current study: (1) the backpacking literature will focus on motivations and values of a backpacker and their risk assessment; (2) the definition of backpacker tourism in SEA and lastly, (3) the characteristics of the European Generation Y sector when it comes to travelling will be examined. The methodology chapter will provide detailed descriptions about the data collection and data analysis method. The findings chapter presents and discusses the results

from in-depth interviews. The concluding chapter summarises the combined findings and connects the author's primary research to the literature review.

2   Literature Review

2.1   Backpacking tourism

2.1.1   Definitions and characteristics of backpackers

As already established in the introduction chapter, the literature on the topic of backpackers, their motivators, characteristics and destination choice of SEA is sparse. This study intends to fill the three prominent gaps in the literature. To understand who falls into the group of backpackers, one has to seek out clear definition and understand the origin of the term "backpacker". In the academic context, backpackers are also described as drifters, long-term travellers, independent travellers or budget travellers. In 1973, Cohen created the term "drifter" although this term has not stuck and is no longer accurate. There is a clear distinction between outward- and inward-oriented drifters. The first one represents those who travel to far locations and live with locals while the second one refers to those who seek out enclaves to meet people of their own kind (Cohen, 1973). During the 1970s, the "Vermassung" which essentially is the mass evolution of drifters that are travelling led to a change in the definition and terms (Cohen, 1973). The definite term "backpacker" was firstly coined by Pearce (1990) in his book titled "The backpacker phenomenon: preliminary answers to basic questions".

Although numerous researchers have attempted to define backpackers, there is still no conclusive definition of a backpacker. The term was initially generated to find an intermediate between the existing definitions of "drifter" and "budget traveller" (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000, p. 131). The Oxford Dictionary (Oxford Dictionary, 2010) defines a backpacker as "a person who travels or hikes carrying their belongings in a rucksack". This definition shows clear limitations to it and does not necessarily define what character traits a backpacker holds. O'Reilly (2006) declared that

backpackers are not a homogenous group but can be divided according to three characteristics, which are (1) the length of travel, (2) the mode of travel, and (3) the task of travel. Although he further explains that all backpackers show the trait of having limited planning in advance, no fixed timetable and are open to change plans throughout their stay. Pearce (1990) cautioned that backpackers are primarily defined by (1) preference for budget accommodation, (2) social interactions with other travellers, (3) independence and flexibility, and (4) preference for longer stays.

Existing literature implies that backpackers travel for an extended period of time with a flexible schedule (Cohen, 1972, 1973, 1982; Riley, 1988; Vogt, 1976). Furthermore, Riley (1988) and Teas (1974) characterised them as low-budget travellers. This indicates that backpackers generally eat in low-priced restaurants, stay at inexpensive hotels and use public transport (Cohen, 1972, 1973; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Vogt, 1976). Existing literature further provides that backpackers have a pursuit for adventure, seek unique experiences and see themselves as travellers rather than tourists (Cohen, 1972, 1973; Riley, 1988; Vogt, 1976). Cohen (2003) noted that backpackers spend a significant amount of time in backpacker enclaves and only a minor percentage of time was dedicated to travel off the beaten track and interact with locals. There is a clear irony when looking at backpackers as many seek freedom and being on their own and making their own decisions. They want to distinguish themselves from the mass but most of them seem to follow the same plan and the same itinerary which makes them follow the mass once again and defeats their goal (Cohen, 2003). In Western societies, backpacking is often related to life crisis and the transition between youth and adulthood. Backpacking serves as "time out" from pursuing a career although Cohen stated that it is not a mission to change their way of living (Cohen, 1979).

Contemporary backpackers mostly travel alone or in pairs however they do tend to connect with other backpackers to form non-lasting groups

(Murphy, 2001). Outward-oriented drifters appreciate the interaction with locals however this interaction is not as important as the interaction and connection to other likeminded backpackers (Cohen, 2003; Murphy, 2001). Seeing as backpackers travel on a budget one might come to the conclusion that the revenue created by them would be less than ordinary tourists however as backpackers travel for a longer period of time the amount of income they bring to the destinations is higher (Gibbons & Selvarahjah, 1994 as cited in Schevyens, 2001). Sorensen highlighted that backpackers are more a "socially constructed identity than a clearly defined category" (Sorensen, 2003 as cited in O'Reilly, 2006). Uriely, Yonay and Simchai (2002) and Maoz (2007) both ascertained that backpackers cannot be grouped into a homogeneous sector.

Cohen (2003) commented that the backpacker phenomenon was particularly scarcely researched as it lacked the support of the tourism industry. The earliest articles dedicated to the topic of backpackers appeared in the 1970s, by Cohen in 1973 and Vogt in 1976. From the 1980s onwards the interest in backpackers on an academic level picked up and Cohen, Riley, Maoz, Loker-Murphy & Pearce and Westerhausen are commonly found writers of publications in this area. The change in the nature of backpacking is closely linked to the rapid changes in tourism (Cohen, 2003). With the growth of travel and tourism, the topic of backpackers becomes of importance. Some countries struggled to understand the potential this sector has to the income of a country. Cohen stated in 2003 that Thai authorities were hesitant towards backpackers and wanted to develop the luxury sector rather than focus on backpackers (Niyamabha, 2003 as cited in Cohen, 2003).

2.1.2 Backpackers' travel motivations and values

Maslow's (1970) pyramid of the hierarchy of needs is frequently used in different fields such as the consumer behaviour in marketing. It identifies five different classes of needs that a person has, and they are physiological

needs, safety needs, belongingness and love needs, self-esteem needs and the need of self-actualisation. In tourism this pyramid is often used to describe or explain how travellers move around according to their needs. Maslow (1970) believed that people are motivated by unknown things and facing new situations can trigger new motivation. The conclusion in this thinking is that more experienced travellers have a higher motivation.

Another model which is often used for understanding travellers' travel motivations is the Travel Career Ladder, which was introduced in 1988 by Pearce and revised in 2005 to the Travel Career Pattern (Pearce, 2005). Pearce (2005) declared that there are four dominant travel motivations, which are novelty, self-development, relationship and escapism. Besides the above four, motivators such as meeting locals appear for experienced travellers while security and recognition are present for inexperienced travellers. Despite its extensive applicability, criticism about this framework appeared arguing that age and previous experience are not necessary for basic travel motivation. Furthermore, motivators are basic push and pull factors. Push factors are factors that make the tourist leave their current environments where the main motivation lies on the wish to experience and see something new whereas pull factors attract tourists to come to a certain destination. A common motivation for travelling is the search for authenticity which is repeatedly used by several authors. MacCannell (1999) defined authenticity as the travellers need to search and experience something different. He further stated that modern tourists see society with a lack of authenticity which pushes him to search for authenticity in other places. Backpackers therefore exist in a deeper authentic life than other tourists. Other common motivators amongst backpackers are cheap prices of accommodations and the possibility to interact with others.

Travel motivations for backpackers are of different nature for every individual however there are a few clear motivators that all backpackers tend to show. Self-development plays a major role in backpacking as most people

tend to go on a backpacking trip in a time of crisis or a time of transition in their life (Cohen, 2003). The majority of young people today are keen on seeing the world and other surroundings than what they are used to. Different cultures and languages may prove as an obstacle to some though some see this as a challenge. A number of motivators why respondents chose backpacking as their travel method were identified in a study by Speed (2007). He interviewed 374 respondents and the outcome showed that the majority of respondents chose experiencing new cultures as their main reason to go backpacking. Other reasons that were repeatedly mentioned were to get away from it all, the search for authentic experiences, to experience beautiful scenery, to meet local communities and to "find themselves".

Cohen stated that backpackers are mostly interested in their own amusement and experience (Cohen, 2003). They do engage regularly with other backpackers although this is mostly on a superficial basis with the constant changing enclave members. The hostels and backpacker enclaves build a familiar environment much like home to make backpackers feel welcome. With these emerging mass tourism enclaves' backpackers today require less skills and effort during their trip than earlier drifters (Cohen, 1973). Freedom is another major motivator for young people to go travelling. New experiences and lesser restrictions or boundaries than they have to engage with at home in their usual environment are also positive factors for backpacking (Cohen, 2003). Hallab, Price and Fournier (2006) conducted a study about travel motivations by students and concluded that the respondents' motivators and influences included price, security, scenery, accessibility, food, accommodation and entertainment.

2.1.3 Backpackers' risk assessment

Risk assessment is based on the perception and reaction of an individual when risks occur, the way people respond to possible hazards and

analyse certain situations. Possible risks are health and safety risks or crime which can be anticipated by people (Hunter-Jones et al., 2007). With backpacking increasing in popularity, the negative effects and overall attention to backpacking related risks has risen (Hunter-Jones et al., 2007). Elsrud (2001) stated that backpackers are aware of the possible risks of travelling but search for these in terms of adventure. The structure of backpacking tourism appears to involve a certain amount of risk and adventure.

Buckley (2004 as cited in Hunter-Jones et al., 2007) states that people react differently to natural disasters and health risks after he analysed tourist arrivals after the happening of Hurricane Ivan in the Caribbean and the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak in East Asia. In the study that Hunter-Jones et al. (2007) undertook, the authors found out that backpackers with prior experience were more inclined to research travel risks than travellers without prior experience who trust package tour operators. Furthermore, the study showed that health concerns were a significant risk factor for all respondents. The authors categorised the responses into "everyday types of hazards" and "crisis situations" where the distinction between the two types of risks was primarily happening sub-consciously. Perceived risks can be derived from triggers like pre-travel influences, war and political instability, health, crime and terrorism and the influence of natural disasters. Hunter-Jones et al. (2007) noted that war was the most significant influencer when it comes to destination choice, while natural disaster had little impact on the travel decision. Mintel (2003) however claimed that major crises "such as SARS and the Iraqi war had no impact upon travel aspirations".

Hunter-Jones et al. (2007) claimed that backpackers, especially younger representatives are a high-risk group seeing as they are "more vulnerable due to their age, attitudes, naivety and generally low levels of experience as travellers" (p. 238). An article written by authors in the

Department of Clinical Tropical Medicine and Hospital for Tropical Diseases in 2010 was dedicated to the increased risk of rabies exposure for people in SEA (Piyaphanee, Shantavasinkul, Phumratanaprapin, Udomchaisakul, Wichianprasat, Benjavongkulchai, Ponam & Tantawichian, 2010). The rabies virus is transmitted after being licked or bitten by infected animals. After conducting a questionnaire-based study in a busy backpacker area in Bangkok, the authors found that only 18% had had pre-exposure vaccines before their travels. Among those 70% who had not had vaccines, some stated the reason was that the price of the vaccines was too high. Some were unaware of the risk of the virus or they found the vaccine unnecessary. The study showed that majority of backpackers did not know how dangerous the virus was and how it was transmitted. Nevertheless all travellers are at risk of catching this disease which is mostly fatal once symptoms develop.

2.2   Backpacking tourism in SEA

Geographically situated in Asia between China and Australia, SEA is made up of eleven countries that are subdivided into the mainland of SEA and maritime SEA. The mainland is commonly referred to as Indo-china and the countries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. The maritime region of SEA spans across Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and the new nation of East Timor (Nations Online, 2015). During the World War II, SEA was under attack in the war against Japan and the Pacific War occurred in Asia with all countries in SEA being former colonies (The War Time Journal, 2013). During 1975 to 1979, Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge led Cambodia under a communist movement in order to attempt a classless peasant society killing approximately 7 million people (History, 2009). Due to the happening of wars and other horrific activities, there are still a large number of undetonated landmines that are of imminent danger for the inhabitants and backpackers. Given that SEA contains a

number of different countries with different influences from prior colonialism, there is a vast number of religious beliefs and ethnic groups in SEA. Islam is the most widely represented religion in SEA accounting for approximately 40% of the whole population (McCarthy, 2015). Countries practising Islam are Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia and the Southern Philippines. Buddhism is largely exercised in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos Vietnam and Singapore whereas Christianity is practised mostly in the Philippines, Eastern Indonesia and East Timor with a Roman Catholic rate of 96.9% (Central Intelligence Agency, n.d.) due to it being a Portuguese colony from 1702 to 2002. Hinduism is a receding religion in SEA with practisers only found in Bali, Indonesia and Angkor Wat, Cambodia.

Tony Wheeler's book "Southeast Asia on a shoestring" (1975) that was published by the Lonely Planet can be seen as the birthplace of mass backpacking tourism in SEA. During the early 1990s Indochina states were opened to individual travellers which led to a rapid adaption progress of low-budget accommodation (Spreitzhofer, 1998). Hampton and Hamzah (2010) discussed the evolution of backpacker trails in their paper. The hippie trail during the 1970s evolved to the backpacker trail during the 1980s to 1990s which today is the contemporary SEA trail. Looking at the evolution of the trails and comparing the countries, it is clear that long established destinations such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia are still an important part of the SEA trail. Newer Indo-chinese countries such as Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos which were developed during the 1990s as a travel destination became part of the contemporary SEA trail. Australia plays a big factor when looking at these trails as a number of travellers travel through Asia to get there the aim of this being to see more on their trip.

Alex Garland's (1996) novel "The Beach" which was adapted to a movie in 2000 starring Leonardo diCaprio can be seen as a motivation to some to travel to Thailand and experience similar situations. Although the novel was originally written as a criticism of the backpacking culture many

still see this portrait of drugs, sex, parties and the "perfect beach" as a goal to experience the same things. The search for the "perfect beach" and the "untouched exotic" (Spreitzhofer, 1998) are deeply rooted in the goals of backpackers coming to SEA. In controversy of the relatively negative image, "The Beach" displays, Elizabeth Gilbert managed to portrait a completely different aspect of backpacking in Asian countries. In her book Eat Pray Love (Gilbert, 2007), she travels to three different countries in order to find herself after a divorce and low point in her life, Gilbert writes about the tranquillity and calmness of Ubud in Bali, Indonesia. She seeks solitude and takes lessons from a known healer and meditator. This might stand as an inspiration for backpackers that travel to seek self-development as self-actualization or that stand in a crisis in their life. This solitude can be connected to the fact that backpackers like to travel off the beaten path. This anti-touristic behaviour of backpackers avoiding majorly touristy areas but "widening lifespaces by exploring not only unknown geographic areas but also unknown/strange social situations" (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995 as cited in Muzaini, 2006) is relatively common. There even are backpackers that spend months in Australia and fail to travel to Ayers Rock as it is too "touristy" and "cliché".

SEA has various inherent advantages that makes it very attractive for travellers like breath-taking landscapes, the possibility of complete peace and solitude and the bustling of big metropolises, as well as a vast amount of UNESCO heritage sites. The environmental diversity that SEA has to offer is enormous as is the animal world. Orang-utans, elephants, leopards, tigers and the Komodo dragon are just a few of the species inhabiting SEA. The great biodiversity of marine life is another factor that draws attention to travellers. Coral reefs, turtles and swimming with whale sharks in the Philippines can be found on quite a few "bucket-lists" of backpackers coming to SEA. On the grounds that the majority of backpackers originate from the Western cultures, their interest lies on experiencing different cultures (Sorensen, 2003). SEA being an area with a large number of different

countries and therefore different people, cultures, norms and landscapes makes it even more attractive to travellers. SEA is also known for its wild parties, a prime example being the Full Moon Party, especially the one hosted in Koh Phangan, Thailand as it is the biggest and most outrageous. Every month roughly 10,000 to 30,000 people visit the party.

The presence of drugs at these parties is no secret even though the official website clearly states that drugs are illegal in Thailand and consumers will be punished by severe penalties (Full Moon Party Thailand, 2016). Incidents happening at Full Moon Parties are serious - drugs, theft, rape and death are sadly a frequent reoccurrence. The image of these parties has long since lost the glorious reputation it had in the 90s yet every year progressively more people attend. Another party phenomenon similar to the Full Moon Party is Tubing - backpackers (in large numbers) floating down the river on a floating device. The website southeastasiabackpacker.com already draws attention to the next Tubing destination after Vang Vieng in Laos was overcrowded with tubers, which destroyed the image of this experience. After a number of deaths by people drowning, the rowdiness of the backpackers and this event disturbing other tourists and the locals, hearsay travelled that Vang Vieng was not was it used to be. This can be seen as a negative effect on the local economy as backpackers might have ruined this city for future travellers. Nevertheless, backpackers continue to be keen to party and these parties will constantly evolve.

SEA is fairly cheap compared to European standards it is very attractive for backpackers to travel to these regions as they can further extend their travel period on a low budget. Backpacking in SEA roots back to the former hippie-trails which make it a well-established destination and backpacking is seen today as a leader of mainstream tourism (Spreitzhofer, 1998). Muzaini (2005) stated that SEA remains a "preferred habitat due to ease of travel and the low costs of staying there". He also concluded that backpackers aim to "be one" with the locals. Cohen (1982) expressed that

backpackers aim for an "authentic experience" meaning they would avoid overly touristic places and travel off the beaten track. On the other hand, the food variety in SEA is fairly attractive for travellers. Backpackers tend to avoid Westernized European restaurants with high prices which target travellers and tourists on a higher budget. Roadside stalls and markets with cheap local food and prices is where one will find the majority of backpackers (Muzaini, 2005). The speciality of fried insects comes strange to most travellers, however backpackers are more lenient to try this compared to general tourists. The question of safety and hygiene is presumably the main reason why tourists on a bigger budget do not eat on the street. Backpackers are statistically speaking less intimidated by possible food related illnesses. The factor that ties in closely with backpackers wanting a local and authentic experience is the cost of street food. Presumably backpackers pay slightly more than locals as they might be able to negotiate the price better but the price of a street meal stands in no relation to the price one will pay in a restaurant. It is therefore possible for backpackers to eat for €5 a day which is incredibly cheap and will extend their travel opportunities. The overall price of travelling through SEA compared to travelling in Europe stands in no relation. Accommodation, transportation and food are incredibly cheap to Europeans which makes it easy for backpackers to travel for a long time as they can live off so little every day (Muzaini, 2005). Thus, travelling through SEA is extremely attractive for people on a low budget.

2.3   Characteristics of Generation Y

Generation Y describes people who born between 1977 and 1994 and this age group is the descendant from the previous Baby Boomers, this age segment is also known as Echo Boomers, Millenials or Internet Generation. Generation Y is said to be "an enormously powerful group that has the sheer numbers to transform every life stage it enters" (Paul, 2001). Due to the fact

that Generation Y was born in the time of emerging technology and the people within this age group have grown up constantly surrounded by technology this segment is extremely technology advanced and educated in this field. Therefore Internet, tablets and smartphones are a necessity for this age group (Generation Y, 2015).

Generation Y is seen to strive for their dream job even if this means they would have to change jobs regularly to get the perfect position (Mielach, 2012). Lazy, narcissistic and coddled are regular descriptions of Generation Y although there are also positive affiliations with this generation. Main (2013) described them as more "open-minded, and more supportive of gay rights and equal rights for minorities". The Economist (2016) issued a special report about Generation Y and called this segment Generation Uphill. The image produced by the article about Generation Y shows that this group is the "luckiest group of young adults ever to have existed" (The Economist, 2016). This sector is said to be richer and the best-educated generation so far, future improvements in technology are believed to help Generation Y live past 100 years. Yet the article concentrates on the complaints and difficulties that this generation has to face. Finding a job and a place to live seems to be more difficult than ever before which might be led back to the fact that a lot of companies favour older and more experienced people over young graduates. Governments also seem to favour older generations with increased health care and pensions. The young people of today are said to be footloose due to the open world and ease of travel, nothing binds them to a place and they are free to roam around more than previous generations.

3   Methodology

To recap, the purposes of this study are twofold: (1) to identify motivators and inhibitors that influence European young backpackers' inclination to travel to SEA as well as (2) to understand their risk assessment and risk reduction strategies. Considering the exploratory nature of the studied topic, this study uses the qualitative approach and specifically in-depth interviews to collect primary data from European young backpackers. Another reason for choosing the qualitative approach is that it enables the author to engage the respondents and collect a maximum amount of information about the respondents' demographics, their motivators and inhibitors for travelling and their risk perception of SEA.

Purposive sampling approach was employed to identify the respondents. Travellers (born between 1977 and 1994) who have backpacking experience and/or plan to have a backpacking trip in the coming 12 months are the target respondents of this study. The target respondents were reached through the author's social networks and various online platforms. Decrop (1999) stated that good and relevant data should have density, meaning that every interview should confirm and build on previous interviews. Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined saturation to be a point where there is no further or new data to collect. Since the saturation was reached in the tenth interview, responses from ten qualified respondents were the primary data to be used in this study.

The interviews were done in person, via video conferences or via email communications under the moderation by the author. A total of 18 questions were asked in each interview. Table 1 lists all 25 questions with their corresponding rationale of understanding respondents' interest in travelling to SEA, their motivators, inhibitors, risk assessment and risk reduction strategies.

The author's aim during these interviews was to stay critical to the topic and be able to extract the relevant information for the outcome of this

study. Murphy conducted a study in 2001 with a hired interviewer of similar age and background to the interviewees with the explanation that this way the interviewer could relate and engage more comfortably with the respondents. Seeing as the author of this study is in the same age group as the target respondents, the homogeneity between interviewer and interviewee is also assured. Furthermore, the author went on a backpacking trip to Australia and Indonesia herself which helps her relate to the topic of backpackers, the decisions, motivators and risks that come with it.

Table 1. Data collection questions and purpose

Purpose of question	Interview questions
Verifying respondents' eligibility	
	How old are you?
	What is your gender?
	Where are you from?
	When you go travelling, where would you acquire travel- and destination-related information?
	Would you consider going backpacking to Southeast Asia in the future?
	How much preparation would you do before going backpacking to Southeast Asia?
	How many backpacking trip(s) did you have in the last 12 months?
	Where did you go backpacking in the last 12 months?
	When was the first time you went backpacking?
Identifying motivators that pull backpackers to SEA	
	What factor(s) motivate you to go backpacking to Southeast Asia?
	Can you rank these motivating factors according to their level of importance? (1 = most important, 2 = second most…)
	Which type(s) of activity would you do while backpacking in Southeast Asia?
Identifying possible inhibitors for backpacking in SEA	
	Where would you go backpacking instead?
	Why do you prefer this destination over Southeast Asia?
	What does this destination have that Southeast Asia does not?
	What are reason(s) why you do not want to go to Southeast Asia?

Identifying possible risks and risk reduction strategies for backpackers and the destination	
	Are you aware of any potential risk(s) of going backpacking to Southeast Asia? If yes, please list all of them.
	Can you rank these risks according to their level of importance? (1 = most important, 2 = second most important …)
	Would these potentials risks prevent you from going backpacking to Southeast Asia? If yes, please discuss why and how.
	Are these risks the major inhibitors discouraging you not go backpacking to Southeast Asia?
	If these risks were eliminated, would you consider go backpacking to Southeast Asia?
	What would you do to reduce these potential risks?
	What do you think the destination could do to reduce the risk?
Establishing possible popular destinations within SEA	
	What is your most preferred country for backpacking in Southeast Asia?
	What is your most preferred city for backpacking in Southeast Asia?

Content analysis was undertaken by the author and the advisor of this thesis individually in order to increase the reliability of the outcome and reduce the possibility of human error. Interviewees' responses to each interview question was firstly transcribed and saved into tables for clarifying the outcome and relevance of each question by the author. The thesis advisor then cross-validated the results to ensure the accuracy.

4 Findings and analysis

4.1 Respondents' demographic profile

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of all ten respondents. The ten qualitative interviews were all undertaken with European respondents that live in Europe with the exception of one respondent who is currently backpacking in South Korea. The age of respondents ranges from 19 to 25 and they live in Austria, Germany, Cyprus and the United Kingdom. Six out of ten respondents were female which shows the majority of respondents were female. Three respondents undertook backpacking trip in the previous twelve months and nine respondents have all been backpacking once in their lives which leaves only one respondent without any previous backpacking experience.

Table 2. Demographic profile of respondents

Respondent ID	Age	Gender	Nationality	Number of backpacking trips in last 12 months	First backpacking experience
Respondent A	20	female	Germany	1	February 2015
Respondent B	20	female	Cyprus	0	August 2013
Respondent C	24	male	United Kingdom	0	September 2011
Respondent D	23	male	Germany	6	September 2013
Respondent E	19	female	Germany	0	n/a
Respondent F	21	female	Germany	0	September 2012
Respondent G	23	female	Austria	0	September 2012
Respondent H	25	male	Germany	2	September 2012
Respondent I	22	female	Germany	0	April 2011
Respondent J	24	male	United Kingdom	0	July 2010

During the interviews, the respondents were asked to indicate their preferred city and country in SEA for having a backpacking trip. Six respondents named Bangkok as their preferred city. Other destinations that were named were Manila, Ha Long City, Singapore and Kuta. The most preferred country that was named by four respondents was Cambodia. Three

respondents chose Thailand and two chose Vietnam. Burma, Indonesia and the Philippines were all named once. The respondents were then asked to outline where they would get travel related information from. Nine respondents named the Internet and general online sources as their main source of information while five respondents further mentioned recommendations and previous experiences from friends and family. Only one respondent named travel guides as the source of information.

4.2 What makes SEA so attractive to young European backpackers?

This section discusses the findings to the question "What factors motivate you to go backpacking to SEA?" The respondents were firstly asked to list all their motivators and then rank them according to their level of importance. Table 3 shows the motivators and their corresponding ranking by each respondent.

Table 3. Motivators for choosing SEA as backpacking destination

Motivators	Respondent ID									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
culture	1		1	1	1	2	4	4		1
nature & landscape	2			4	3		3	1	3	2
cost		3	3			1	1	3	1	3
lifestyle	3			5						
destination		1								
weather							2		2	
reviews & recommendations		2			4					
food and beverage			4			3				5
nightlife			2							
adventure				2				2		
job opportunities				3						
history					2					
attractions	4									
activities										4

Note. The number represents the importance level of motivators (1 = most important; 2 = second most important)

4.2.1 SEA's unique culture

Culture was nominated as the most important motivator by five respondents. One respondent ranked culture as the second most important motivator while two other respondents ranked it as their fourth most important factor. Overall eight out of the ten respondents named culture as one of their motivators. As discussed in the literature review chapter, culture is an integral part of SEA and by the high ranking one can assume that culture in SEA is one of the factors that make SEA so attractive to interviewees. Having established this fact further research could be done to underline the reasons why SEA's culture is so important to European young backpackers and what they do to get in contact with it.

4.2.2 Low travelling cost

Low travelling cost is another factor that motivated a large number of respondents. Three respondents named the cost of travelling to and around SEA as their priority and four respondents stated that cost is the third most important motivator. Existing literature about backpackers shows that backpackers tend to travel on a low budget in order to be able to extend their travel period (Muzaini, 2005). Given that SEA is a rather cheap destination for travelling, it comes as no surprise that seven out of ten respondents named low travelling cost as a main motivator. The reason why travelling in SEA is so cost efficient is not within reach of this study and could be a possible topic for further research. Future research could be also done to evaluate whether only the sector of backpackers finds this factor motivating or if other travel segments name cost as a main motivator too.

4.2.3 Nature and landscape

Seven out of ten respondents named the nature and landscape that SEA offers as one of their main motivators. It was ranked once as the first and

second motivator while three respondents named it in third place of motivators. The literature review section discusses the variety of landscapes that SEA offers. The response of this study shows the importance that nature has for backpackers and therefore how critical it should be to preserve it. Seeing that nature and landscape is highly valued by European young backpackers it could be essential for the destination to highlight this aspect in order to attract European young backpackers.

4.2.4 Weather and adventure

Weather and adventure which are not necessarily similar in nature were both ranked twice in second place by four different respondents. Seeing that the weather in SEA tends to be comparably hotter than Europe, it is understandable that backpackers might prefer the better weather conditions and choose this as a motivator. Given that only two respondents named this factor the question comes up whether other respondents forgot to name weather as a motivator due to indifference or other reasons since no respondents in this study named the weather in SEA as an inhibitor. Adventure is an entirely different motivator and the question of what an adventure actually is comes to mind. There could be a number of different sources for adventures, the adventure of travelling, the adventure of travelling alone, travelling to a foreign country, travelling to SEA, adventurous activities whilst travelling to SEA and so forth. Given that the two respondents gave no actual definition of adventure, this motivator calls for further interpretation and research.

4.2.5 Other motivators

Other motivators were also identified even though they were not ranked as highly as the above mentioned. Food and beverages were named three times but with a rather low ranking. As noted in the literature review chapter, the wide variety of foods combined with the low cost of food and

travelling in SEA were well received by international travellers. It is not unexpected that food and beverages were named as a motivator. Thai and Vietnamese cuisine are furthermore relatively popular in Europe and being able to sample an authentic Asian meal in SEA would be a big motivator for some travellers. Seeing as this study focused on young European backpackers it comes as a bit of a surprise that the nightlife in SEA was only mentioned by one respondent. This could tie in with the risk of getting drugged which will be further discussed in section 4.4. The history of SEA was mentioned once which shows that the sector of European young backpackers is more interested in the culture but not necessarily the history of the countries. One could conclude that backpackers are not automatically interested in the history and how the culture established but more what contemporary SEA looks like. One backpacker mentioned job opportunities as a motivator. This indicates that this particular respondent aims to travel for an extended period of time and is willing to work whilst backpacking to extend his travels even further. The overall image and reputation of the destination, the different lifestyle and reviews and recommendations of friends, family or others, attractions and activities were named as further motivators. All these motivators indicate what makes SEA so attractive to European young backpackers and the combination of all motivators seem to make SEA the perfect destination.

4.3 What are popular activities whilst backpacking in SEA?

The following part presents the responses to the question "Which types of activities would you do whilst backpacking in SEA?" Table 4 shows the various activities mentioned by each respondent in the interview.

Table 4. List of activities respondents would do whilst backpacking SEA

Activities	Respondent ID									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
island hopping	X					X	X	X		
temple tours/cultural tours	X					X		X		X
markets/shopping	X						X		X	
sightseeing		X	X		X	X		X		
food and beverages			X				X		X	
renting a scooter/bike			X					X		
exploring			X							
sea/beach activities			X			X		X	X	
nightlife			X							
temple stay				X						
jungle tracking				X						
work for NGOs				X						
walks/hikes						X	X			
rainforest/mountains						X				
relaxation							X			
elephant riding								X	X	
rafting										X
parties										X
networking with business people				X						
rock climbing								X		

4.3.1 Sightseeing, temple and cultural tours

Five respondents named sightseeing as one of the activities they would do whilst backpacking in SEA and temple and cultural tours were named four times by different respondents. Two respondents identified both sightseeing and cultural tours as their activities. These activities both tie in with the respondents that named culture as a motivator although sightseeing was mentioned by respondents that did not mention culture as a motivator. These results show that sightseeing does not necessarily associated with

cultural and historic sights but could be any source of sights. Given that seven respondents either selected sightseeing or temple tours as an activity one can conclude that young European backpackers are interested in sights and cultural monuments even whilst travelling. This could be another area where the destination could target other backpackers to visit SEA.

4.3.2   Island hopping, sea and beach related activities

Island hopping as well as sea and beach related activities were both identified by four respondents and two respondents listed both activities. As SEA consists of big maritime areas, it is understandable that beach and sea related activities are of high importance for backpackers. Thailand and Indonesia are home to a few of the world's most beautiful islands which explains why four respondents named island hopping as a preferred activity. This further makes SEA even more attractive to young backpackers and travellers in general. SEA is moreover home to a large amount of surfers. Kuta, on the island of Bali in Indonesia, is full of surfers all year round meaning a steady tourism and surf industry which brings high revenues to the country. Quicksilver has been hosting a surf competition called the Uluwatu Challenge for eight consecutive years in Indonesia (World Surf League, 2015).

4.3.3   Food and beverages

Food and beverages were already discussed in section 4.2.5 as motivators of travelling to SEA. The fact that respondents listed food and beverages and restaurants as activities they will undertake whilst backpacking in SEA strengthens the motivators and the overall attractiveness of food variety that SEA has to offer. This also strengthens the outcome and reliability of this study seeing that food and beverage were consistently named as a factor that makes SEA attractive to young backpackers.

4.3.4 Other activities

Coming back to the highly valued motivator of nature and landscape the activities the respondents further outlined during this question were walks and hikes, exploring the rainforest and the mountains, jungle tracking, elephant riding, rafting and rock climbing. All these activities relate to the variety of nature and wildlife that SEA has to offer. Especially rainforests and elephant rides are non-existent in Europe which could be a reason why these activities are so attractive to Europeans. The extent of different answers of nature related activities to this question shows the influence that nature has on the respondents and how substantial nature is in the attractiveness of SEA. Parties were only selected by one respondent which again is surprising seeing as the literature review established the amount of parties that SEA has to offer. The literature review also outlined the reputation and risks of these parties but further stated that visitors to parties still increase. Therefore the question arises if parties like the Full Moon Party are still as popular as existing literature indicates. The same respondent that named job opportunities as a motivator stated that some of the activities whilst backpacking in SEA would be working for a non-governmental organisation and networking with business people. Due to these activities only being listed by the same individual the question emerges whether these activities are specific to this certain backpacker and his personal preferences or to his personal views on the travel form of backpacking. Two respondents selected renting a scooter or a bike to travel and explore SEA. The author can say from personal experience that renting a scooter is an easy task and a great way to explore SEA although it is also dangerous seeing as SEA and Asia in general have different views and regulations about traffic laws and road discipline is often very poor. The fact that only two respondents named this activity has a number of reasons which will be further discussed in the chapter of risks in section 4.4.4. Further activities that were selected by respondents are visiting markets and shopping, taking part in a temple stay and general relaxation. It

is clear that all these activities make SEA attractive to this group of European young backpackers however, seeing as a few activities were only recognised once it is questionable if these specific activities is what makes all European young backpackers motivated to travel to SEA or whether they are personal preferences. Nevertheless one can conclude without a doubt that sightseeing, sea and beach related activities and food and beverages are crucial activities and motivators for travelling to SEA and are the pillars of what makes SEA so attractive to young European backpackers.

4.4   Risks associated with backpacking in SEA

After outlining their motivators and preferred activities the respondents were asked to outline any potential risks they knew about when travelling to SEA. They were further asked to rank their identified risks according to their importance in order to answer the research question of young European backpackers' awareness of risks when travelling to SEA. Table 4 indicates the risks identified by the respondents and their level of importance. One respondent indicated that she would start preparing for her trip five months before departure while four respondents all stated that they would need a preparation time between one to two months. A preparation time of two to three months and one to two weeks were both mentioned once. Two respondents clearly indicated that they would need vaccines long before their preparation time frame and would therefore need to start planning their trip further ahead. Although many potential risks were reported, all respondents claimed that none of the risks they mentioned would prevent them from travelling to SEA.

Table 5. Risks reported by respondents whilst backpacking in SEA

Risks	Respondent ID									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
sickness	1	1		2	2	3	1	1	1	2
robbery/crime	2		5			2	4	3	3	3
getting ripped off		2	6							
communication gap		3								
drugs						1	2	2	2	1
murder			1							
abduction			2							
road accidents			3				5			
personal injury			4							
sexual transmitted diseases				1						
natural disasters				3				4		
lack of medical support					1				4	
terrorism							3			

Note. The number represents the importance level of motivators (1 = most important; 2 = second most important)

4.4.1 Sickness

Sickness was listed by all but one respondent and was ranked the most crucial risk by five respondents. Sexual transmitted diseases were nominated once as the most threatening risk. This fear of sickness and the high risk can have different origins. One can assume that due to the fact that most illnesses spreading in SEA are not as widely spread in Europe, people are increasingly scared. The study response rate shows that sickness is the most central risk identified by young backpackers when travelling to SEA. This makes it not a perceived risk but an actual risk seeing that so many respondents identified this risk. Therefore it is imperative that the destination knows about this risk and is able to control and prevent it. Sicknesses like malaria, dengue fever, cholera, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and rabies are rather common in areas such as SEA. Therefore the destination is required to inform and prevent these sicknesses and the backpackers that travel to SEA should be informed about them in order to lower the risk.

4.4.2 Drugs

Exactly half the respondents named drugs as a perceived risk. When asked to explain the risk of drugs the answer was either getting drugged without knowing, getting caught by the police with drugs, or unwillingly carrying drugs over borders through smugglers. All countries in SEA have strict regulations and laws when it comes to drug use and the sale of drugs. Nevertheless as already established in the literature review, there are still a large number of drugs circulating SEA and it is not as difficult to get into the possession of drugs as the country authorities would hope. A number of drug related deaths happen every year in SEA which are connected to the responses of murder and abduction as a perceived risk. After sicknesses, drugs were the perceived risk that scored second highest in the overall scale of importance. This indicates the importance of drugs and their role in SEA regarding young backpackers.

4.4.3 Robbery and crime

Seven respondents listed robbery and general crime as a perceived risk and it was ranked from 2 to 5. The origin of this perception of risk is somewhat unclear. Police presence or the lack thereof could be an indicator for this risk nevertheless SEA is mostly regarded as a rather safe destination. Two respondents mentioned getting ripped off as a perceived risk which is similar to the risk of crime and robbery. Every guide book will warn about pick pockets in SEA but these exist in big European cities too. When regarding the travel form of backpackers and their preferred choice of accommodation the perceived risk of robbery becomes clearer. Hostels tend to have big rooms to accommodate a number of guests at the same time in a smaller space. Not every hostel will possess cupboards where backpackers can lock their valuables and a number of backpackers do not tend to lock away their belongings, which makes it easy for people to steal things. Another factor that can lead to robbery in hostels is the large amount of people in a small

space and the anonymity. The amount of respondents that declared this risk enables the assumption that robbery and crime are of high importance and are a highly perceived risk for young European backpackers.

4.4.4 Others

The communication gap that exists between locals in SEA and young Europeans was mentioned as a perceived risk. A number of locals tend to not be educated and therefore speak little to no English which makes communication extremely difficult. This could present a major barrier and inhibitor for some backpackers that travel to SEA although there are normally always locals who speak a little English or at least know how to somewhat communicate with foreigners. Circling back to the activity of renting a bike or a scooter that was discussed in chapter 4.3.4 which was identified by only two respondents. Road accidents and personal injury were recognised as potential risks which might explain why the activity of renting a scooter was not valued higher. A number of areas in SEA, especially rural areas do not tend to have a good infrastructure and the quality of streets is bad. Furthermore European street and traffic rules do not seem to be present in SEA. Many tourists and especially backpackers tend to underestimate the traffic in SEA which is increasingly higher and denser than in Europe. This leads to a number of accidents in which foreigners are involved. Therefore it is a clear perceived risk which explains why the activity of renting a bike was only listed by two individuals. The lack of medical support in SEA or the lack of hospitals and doctors that are equal to European standards is another perceived risk. Although this risk was only mentioned by two respondents it is clear that this is closely related to the perceived risk of sickness. Falling ill in SEA and fearing the lack of medical support increases the perception of the risk of illnesses. Natural disasters and terrorism are perceived risks that are uncontrollable. The above mentioned risks such as illnesses, drug abuse, and crime are all somewhat calculated risks. Young backpackers know about the

existence of these risks in SEA and can evaluate their importance accordingly. But natural disasters and terrorism are risks than cannot be calculated and can occur in any place on the planet at any given time. After the tsunami in 2004 that originated in the Indian Ocean and killed approximately 230,000 people, the countries in SEA experienced a huge decline in tourist arrivals. Everyone was scared that another similar disaster could happen again when the truth is that an earthquake could occur at any time at any given place. Nevertheless people tend to think that due to it happening once, there is the possibility of it happening again.

4.5   Risk reduction strategies

In the final part of the interviews, the respondents were asked to assess the previously named risks and identify possible risk reduction strategies for backpackers and the destination. These two questions aim to answer the third and final research question concerning the risk reduction strategies. The respondents were first asked to outline what they personally would do to reduce the risks they mentioned and then further they were asked to identify risk reduction strategies that SEA could integrate to minimise risk. Combining all risk reduction strategies mentioned for backpackers and the destination the mentioned risks could be minimised extensively. This could increase the number of backpackers that travel to SEA that feel inhibited by the risks. Table 6 lists the strategies reported by the interviewees.

Table 6. Risks identified by backpackers and their risk reduction strategies

Risk reduction strategy by backpackers	Risk reduction strategy by the destination
sickness	
vaccines (4)	better healthcare system and regulations (5)
take medication on the trip (3)	education about health and diseases for locals (4)
healthcare and check-ups prior to travels (2)	better hygiene for the local people (2)
drink bottled water only (2)	
do not take food or drinks from strangers (2)	
only eat thoroughly cooked food (2)	
be careful what you eat and drink (1)	
avoid public toilets (1)	
be well informed about health risks (1)	
robbery	
take care of belongings (3)	
do not let luggage out of sight (1)	
extra wallet with money under clothes (1)	
don't carry too much money with me (1)	
avoid big masses of people (1)	
drugs	
	stricter laws against drugs and dealers (2)
crime	
don't go to dangerous places (3)	higher security levels (6)
don't go out alone at night (3)	better police enforcement for foreigners (2)
conducting more research (3)	apply stricter law regulations (1)
be careful/be aware of surroundings (3)	less corrupt police (1)
ability to adapt to foreign cultures (1)	
terrorism	
avoid big masses of people (1)	stricter laws for people entering the country (1)
	better risk management and emergency plans (1)
	help from more experienced countries (1)
getting ripped off	
be informed about prices (1)	
negotiating skills (1)	
travel with a larger group of people (1)	
natural disasters	
	higher prevention technology (1) (similar to actions taken after Tsunami 2004)
	better risk management and emergency plans (1)
	put money towards better infrastructure (1)
road accidents	
	better road safety (1)
	more road signs (1)
	stricter rules about helmets and seatbelts (1)
	maximum number of people of one vehicle (1)

Note. The number represents the amount of respondents that identified this strategy

4.5.1 Sickness

The study results already established that sickness was the highest risk for this particular group of respondents, which explains the larger number of risk reduction strategies that were collected. Vaccines and health check-ups were listed several times as a popular risk reduction strategy. Seeing as vaccines were also included by two respondents in their preparation schedule this risk reduction strategy is further strengthened in its importance. Drinking bottled water, eating thoroughly cooked food and not taking food from strangers are further risk reduction strategies that were named by two respondents. Examining all risk reduction strategies that were listed when it comes to sickness and disease one can conclude that overall knowledge and care regarding illness in SEA are essential. Being well informed about health risks and being aware of the food and drinks one intakes are strategies that require very little action but tend to have a high relevance and consequence to reduce the risk of sickness. Half the respondents urged that SEA should enforce a better healthcare system and higher regulations when it comes to hygiene and food safety. Educating the locals about health risks and diseases would minimise the infection rate and therefore the transmission rate and likely the possibility of diseases for foreigner travelling to SEA. By enforcing these strategies, the risk of getting infected by the local people would be reduced and therefore the risk of sickness for foreign travellers would be reduced which would then lead to less precautions being necessary on their behalf. This does not inevitably result in travellers neglecting their own risk reduction strategies but rather support them in minimising the risks. Future backpackers that would not use vaccines would be at lower risk of getting infected if the hygiene and knowledge levels of locals were raised.

4.5.2 Robbery, drugs and crime

Robbery and crime were highly present in the list of risks that were identified in earlier chapters of this study. The risk reduction strategies that were recognised to reduce robbery and crime were represented several times by three different respondents. Avoiding dangerous places, avoiding walking alone at night and being aware of your surroundings are once again simple precautions that are not labour intensive but very effective, hence the large amount of representation of respondents. Similar to the risk of sickness, the respondents of this study claimed that conducting further research about the destination would reduce the risk of robbery and crime and be extremely beneficial for backpackers that travel to SEA. Six respondents stated that the destinations should apply higher security levels, which demonstrates the role and importance that crime plays for this group of young backpackers. The risk reduction strategies that were listed by the respondents are fairly labour intensive and not as simple as the risk reduction strategies that every individual backpacker can perform. Southeast Asian countries have strict laws against drugs and drug dealers however there are still a large number of drugs in circulation in these countries. Therefore SEA needs to reinforce even stricter rules and laws against drugs to prevent drug-related deaths, accidents and crime. Backpackers who are unwillingly and unknowingly part of a drug smuggle or drug use would be punished severely even though they are not responsible. It is of great importance that SEA enforces correct laws and regulations to prevent similar scenarios.

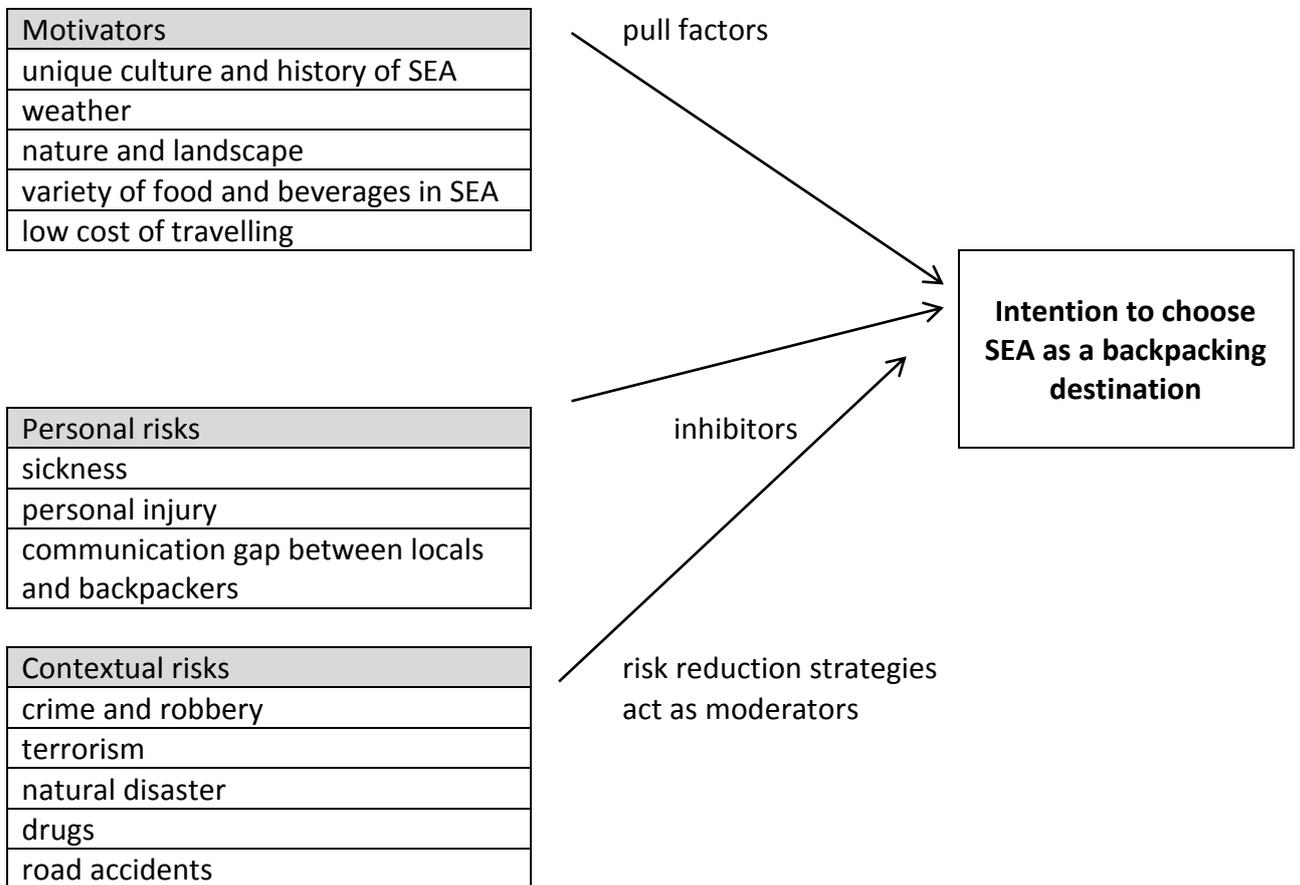### 4.5.3 Other risk reduction strategies

Regarding terrorism only one respondent mentioned a possible risk reduction strategy on the grounds that terrorism is an unexpected risk that one can hardly be prepared for. One can assume that avoiding big masses of people is the main response when asked how to prevent the risk of terrorism. However of all the respondents, only one respondent mentioned terrorism

and a possible risk reduction strategy. The reason for this is unclear seeing that Hunter-Jones et al. (2007) claimed that war is the most significant influencer for destination choice. The respondents described three risk reduction strategies for the risk of getting "ripped off". The literature review indicated that backpackers travel on a low budget and therefore are in favour of bargaining and bartering with locals therefore negotiation skills are of importance and useful to backpackers that travel to SEA. Repeatedly the risk reduction strategy of knowledge and information appears. Being informed about prices enables the backpackers to negotiate the right price and prevent getting ripped off. Therefore correct information and negotiation skills are ideal for backpackers that aim to travel on a budget. Road safety and accidents were already discussed in earlier chapters nevertheless respondents were able to identify a number of risk reduction strategies SEA requires. Higher road safety and more road signs would help foreigners participating in traffic in SEA whereas stricter rules about helmets and seatbelts and a maximum number of people in one vehicle are additionally directed to locals. Scenes with five people including small children on one scooter are not a rare sight in SEA, which increases the risk of accidents.

Overall road safety enforcement requires a large amount of police enforcement to ensure locals and foreigners comply with these rules. This would cost the countries of SEA a large amount of money that they may not possess or may not want to spend. Unexpected risks such as natural disasters are extremely hard to prevent although some respondents were able to identify a risk reduction strategy. After the tsunami in 2004, Thailand implemented a tsunami prevention system, which is said to be the best warning system in SEA (Saengpassa & Sarnsamak, 2012). Similar prevention technologies could be implemented as a risk reduction strategy to prevent and manage possible natural disasters. Having an efficient emergency plan and risk management are further strategies that SEA could implement to reduce risks. Combining both risk reduction strategies from the backpackers'

perspective and the destinations perspective would further reduce the risks that were identified in this study and would result in an overall highly effective risk reduction which in turn would increase that attractiveness of those countries to future backpackers.

5   Conclusion

Motivators
unique culture and history of SEA
weather
nature and landscape
variety of food and beverages in SEA
low cost of travelling

pull factors

Intention to choose SEA as a backpacking destination

Personal risks
sickness
personal injury
communication gap between locals and backpackers

inhibitors

Contextual risks
crime and robbery
terrorism
natural disaster
drugs
road accidents

risk reduction strategies act as moderators

Figure 1. Summary of research findings

Figure 1 summarises the data and information that was collected throughout the study. The motivators that were identified during the process of this study symbolise pull factors that SEA has to attract young European backpackers. These motivators have a positive influence on the decision making process of travelling to SEA. These prove to be important information to DMOs in SEA as they can further promote and extend these motivators to attract a higher number of young backpackers residing in Europe. The personal risks and contextual risks are potential inhibitors that backpackers identified but none were of such high importance because no respondent

chose not to travel to SEA due to these identified inhibitors. One possible reason is that some risk reduction strategies for backpackers and SEA as a destination that were discussed moderate the risk. Combining both risk reduction strategies of actions the individual backpackers can take and actions the destination can take will reduce the risks to a minimum. This would increase the number of backpackers that travel to SEA. By identifying the risks from a backpackers' perspective ensures the relevance of this study. SEA can profit from this data to improve their risk reduction strategies.

Having successfully identified motivators and risks of choosing SEA as a backpacking destination and also risk reduction strategies of both backpackers and destination, this study does make some theoretical contribution to existing literature. Although the gap in existing literature has been somewhat filled by the findings of this study, there are still limitations which constrain the external validity of the current findings to a greater extent. Firstly, the sample size (with ten respondents only) that was used in this study is comparably small. Secondly, the majority of respondents are of German nationality which limits the reach of the target group. To redress these limitations, future research should consider increasing the sample size and the diversity of nationalities. The third limitation in the study is the fact that not one respondent declined the main research question of whether they would go backpacking in SEA. All respondents answered that they would go backpacking to SEA despite the existence of possible risks. This underlines the attractiveness that SEA has for backpackers and the importance of this region as a travel destination for this specific target market. The possibility of human error in data analysis is the final limitation to this study. The data analysis was undertaken by the author and not with help of an automated system. Though an additional person analysed and supervised the same data which improves reliability, yet the possibility of human error and having misinterpreted or misanalysed the data is there. Future research could utilize

the automated system to analyse data especially if the sample size is extensively bigger to increase reliability.

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Backpacking Southeast Asia is as popular as ever and it's not hard to see why. The region is cheap, home to truly unique and varied cultures, fantastic weather and scenery but with such a thriving backpacker scene, home comforts are never hard to find. Perhaps it has lost some of the mysticism it had back in the day when traveller numbers were still relatively small but there is still undeniably a certain magic about this part of the world. On the Southeast Asia backpacker trail, temptation lies at almost every corner and it'd be easy to blow this budget if you aren't great on self-discipline! If it's your first time travelling then you'd be wise to budget for more than the figures above. TRAVEL INSURANCE. We recommend World Nomads who specialise in providing cover for backpacking trips. Since Southeast Asia is made up of multiple islands and rugged terrain, we recommend choosing backpacks over wheeled luggage. Alternatively, you can also choose to get convertible backpacks which convert as a backpack or a wheeled suitcase. To help you choose the right travel bag, here are some of our top recommendations based on bags that we've tried and tested!