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**Digital Nomads – Drifters 2.0?**

The backpacker phenomenon has undergone a number of changes and developments over the past decades. Originally emerging from the drifters of the 1960s and 1970s – long-term travellers seeking escape from societal norms and structures -, it has become a mass phenomenon widely popular with young travellers from around the globe. Recently, a further distinction has emerged. Originally concerned only with low-budget travellers, the term ‘flashpackers’ has evolved throughout the literature, referring to those that still want to experience the advantages of the backpacker travel style in terms of sociability and authentically perceived cultural experiences, while being more affluent in their service choices and making comparatively heavier use of information and communication technologies during their travels.

Recently, yet another new sub-culture can be observed. The so-called digital nomads are young professionals whose occupation allows them work independently in terms of location – an advantage heavily used through long and frequent travels while simultaneously earning the income required for this lifestyle. However, the academic literature has not yet acknowledged this new phenomenon. It thus remains unknown what the characteristics of a digital nomad are, to what extent they make use of the tourist infrastructure, what influences their travel behaviour, and where they can be placed within a wider tourism context. Initial content analysis of online media leads to the assumption that the main driver behind this particular travel-based lifestyle is a desire to escape the often inhibiting structures of the traditional, location-dependent working life, raising the question of whether or not the backpacker phenomenon (characterised by a low budget, long travel durations and sociability) has taken a 360-degree-turn by resulting in a new generation of drifters.

The aim of this research is to provide an initial definition of digital nomads and shed light on their potential place within and relevance for the tourism industry by also examining their travel behaviour and decision making process. A content analysis of online material such as blogs, discussion forums, Facebook groups and videos will allow the creation of guidelines for qualitative in-depth interviews. These will be conducted via Skype with several self-identifying digital nomads. Results will not only allow for a first insight into this new phenomenon but will also shed light on the ways in which globalization, digitalization and value changes can contribute to new tourism-related lifestyle forms.