



ACADEMIC DISCUSSIONS ON HOSTEL: LIMITS, CHALLENGES, AND PERSPECTIVES

DEBATES ACADÊMICOS SOBRE HOSTEL: LIMITES, DESAFIOS E PERSPECTIVAS

DEBATES ACADÊMICOS SOBRE LOS HOSTALES: LÍMITES, DESAFÍOS Y PERSPECTIVAS

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon known as hostels is a type of accommodation that essentially facilitates sociability among its guests. From specific physical structures, such as shared kitchens and bedrooms, to encourage human interaction, to even closer contact with the hosts, these are generally the basic characteristics of this type of lodging. The target of this article is to discuss the knowledge produced on the hostel, identifying the focuses, the most approached topics, and also the perceived gaps in this academic production. In methodological terms, conducted in databases of scientific reference publications, both in the Brazilian context (Brazilian Library of Theses and Dissertations - BDTD, the CAPES, and SciELO Brazil journals homepages) and internationally (EBSCO, Science Direct, and SciELO). Rather than quantifying this production considering a specific period, the survey conducted in these databases aimed to identify and discuss the most addressed issues in the papers published on the hostel, as well as the gaps in the existing academic production. The data were analyzed using content analysis, examining the similarities and differences in the discourse surrounding the theme of hostels. The outcomes evidence the need to overcome the understanding of hostel which reduces it to a kind of “cheap”, “economic”, “low-cost”, “backpacker”, or a simple “extension hotel”. These were the most frequent features of the academic discussions about the hostels. Even though they are relevant, often they limit the progress of knowledge on this kind of lodging. Still, it was noticed that the predominant focus of studies about hostel targets management, market, and marketing. Without denying the studies that reinforce these understandings, and their possible contributions to the systematization of knowledge about the hostel, it should be clear that time has come to understand the phenomenon from its countless possibilities, practices, understandings, senses, and meanings. The hostel is a subject that has been studied since the early 1960s. Even with the expansion of the bibliographic material on this topic in the last 60 years, these advances are still timid. Many studies related to different means of lodging do not specifically refer to the hostel, and it is common to use the term as a synonym for the hotel. The terminological confusion is a characteristic still prevails nowadays, since the vast majority of identified studies when investigating the topic focus on homeless or socially vulnerable people, to the detriment of those related to the hostel. Scarce qualified academic production on hostels, with incipient research conducted at the master and doctoral levels. Scarcity of studies devoted to historicize, conceptualize,

review the hostel topic, as well as map its state of the art. The hostel needs to be understood as a social space in which a mesh is woven involving individuals, social relations, and sociocultural dynamics. The findings show that even the existing constructs contributed to systemize the studies on hostels, glancing at their limits and possibilities appear as crucial factors for the improvement of this field.

Palavras-chave: Hostel; Academic production; Low-cost; Backpacker.

RESUMO

O fenômeno conhecido como hostels é um tipo de acomodação que, essencialmente, facilita a sociabilidade entre os hóspedes. Desde estruturas físicas específicas, como cozinhas e quartos compartilhados, para estimular a interação humana, até um contato ainda mais próximo com os anfitriões, essas são, em geral, as características básicas desse tipo de hospedagem. O objetivo deste artigo é discutir a produção de conhecimento sobre o hostel, identificando os focos, os temas mais abordados e também as lacunas percebidas nessa produção acadêmica. Em termos metodológicos, a pesquisa foi realizada em bancos de dados de publicações científicas de referência, tanto no contexto brasileiro (Biblioteca Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações – BDTD, CAPES e sites de periódicos do SciELO Brasil) quanto internacionalmente (EBSCO, Science Direct e SciELO). Em vez de quantificar essa produção considerando um período específico, a pesquisa realizada nessas bases de dados teve como objetivo identificar e discutir as questões mais abordadas nos trabalhos publicados sobre os hostels, bem como as lacunas na produção acadêmica existente. Os dados foram analisados por meio da análise de conteúdo, examinando as semelhanças e diferenças no discurso em torno do tema dos hostels. Os resultados evidenciam a necessidade de superar a compreensão do hostel que o reduz a um tipo de acomodação “barata”, “econômica”, “de baixo custo”, “para mochileiros” ou a uma simples “extensão de hotel”. Essas foram as características mais frequentes das discussões acadêmicas sobre os hostels. Embora sejam relevantes, muitas vezes elas limitam o avanço do conhecimento sobre esse tipo de acomodação. Ainda assim, percebeu-se que o foco predominante dos estudos sobre hostels recai sobre gestão, mercado e marketing. Sem negar os estudos que reforçam essas compreensões e as possíveis contribuições para a sistematização do conhecimento sobre o hostel, se faz fundamental compreender o fenômeno a partir das inúmeras possibilidades, práticas, compreensões, sentidos e significados. O hostel é um tema que vem sendo estudado desde o início da década de 1960. Mesmo com a expansão do material bibliográfico sobre o tema nos últimos 60 anos, esses avanços ainda são tímidos. Muitos estudos relacionados a diferentes formas de hospedagem não se referem especificamente ao hostel, e é comum usar o termo como sinônimo de hotel. A confusão terminológica entre o termo albergue como sinônimo de hostel, trata-se de uma característica que ainda prevalece atualmente, uma vez que a grande maioria dos estudos identificados ao investigar o tema concentra-se em pessoas em situação de rua ou socialmente vulneráveis, em detrimento daqueles relacionados ao hostel. A produção acadêmica qualificada sobre hostels se mostra escassa, com poucas pesquisas realizadas nos níveis de mestrado e doutorado. Há escassez de estudos dedicados a historicizar, conceituar e revisar o tema do hostel, bem como mapear o estado da arte. O hostel, portanto, precisa ser entendido como um espaço social no qual se tece uma rede envolvendo indivíduos, relações sociais e dinâmicas socioculturais. Os resultados mostram que, mesmo que os constructos existentes tenham contribuído para sistematizar os estudos sobre hostels, examinar os limites e as possibilidades surge como fator crucial para o aperfeiçoamento desse campo.

Palavras-chave: Hostel; Produção acadêmica; Baixo custo; Mochileiros.

RESUMEN

El fenómeno conocido como hostales es un tipo de alojamiento que esencialmente facilita la sociabilidad entre sus huéspedes. Desde estructuras físicas específicas, como cocinas y habitaciones compartidas, para fomentar la interacción humana, hasta un contacto aún más cercano con los anfitriones, estas son generalmente las características básicas de este tipo de alojamiento. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar el conocimiento producido sobre los hostales, identificando los enfoques, los temas más abordados y también las brechas percibidas en esta producción académica. En términos metodológicos, se realizó en bases de datos de publicaciones científicas de referencia, tanto en el contexto brasileño (Biblioteca Nacional de Tesis y Disertaciones de Brasil - BDTD, CAPES y páginas web de revistas de SciELO Brasil) como internacional (EBSCO, Science Direct y SciELO). En lugar de cuantificar esta producción considerando un período

específico, el análisis realizado en estas bases de datos tuvo como objetivo identificar y analizar los temas más abordados en los artículos publicados sobre hostales, así como las brechas en la producción académica existente. Los datos se analizaron mediante análisis de contenido, examinando las similitudes y diferencias en el discurso en torno al tema de los hostales. Los resultados evidencian la necesidad de superar la concepción del albergue que lo reduce a una especie de alojamiento “barato”, “económico”, “de bajo costo”, “para mochileros” o simplemente “un hotel de extensión”. Estas fueron las características más frecuentes en los debates académicos sobre los albergues. Si bien son relevantes, a menudo limitan el progreso del conocimiento sobre este tipo de alojamiento. Aun así, se observó que el enfoque predominante de los estudios sobre albergues se centra en la gestión, el mercado y el marketing. Sin negar los estudios que refuerzan estas concepciones y sus posibles contribuciones a la sistematización del conocimiento sobre el albergue, debe quedar claro que ha llegado el momento de comprender el fenómeno desde sus innumerables posibilidades, prácticas, concepciones, sentidos y significados. El albergue es un tema que se ha estudiado desde principios de la década de 1960. Incluso con la expansión del material bibliográfico sobre este tema en los últimos 60 años, estos avances aún son tímidos. Muchos estudios relacionados con diferentes medios de alojamiento no se refieren específicamente al albergue, y es común usar el término como sinónimo de hotel. La confusión terminológica sigue siendo una característica común hoy en día, ya que la gran mayoría de los estudios identificados sobre el tema se centran en personas sin hogar o socialmente vulnerables, en detrimento de aquellos relacionados con los albergues. La producción académica cualificada sobre albergues es escasa, con investigaciones incipientes a nivel de máster y doctorado. Hay escasez de estudios dedicados a historicizar, conceptualizar y revisar el tema de los albergues, así como a trazar un mapa de su estado actual. El albergue debe entenderse como un espacio social en el que se teje una red que involucra a individuos, relaciones sociales y dinámicas socioculturales. Los hallazgos muestran que incluso los constructos existentes han contribuido a sistematizar los estudios sobre albergues, pero al observar sus límites y posibilidades, se presentan como factores cruciales para el avance de este campo.

Palabras clave: Hostal; Producción académica; Bajo costo; Mochilero.

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INTRODUCTION

“Youth hostels cover the world. You can find them in cities, in the countryside and beside the sea, in every continent of the world” (Simpson 2015, p. 1). The hostel is a type of accommodation that was envisioned just over 100 years ago. At first, they were mainly set up in Europe aiming to attract younger travelers.

In recent decades, especially after the post-World War II period (between 1950-1960), the hostel gained projection due to the growing demand for this type of accommodation in many parts of the world. Since 1932, it has had an international association: Hostelling International (HI), which currently is present in more than 70 countries. Although not all hostels are associated to HI, this institution disseminates and globally represents this type of accommodation.

Going back in time, one can see that this type of endeavor was conceived by the German Richard Schirrmann. Schirrmann's figure is praised and disseminated by several authors (Simpson, 2015; Rashid-Radha, 2015; Bahls, 2015; Volante, 2011; Bunda, 2014; Giaretta, 2003; McCulloch, 1992). Social activist and natural history teacher, Richard Schirrmann conceived the first hostel in 1912 to accommodate his students during school trips. He proposed fieldwork and technical visits through the German countryside in his lesson plans. The goal of these expeditions was to enable students to socialize and to provide teachers' contact with the outside environment, especially with nature. Schirrmann “[...] dreamed of a chain of simple

places, spreading across the countryside, where Young people might stay. Travelling between these youth hostels” (Simpson 2015, p. 2).

Schirrmann believed that children learned best outside the classroom environment. During contact with nature, the learning acquired in books could be boosted through observation, analysis, and group learning. The professor saw the trip as a critical element to compose the teaching method. Thus, he included in his classes a diverse program of trips across the German territories (Simpson, 2015; Bahls, 2015).

The idea of hostels as spaces of sociability became widespread through these field trips (Satyro and Pinheiro 2006). In the first hostels designed by Schirrmann, human interaction was encouraged by the experiences provided during the stay. During the trips, students could interact with each other, with other teachers, with the landscapes, and with the local culture (Bahls, 2015).

Until today, the hostel preserves these characteristics, considering it a space for socializing due to the interactions that take place inside and outside the establishment. Professor Schirrmann could not have imagined that this educational strategy would become a worldwide phenomenon. Even with the dynamics of time, with the socio-cultural, historical, and touristic differentiations of each territory, the legacy he left prevails materialized in the present-day hostels.

Internationally, hostels represent a "social phenomenon" and are often encouraged by public authorities. They "are well spread and even acknowledged by law in some countries, mainly in the European continent and North America" (Bahls and Pereira, 2017, p. 3). However, this valuation does not always happen in countries on other continents. This recent market segment, for example, "is in total abandonment by the Ministry of Tourism - MTur" (Bahls and Pereira, 2017, p. 3), in Brazil some studies indicate that the increase of Brazilian hostels was incipient until late 1990. Except for Rio de Janeiro, initiatives in this scope are still isolated in the Brazilian territory (Thomazi, 2019).

At the same time, the Brazilian scientific production on hostels was boosted. The studies on hospitality carried out mainly in the scope of undergraduate and graduate studies in Hospitality at Anhembi-Morumbi University/São Paulo, and in Tourism and Hotel Management at the Itajaí Valley University/Santa Catarina, contributed in this direction. (Bahls and Pereira, 2017).

Although some advances are verified in the publications about hostels in the first two decades of the 21st century, they are of a more punctual feature. Therefore, the phenomenon is seen as embryonic in Brazil, and also in several other parts of the world (Pereira and Gomes 2020; Thomazi, 2019; Cró, 2018; Silva, 2018; Bahls and Pereira, 2017; Mané 2017; Abrantes, 2016; Bahls, 2015; Silva and Kohler, 2015; Oliveira and Falcão, 2014). Despite its relevance for the Tourism and Hospitality areas, the scientific production on hostels is still scarce and incipient, highlighting the need to conduct new studies on the topic.

In this regard, state-of-the-art studies aim to map and discuss the academic production of a given area or field of study. They can contemplate different types of works: articles published in journals, papers presented in scientific events, Ph.D. and Master's theses, etc. The analysis of a specific sector of these publications is called "state of knowledge" (Romanowski and Ens, 2006).

In the current research, only two studies dedicated to the state of the art of hostels were identified. The first consists of a mapping conducted by Bahls and Pereira (2017). Considering the period from 1990 to 2014, the authors identified a total of 66 scientific references related to the hostel, including Brazilian and international publications. However, only 16 of these works contemplate the hostel as the main topic. The authors found that scientific articles predominate among these publications, followed by undergraduate monographs. Also, the scientific production produced within master's and doctoral programs is small in the surveyed period. No doctoral thesis on the subject was identified until 2014, the last year covered in this study.

Another study to be mentioned sought to map the state of the art of hostel in the Portuguese-Brazilian reality in the period from 2015 to 2019 (Pereira and Gomes, 2021). The authors found similarities and differentiation concerning the previous research. Starting with the increase in publications, since 130 academic papers were identified (62 published in Portugal, and 68 in Brazil). This result endorses what Bahls and Pereira (2017) pointed out when they stated that research on hostels is promising.

When considering the academic production on hostels, it is observed that articles and undergraduate monographs are the most common types of work. In recent years, an increase in the more qualified production on the subject has been noted both in Brazil and Portugal, through the development of doctoral theses. It is reiterated that this type of academic work was not detected by Bahls and Pereira (2017) in the period they studied (1990-2014).

Pereira and Gomes (2021) also verified, in the analyzed production, that authors linked to different areas of knowledge, especially tourism, investigated the hostel thematic. However, the low articulation between publications is a matter of concern. To advance the academic discussions about the hostel, it is necessary to expand the interconnection between these works. Thus, the importance of studying the phenomenon from an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary perspective is evidenced.

Considering the most discussed topics and approaches in the works about hostels, Bahls and Pereira (2017) state that the focus of this academic production is on the following topics: management, market, and marketing, as well as a backpacker and low-cost. These topics were also found in Pereira and Gomes' study (2021). The authors consider that the analyzed production presents some theoretical and conceptual progress about the hostel, although shy, between the 2015-2019 period.

To provide continuity to these discussions, a new search was conducted in February/March 2021 in databases of scientific reference publications, both in the Brazilian context (Brazilian Library of Theses and Dissertations - BDTD, the CAPES, and SciELO Brazil journals homepages) and internationally (EBSCO, Science Direct, and SciELO). Rather than quantifying this production considering a specific period, the survey conducted in these databases aimed to identify and discuss the most addressed issues in the papers published on the hostel, as well as the gaps in the existing academic production.

This exercise unveiled a challenging scenario. On the one hand, it is marked by a growing production on the hostel, but, on the other hand, there are still some limits surrounding the studies on the subject, as well as some gaps that researchers may face when trying to explore, map and update the topic. This article aims to contribute to overcoming these challenges, adding

analysis and reflections to the academic discussions about the hostel, as it will be dealt with next.

Given this scenario, the question is: what are the most recurrent aspects in the academic discussions about hostels? Considering the theoretical and empirical research on this subject, what gaps can be highlighted in this production?

To find answers to these questions, a study was conducted in the context of the Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Program in Leisure Studies at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil. In this perspective, this article aims to discuss the knowledge already produced about "hostel", identifying the approaches, the most addressed issues, and the gaps in this academic production.

This text is divided into five sections. The next section is devoted to methodological aspects. The third section discusses the relationship between hostels and young students and backpackers. Next, we explore the connections between hostels and hotels. After that, we present some reflections on the concept of "low cost" and its relationship to hostels. Finally, we conclude the article with closing remarks and suggestions for future research.

METODOLOGIA

This study was grounded in a qualitative approach. Turato (2005) states that qualitative research should examine beliefs, habits, attitudes, values, and opinions, thereby promoting an understanding of the meanings and significance of various phenomena and events.

Complementarily, the methodological approach was grounded in a literature review, which, according to Dencker (1998, p. 125), should be conducted "based on existing material: books and scientific articles. [...] all research requires a preliminary phase of surveying and reviewing the existing literature for conceptual development and the definition of theoretical frameworks." The author further notes that literature review is characterized by three aspects: a greater degree of breadth, time efficiency, and ease in the data collection process.

In this context, a survey of existing literature on the topic was conducted, aiming to grasp the concept of hostels based on the understandings that define them, and to discuss the essence of this type of accommodation. To this end, a search was conducted in February and March 2021 in leading scientific publication databases, both in the Brazilian context (Brazilian Library of Theses and Dissertations — BDTD, CAPES, and SciELO Brasil journal websites) and internationally (EBSCO, ScienceDirect, and SciELO).

"Hostel" was used as the primary keyword for the search for studies. For this particular study, the term "hostel"— derived from the Portuguese word for "inn"— was chosen over "albergue" (the Brazilian Portuguese translation of the English word "hostel"), due to the pejorative connotations the latter still carries; in Brazil, "albergue" is known as a place to shelter socially vulnerable people, as stated by the authors Silva and Köhler (2015, p. 55): "[...] 'albergue' is the term given to establishments that serve the homeless population."

In this sense, especially in the social imagination, associating "hostel" with "albergue" remains a problematic issue. Thus, it is added: "the terms 'hostel' and 'albergue' are still subject to a certain terminological and conceptual imprecision, which demonstrates the need to explore this issue in greater depth" (Pereira; Gomes, 2021, p. 17).

Rather than quantifying this body of work by considering a specific time period, the research conducted in these databases aimed to identify and discuss the issues most frequently

addressed in published articles on the topic, as well as the gaps in the existing academic literature.

Regarding data analysis, the content analysis method proposed by Bardin (2011) was used. The themes presented below consist of analytical categories identified and interpreted during the research process, namely: Hostels and young students and backpackers; Hostels and hotels; Hostels and low cost.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Hostel's roots: Young students and backpackers

Regarding the hostel origins as a means of accommodation that holds certain singularities, this study evidenced that publications emphasize the hosting of young students (Abrantes, 2016; Bahls, 2015; Mcculloch, 1992; Giaretta, 2003). This social group represents the primary users of hostels when this type of lodging was created by Richard Schirrmann. In this sense, hostels are associated with student roots as they were conceived to house students during excursions and fieldwork developed by the professor (Mcculloch, 1992; Giaretta, 2003).

Another aspect to be highlighted refers to the backpacker root of hostels. The denomination backpacker is widely used "[...] to describe tourists who travel independently, flexibly, and economically" (Volante, 2011, p. 15). Authors associate travelers known as backpackers, with the "cheap rates" practiced by hostels such as Timothy and Teye (2009) and Tavares and Brea (2017). Thus, the origins of the hostel are commonly linked to young backpackers, and also to independent international tourists. Because they travel on a tight budget, these tourists demand affordable accommodations. (Tavares and Brea, 2017).

Still, some claim that hostels have stimulated backpackers to frequent such spaces (Nash, Tyne and Davies, 2006). Salviato (2020, p. 23) corroborates this perspective when he states: "This style of accommodation attracts a particular type of tourists seeking this special kind of experience, those tourists are commonly known as backpackers".

Other studies believe that this accommodation is directly related to the backpacker guest profile, and vice versa (Macedo, 2018; Keeley, 2001; Pearce, 1990). This type of tourist is known to be generally young, to flexibly plan their trip, to perform activities that generally differ from mass tourism, and to stay for a longer period in the visited destination (Nash, Tyne and Davies, 2006). Besides, the backpacker carries trends such as traveling to different locations in the same destination, using public transportation and local services, greatly impacting tourism and the local economy (Macedo, 2018).

Since Australian professor Philip L. Pearce first coined the term backpacker at a conference in 1990 (O'regan, 2021), several studies in varying contexts have continuously attempted to understand and interpret the backpacker phenomenon and its nuances. Somehow, hostels were also contemplated in these studies, as a backdrop for discussions about backpackers (Pearce, 1990; Firth and Hing, 1999; Nash, Tyne and Davies, 2006; Silva, 2006; Chitty, Ward and Chua, 2007; Khozaei, Hassan and Khozaei, 2010; Filho, 2010; Musa and Thirumoorthi, 2011; Ciccio, Teixeira and Salles, 2011; Lai, 2013; Kerry, 2013; Hory, Major, Müllner and Benko, 2017; Brochado and Rita, 2018; Pramudita, 2019; Chen, Zhao and Huang 2020; O'regan, 2021).

That said, one commonly finds research associating hostels with backpackers because they are the majority public in these environments (Nash, Tyne and Davies, 2006; Volante, 2011; Abrantes, 2016; Cró, 2018). Thus, much of the studies on these topics positively highlight this synergy. "There are several authors who have made, in a more scientific context, positive contributions to the definition of the hostel" (Abrantes, 2016, p. 184). The author goes on to state that a large part of these hostel concepts are "[...] associated with the definition of youth or backpacker tourism, where this issue is addressed with much more research depth, than the hostel concept" (Abrantes, 2016, p. 184).

However, there is a problematic issue. The fact that the term backpacker is constantly associated with the hostel means that a larger number of studies, and with more depth, prioritize the bibliographic production about this type of traveler, rather than the means of lodging chosen by him/her. Thus, publications on hostels are still scarce. This endorses the vast backpacker literature found in the assessment of national and international hostel publications (Pereira and Bahls, 2017; Pereira and Gomes, 2021).

Certainly, the scientific production about the backpacker contributes, to some extent to boost research and publications about hostels, as the hostel/backpacker relationship enables constant feedback in the studies about both topics. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find understandings of hostel disconnected from the word backpacker, which can generate reductionism and hinder the progress of productions about this type of venture.

Despite the misunderstandings that the symbiosis hostel and backpacker can cause, as barriers, subordination, reductionism, and terminological-conceptual confusions, the overlap of terms is perennial in the studies of the area. It is common for authors to state that hostels are "[...] the most visible, material and symbolic part of the backpacker culture" (Silva and Kohler, 2015, p. 5). According to Falcão (2016, p. 2), researching backpackers means digging into these subjects and also into their specific practices, which mobilizes an "incalculable number of symbolic representations." These representations unfold in the most distinct contexts, including hostels, which provide facilitating spaces for these travelers' countless practices.

This overview highlights that backpackers' peculiarities are noticed in hostels. Falcão (2017), for example, discusses the unique spirit of collectivity that pervades backpackers during the process of living in a hostel. This is since it is a public that, commonly, likes to socialize and interact with other people during their stay in these environments. This allows the establishment of bonds of friendship and cultural exchange. These aspects are highlighted in several works that have been published on the subject in the last decades (Pearce, 1990; Firth and Hing, 1999; Giaretta, 2003; Nash, Tyne and Davies, 2006; Silva, 2006; Chitty, Ward and Chua, 2007; Khozaei, Hassan and Khozaei, 2010; Filho, 2010; Musa and Thirumoorathi, 2011; Ciccio, Teixeira and Salles, 2011; Lai, 2013; Kerry, 2013; Hory, Major, Müllner and Benko, 2017; Brochado and Rita, 2018; Pramudita, 2019; Chen, Zhao and Huang, 2020; O'regan, 2021).

Falcão (2017, 2016) studying the hostel context, detected some of the characteristics coming from backpackers: interest for information exchange, openness to interact with other guests, availability to share their life stories and personal experiences, sharing of feelings relevant to the creation of social bonds, even if they are temporary and/or ephemeral. The author concludes that the main reason backpackers choose hostels to stay is due to the possibilities of sociability provided by this type of accommodation. She states that "meeting people,

exchanging ideas and information, finding companions to undertake an itinerary becomes their motivation" (Falcão, 2016, p. 9).

The characteristics of the backpacker culture make the "hostels provide a more informal atmosphere, with more focus in the social factor, promoting interaction among guests and staff" (Salviato, 2020, p. 22). In other words, the backpacker culture transforms the hostel into a means of hosting a "[...] relaxed environment, conducive to meeting people to form friendships around the world and to know the most, with the least expenditure" (Giaretta, 2003, p. 78).

As already mentioned, it is common for backpackers to be mentioned in the bibliography as being the majority guest type in hostels. However, several pieces of research show an increasingly wider and more diversified public in these spaces. This happens after hostels were recognized and valued as important means of accommodation for tourism in general, and not only for backpackers (Giaretta, 2003).

Thus, the target audience of the hostel is not restricted to a specific category. The desired audience includes people with different profiles in terms of social class, education, and age, among others (Nash, Tyne and Davies, 2006; Giaretta, 2003). The plurality of subjects that seek this means of lodging shows itself to be hermetic and difficult to categorize. However, even characterized by pulsating diversity, studies reveal that young people are still the majority of the frequenters of these spaces. "More than labels, younger tourists seek experiences, conviviality, new friendships, and integration into new societies, where hostels have an important presence" (Abrantes, 2016, p. 178). For the author, this type of establishment is more likely to meet the needs and interests of young people.

Thus, in the hostel context, the emphasis is on: "They're focused on young people but everyone is welcome and people from all walks of life can mix freely in a youth hostel" (Simpson, 2015, p. 1). Therefore, there is no specific age limit to stay in a hostel, evidencing an enlargement in terms of the market (Silva, 2015).

Today, increasingly, intergenerational data is put in evidence in this process of interaction between the public who stay in hostels. The experiences of these places are also broadened, through the blending of cultures of different matrices and the contact with different traditions. (Silva, 2015).

As discussed in this section, some studies have problematized the term backpacker, in an attempt to overcome the reductionist discourse that this term carries. The term backpacker does not belong only to the universe of young people. Besides, it is used more by the actors involved in the tourism market and by public agents, than by the travelers themselves. "Just as not all those who stay in hostels are young people, not all those who travel in an extended way carry backpacks. This is an interpellation of the field; it is an insult to the cliché reproduced in brochures, blogs or films" (Silva, 2015, p. 183-184).

Some authors suggest the adoption of new terminology, consistent with the motivational plurality and the praxis of these subjects: "hedonistic travelers". This is Silva's (2015, 2018) proposal, inspired by O'Reilly's research in 2006, to overcome this limiting discourse.

Another focus addressed by part of the scientific production on hostel concerns the relationship between hostel and hotel, as discussed below.

Hostel: a hotel segment?

Authors such as Campos (2005) believe that hostels were created by hotels and, therefore, are considered as their extension, but in a cheaper, more basic, and simpler format. For this author, these two means of lodging have different characteristics, aiming to meet different guest profiles. Thus, they vary about structural issues, pricing, services, location, products, etc. This variety of options illustrates, thus, the typology marking the wide range of lodging existing in different countries around the world.

Other studies, however, highlight the structural, service, and experience differentiation between hotel and hostel (Bunda, 2014; Oliveira-Brochado and Gameiro, 2013). A research developed by Bahls and Pereira (2017) found a "conceptual misrepresentation" of hostels in part of the traditional literature on means of lodging (Deus, Delvizio and Nascimento, 2016; Braga, 2003; Garcia, 2004; Vieira and Cândido, 2003; Ferri and Ruschmann, 2000; Ferreira, 1975). Besides considering the hostel as a derivation of the hotel, this production approaches it as a simple and economical alternative to conventional hotels, which offer accommodations with a minimum of comfort, hygiene, and safety for people who travel with few financial resources (Bahls and Pereira, 2017).

When incorporated into the hotel logic, we observe a problematic issue: the subordination of the hostel. This leads to an asymmetric relationship, in which hotels are in a position of superiority and, consequently, hostels are in a lower level.

As seen, the hostel was envisioned and disseminated as a means of accommodation that reflected the home and classroom of the youth of its day. This is not just about providing low-cost accommodation. The proposal of these spaces seeks "[...] to put people in contact with the culture of big cities and with nature, proposing a simpler way of life, seeking understanding between people of different cultural heritages" (Bahls, 2015, p. 299).

Therefore, when looking at the reasons that made the genesis of the hostel possible, one sees a tendency not to follow the standards imposed by the hotel market. Therefore, it can even be said that the hostel represents a movement that subsists and resists the logic imposed by the hotel business. However, paradoxically, adaptations are observed, as well as incorporating elements related to the hotel context to survive in the market.

Hostels are far from providing only low-cost accommodation since it is possible to find luxury hostels. These so-called boutique hostels offer a high standard of quality, sophistication, and refinement, and have a physical structure similar to a luxury hotel (Bahls and Pereira, 2017).

However, there is a core issue that differs a hostel from a hotel: human interaction. This is not to say that a hotel does not value interaction, but hostels consider it as a basic component of the lodging experience. This interaction sometimes goes beyond formalities and roles, constituting the deepening of social ties. This is a hallmark of hostels, in the sense of promoting and stimulating human interaction.

And, because it is so, it appears as a widely spread value in studies, confirmed by several scholars in the area, in the most diverse researched scenarios, both nationally and internationally (Heath, 1962; McCulloch, 1992; Giaretta, 2003; Hetch and Martin, 2006; Satyro and Pinheiro, 2006; O'regan, 2010; Volante, 2011; Saraiva, 2013; Oliveira and Falcão, 2013; Fischmann, Andrade and Kim, 2014; Bahls, 2015, 2018; Silva and Kohler, 2015; Simpson, 2015; Silva, 2015, 2018; Abrantes, 2016; Canan, Ferreira and Casagrande, 2017; Bahls and Pereira, 2017; Mané, 2017; Cró, 2018; Thomazi, 2019; Pereira, 2019; Seyitoğlu, Çakar and Karataş, 2020).

Thus, the hostel appears as an alternative to hotels, considered "[...] a social and alternative means of accommodation, which promotes, above all, the interaction, understanding, and union between people from different cultures" (Bahls, 2015, p. 8). In this logic, the aforementioned perspective opens doors to the countless possibilities beyond a hotel derivation. In this human relational web, existing an interweaving of practices emerged by the interaction between guests, hosts, and local culture. Making it a type of lodging with a "[...] unique and differentiated genesis and, therefore, with different philosophical roots than hotels" (Bahls and Pereira, 2018, p. 6).

In short, hostels are often invisible in the traditional bibliography on lodging. Thus, hostels are perceived as mere extensions of hotels, appearing in a "simplistic" and "rudimentary" version. This point of view finishes by strengthening a discourse that subordinates the hostel, undervalues the historical legacy and the nature of this type of lodging, disregarding its dynamics and the conceived context.

Hostel: a low-cost means of lodging?

It was found that studies and surveys about hostel, in this research, link this means of lodging to the low-cost segment (Salviato, 2020; Tavares, 2018; Tavares and Brea, 2017; Abrantes, 2016; Valls, 2016; Volante, 2011). "The hostels emerged within the modernist movement of the low-cost hotel industry segment" (Tavares and Brea, 2017, p. 3). As a result, it is often seen as a type of low-cost accommodation, when compared to a traditional type of accommodation (Gallon and Hellmann, 2019; Toledo, 2017; Rashid-Radha, 2015; Dallen and Teye, 2009; Dubin, 2003; Swift, 2002).

Although affinities can be observed with the low-cost segment, not all authors who have researched the topic appropriate this terminology. Thus, when referring to hostels, they prefer to qualify them as "economical", "cheap", or "accessible" means of lodging. Both possibilities have practically the same meaning, but what changes is only the chosen terminology.

So, it is usual to find works from the tourism industry using expressions such as "students and low-income people" (Beni, 1998), "students on a tight budget" (Mancini, 2005), among others, associated with the hostel phenomenon, placing it as an affordable environment. Basically, "hostels are usually understood as low-cost accommodations options for budget travelers. The affordable rates, typically, arise from other business model than the mainstream hotels' model" (Salviato, 2020, p. 22).

To make affordability possible, hostels use strategies "such as the use of shared dormitories and different housekeeping" (Salviato, 2020, p. 22). Generally, beds are sold individually and not the room, as occurs in traditional means of lodging such as hotels. Thus, the reduction of the overnight rate is related to the room's fragmentation, turning them into collective dormitories (Silva, 2015; Abrantes, 2016). Fragmenting the room, turning it into a collective dormitory, therefore, is the principle that governs the reduction of overnight rates. The more beds there are in a dormitory, " [...] the lower the price charged for each night's stay" (Silva, 2015, p. 184). This feature associates the hostel with the low-cost segment and is commonly treated as a cheap means of lodging.

However, it is necessary to consider the rate variation that each hostel may have, due to the offer of additional items allowing to increase the rates charged. In addition to the basic unit offered by hostels (the bed), the fact of having a bathroom inside the dorm, air conditioning,

mini-bar, reading lights, and extra towels are some of the different items that can be included in the rate, raising it (Silva, 2015).

Regardless of the terminologies adopted in the scientific literature to define these endeavors ("low-cost"; "cheap"; "economical"; "affordable"; "reduced fares"), it is considered problematic to restrict them to the low-cost feature. On the one hand, the price can vary concerning the items offered. On the other hand, hostels have several singularities whose roots need to be better understood, as addressed in this article.

CONCLUSION

The hostel is a subject that has been studied since the early 1960s. Even with the expansion of the bibliographic material on this topic in the last 60 years, these advances are still timid. In this study, some of the distinctive features of the academic literature on hostels can be summarized as follows:

- Terminological confusion: this characteristic still prevails nowadays, since the vast majority of identified studies when investigating the topic focus on homeless or socially vulnerable people, to the detriment of those related to the hostel.
- This research identified many studies on the subject addressing the hostel superficially and secondarily.
- Many studies related to different means of lodging do not specifically refer to the hostel, and it is common to use the term as a synonym for the hotel.
- Emphasis on backpacker-related studies. In this context, the hostel is often approached in an accessory or episodic fashion. This reality is similar to the low-cost, a recurrent term in hostel studies.
- The predominance of studies focusing on management, market, and marketing.
- Scarce qualified academic production on hostels, with incipient research conducted at the master and doctoral levels.
- Scarcity of studies devoted to historicize, conceptualize, review the hostel topic, as well as map its state of the art.

Regarding the terminological difficulties, HI adopted some measures aiming to eliminate the confusion between hostels and hostels, as this link ultimately attributed a pejorative sense to the hostel. The lack of distinction between hostel and hostel still is a problematic issue both in the social imaginary and in studies on the subject. For this reason, even though the hostel is an English term, HI Brazil adopted and disseminated this same term in Portuguese (HI, 2015).

The use of the backpacker, low-cost and other terms are not the most appropriate or the only ones to understand hostels. Questioning this type of positioning and theoretical construct is increasingly necessary, since the different theoretical reflections stimulate the construction of new ideas and approaches, encouraging interest and participation in studies on the subject (Isayama and Sousa, 2006).

The findings of this study highlight the need to overcome an understanding of hostel that reduces it to a "cheap", "budget", "low-cost", "backpacker" type of lodging, and as if it were just an "extension of a hotel". These were the most recurrent aspects in the academic discussions about hostels. Without denying the studies that reinforce these understandings, and their possible contributions to the systematization of knowledge about the hostel, it should be clear that time has come to understand the phenomenon from its countless possibilities, practices, understandings, senses, and meanings. We propose to see it in its different ways of manifesting, signifying, and generating meaning in the most distinct contexts.

One of the ways to advance the academic discussions relates to the problematization of the restrictive features usually associated with the hostel. It is also necessary to face the gaps perceived in the academic production about this phenomenon.

It is noteworthy that the academic production on the hostel includes a diverse universe of researchers, areas, and studies in many different contexts, highlighting the multidisciplinary nature of the topic (Pereira and Gomes, 2021). Thus, in the existing bibliographical discussions, one sees a trend to approach it from the most distinct perspectives. This shows that the hostel is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, pervading time, spaces, and practices.

According to Goulart (2005, p. 2), the diversity and epistemological richness of studies in a given area "[...] tends to contribute to the discussion on the subject, enabling the opening of new fronts in the search for improved knowledge to approach the problem through the development of new paradigms". As discussed in this article, some progress has already been observed in research that transcends traditional approaches about hostels (Silva, 2015; Bahls, 2015; Thomazi, 2019).

It is essential to deepen knowledge about the hostel as a social space, interrelated to the subjects comprising it, appropriating it, and giving meaning to its dynamics through social practices and the establishment of relationships in this context. These are some of the gaps identified in the analyzed academic production since the predominant focus of hostel studies is on management, market, and marketing (Bahls and Pereira, 2017).

In this perspective, it is observed that discussions about hostel require new studies on the implications of different features, such as human interaction, socialization, human development, and contact with the local culture and community (Thomazi, 2019; Toledo, 2017; Bahls, 2015). These perspectives dialogue directly with the genesis of the hostel but still require further study. Authors such as Rashid-Radha, Lockwood and Nolan-Davis (2016) have already signaled in their research the incipency of studies regarding social interaction in hostels and its implications in this type of accommodation experience.

Given this, the necessary and urgent discussion formulated here is reiterated, due to the scarcity of studies and research that highlight the paradoxes, tensions, and ambiguities existing in the dynamics of a hostel. Although some systematizations regarding the value aspects of hostels contribute to studies on this topic, the expansion of discussions and new fronts and dialogues regarding this type of accommodation are necessary to deepen and advance the debates.

In line with the understandings of the authors already cited in this investigation, it is understood that the hostel can be understood from the human interactions that compose it, leading individuals to create bonds and friendships. In this sense, the hostel preserves a value-

laden character in terms of strengthening and deepening human relationships, promoting interaction between individuals.

This means that human interactions in the context of a hostel need to be looked at and (re)looked at beyond themselves, and not as an end in themselves that culminates in the possibility of forming bonds and friendships, but as a means that expands, that transcends, mobilizing people, places, practices and new plots. The research contemplated here proposed to look at and advance this perspective, seeing the hostel within what is characteristic of it (human interactions, low-cost, backpackers and young students, and the connection with the hotel) and simultaneously encompassing the differences.

In this regard, people are inserted as the core of a hostel, where the process of human interactions is made up of these encounters and misunderstanding of subjectivities, of subtleties, of interpersonal and intercultural exchanges and, also, of the limitations and tensions arising from this act of interaction of the subjects.

It can be concluded that the hostel consists of a polysemic sociocultural space, marked by and for the conviviality between the host and guest subjects. These subjects appropriate and give meaning to the hostel dynamic through the intertwining of leisure, tourism, hospitality, and commensality practices, revealing a field of complex human interactions.

This article covers some limitations related to the impossibility of appropriating the entire global academic production on the subject. The analyses made represent a theoretical effort to subsidize and stimulate future studies. Therefore, diversifying, innovating, and renewing the topics addressed in publications about hostels is necessary and urgent, as well as questioning those already perpetuated. Although it is a challenging task, it has the potential to open a range of possibilities, discussions, and new fronts to improve knowledge on the subject.

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DECLARAÇÃO DE DISPONIBILIDADE DOS DADOS

Todos os dados relevantes estão disponíveis no texto.

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