Exploring the Motivations and Travel Characteristics of Backpackers in Malaysia

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Abstract : Although backpackers' preference for cheap accommodation provides a convenient basis to differentiate them from the other tourists, it explains little about how backpackers might differ from one another. This paper explores the motivation and travel characteristics of backpackers in Malaysia. A study was conducted in 2005 wherein 403 self-administered questionnaires were distributed and 262 usable questionnaires were received. The results confirmed that this segment is indeed heterogeneous; backpackers pursued different activities, had different motivations and exhibited different destination choice behaviors. Statistical analysis further revealed a sub-segment comprising of older travelers with different preferences and characteristics. However, results were surprisingly robust in terms of what backpackers have in common with one another. This has practical implications for tourism stakeholders as they could focus their product offerings to a group of tourists with consistent sets of attributes. At the same time, stakeholders could address nuances in backpacker motivations through their service deliveries.

Keywords: Backpacker tourism, Motivations, Travel characteristics, Malaysia

Introduction

For a long time now, Malaysia has been a key stopover for the backpackers' journey through Southeast Asia. However, this segment of tourists receives little attention from the local policy makers because the backpackers' low budget, low impact methods of travel are thought to be inconsequential to the tourism industry here. A dearth of data and local publications on backpacker tourism has reinforced this perception. Instead, a key focus of tourism policies in Malaysia is to draw tourists from the "non-traditional" markets like the Middle East and China (EPU 2001). Although tourist arrivals and tourism receipts from these new markets saw strong growth, there is a declining pattern of tourist arrivals from the "traditional" developed economies in both absolute and relative numbers, vis-à-vis Singapore and Thailand. What this suggests is that tourism stakeholders in Malaysia need to find new ways to segment its "traditional" markets and identify niche segments so that the needs of these tourists can be better satisfied.

In an exploratory study of the international backpackers to Malaysia, Lee (2005) has uncovered that this segment of tourists is indeed significant and a high yield one. An estimated 300,000 foreign backpackers visit the country and contribute some RM 1.3 billion (USD 342 million) to Malaysia's Gross Domestic Product each year. On average, a backpacker spends RM 4,427 (USD 1,165)

during his or her trip in Malaysia compared with the average tourist's expenditure of RM 1,888 (USD 496). This is more than twice the average expenditure of all tourists to Malaysia. Interestingly, this result is consistent with that of the Australian Tourist Commission (2004). By staying at hostels and guesthouses, a backpacker is able to cut down his expenditures on accommodation and stretch his budget to justify the longer periods of travel. Through his more extensive travels, a backpacker is also able to disperse the multiplier effect across a wider geographic area than the average tourist does.

Research Purpose and Significance

The main purpose of this study is to determine how international backpackers to Malaysia might differ from one another by exploring their motivations and travel characteristics. Specifically, the objectives of this study are:

(a)   To examine backpackers' activities;
(b)   To understand backpackers' motivations;
(c)   To examine backpackers' destination choice behaviors; and
(d)   To establish the relationships of these parameters against demographic variables.

Backpacker tourism is an area that is under researched in Malaysia. Existing works tended to explore the subject from a sustainability angle or the economic contribution by this group of tourists but little is understood about the backpackers in terms of their motivations and travel characteristics. In this respect, this study is timely and justified.

Literature Review

"Backpackers" is a term that is well known and accepted by the tourism industry in Australia, Southeast Asia and New Zealand. Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) defined backpackers as young and budget-minded tourists who exhibit a preference for inexpensive accommodation, an emphasis on meeting other people, an independently organized flexible itinerary, longer than brief vacations and an emphasis on informal and participatory recreation activities. Backpacker demographics have been fairly consistent in various studies of backpackers traveling in Australia (Jarvis 1994, Loker-Murphy and Pearce 1995, TNT Magazine 2003, Moshin and Ryan 2003), New Zealand (NZTB 1999), South Africa (Visser 2004), Southeast Asia (Riley 1988, Spreitzhofer 2002, Jarvis 2004) and global (Richards & Wilson 2003). Majority of backpackers would fall in the "20-30" age bracket, evenly distributed between males and females, highly educated, with a significant proportion possessing at least a degree. Most backpackers were also likely to come from Europe, with the UK constituting the largest market. For backpackers traveling in Southeast Asia, a typical route would start off in Bangkok, through South Thailand into Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore (or across to Sumatra) before hopping over to the Indonesian islands of Java and Bali

and then on to Australia. The route may be reversed or could include side trips to Vietnam or the Philippines (Hampton 1998, Pearce 1990).

Although backpackers' preference for cheap accommodation provides a convenient basis to differentiate them from the other tourists, there is now consensus in literatures that the backpacker segment is not a homogeneous one. Backpackers' motivations are one such aspect that is highly differentiated. A rich source of literature exists to conceptualize tourist motivations; e.g. Dann's (1977) anomie and ego-enhancement to explain the "push" factors that are internalized in the tourist and Gray's (1970) concepts of sunlust and wanderlust to explain the "pull" factors of a destination. By and large, these theories are equally relevant in explaining backpacker motivations. However, there are some salient features that characterize the backpackers.

Due to their length and span of travels, backpackers would fall under the category of what Graburn (1983) described as rites-of-passage tourism (as opposed to annual vacation). Rites-of-passage tourists are found in conjunction with major changes in status such as adulthood, divorce or career changes. In other words, they are at a juncture in life and traveling gives them time to contemplate what they want to do with their lives (Riley 1988). This type of tourists, exemplified by the backpackers, also reflects a certain degree of cultural self-confidence in order for them to travel out of their familiar surroundings. Rather than deriving satisfaction found in confirming the expected and cognitively familiar, backpackers tend to value serendipity - the pleasure of coming across the exciting and unexpected (Graburn 1983). The ego-enhancement motives of backpackers also take a slightly different form here. Status among travelers is "based on length of time spent traveling, level of poverty while traveling and amount of discomfort experienced while traveling." This explains why "cheapness is essential" (Teas 1988). The less traveled route and more difficult way of getting there, the higher is the degree of mystique and status conferral (Riley 1988).

In Australia, Loker-Murphy (1996) revealed that not all backpackers had the same motive profile. Using Pearce's Travel Career Ladder as a framework, Loker-Murphy found four motive-based clusters suggesting that certain segments of the backpacker market are at a higher level in their travel career than others: Escapers/Relaxers, Social/Excitement-Seekers, Self-Developers and Achievers. She also reported that there were significant differences in cluster membership in terms of nationality, expenditure patterns, accommodation, activity structure preferences and destinations visited. Moshin and Ryan (2003) reported quite similar findings of backpackers in Northern Territory (Australia) using the push-pull motivation framework. The dominant push motives were to broaden knowledge about the world, to make new friends, preference of traveling lifestyle and self-testing, while the pull motives were advice of friends and relatives and a long desire to specifically visit Northern Territory.

Uriely, Yonay and Simchai's (2002) study of Israeli backpackers in India

produced four main classifications of backpackers in type-related aspects. The first classification, "experimental and experiential backpackers", combined alienation from their own culture with the quest for meaning in "Others" according to their level of interaction in the local "center" while traveling. The second classification, "humanistic backpackers", included those who might seek meaningful experiences in the centers of other cultures without being alienated from their own. The third classification, "diversionary and recreational backpackers" referred to those who were mainly interested in pleasure-related activities. The fourth classification, "multi-type backpackers", had features of the other three classifications and was more evident in the case of 'serial backpackers' who pursued one backpacking trip after another. However, the study also indicated that the backpackers complied with most of the conventional form-related attributes of the backpacking ideology, for example, staying at inexpensive accommodations, traveling by public means of transportation that are used mainly by the local population, duration of travel and flexible travel plans.

Backpacker activities are also varied. Richards and Wilson (2003) reported that the common activities that backpackers pursued during their travels included visiting historical sites / monuments, walking / trekking, sitting in cafes / restaurants, shopping and visiting museums. However, activities were highly differentiated according to the destination visited. Beach activities were popular for those visiting Thailand, Greece, Australia, India and South Africa; wildlife and nature-based activities for those visiting Australia and South Africa while Egypt, Germany, China and Ireland were the main destinations for visiting historical sites. Richards and Wilson also noted significant differences in the activities undertaken by males and females and age groups. For instance, female backpackers were more likely to go walking or trekking, to participate in cultural events, to sit in cafes and restaurants and to shop than males. On the other hand, male backpackers were more likely to either watch a sport or participate in sports/adrenaline activities. Younger travelers were more likely to visit nightclubs while the older travelers were more likely to participate in wildlife/nature observation activities.

Despite recent literature emphasizing backpacker heterogeneity, Cohen (2003) noted four possible differences that have not been systematically documented:

1. Differences between urban and rural enclaves in the degree of their demarcation, the kinds and nature of services provided and their functions in the backpackers' trip;

2. Differences among backpackers from different countries in the scope of their interactions with other backpackers (e.g. for some nationalities, they tend to restrict their interaction to their fellow countrymen);

3. Sub-cultural differences among backpackers (e.g. between the middle-class backpackers and backpackers of working class origins); and

4. Differences between young backpackers and those in older age groups.

These differences also pointed to a gap between backpacker theory and practice. While such a discrepancy is endemic in tourism studies, Cohen noted that it was particularly relevant in backpacker studies because the backpacker identity was more "ideology" loaded. The "ideology" that supposedly distinguished backpacking and mass tourism had become increasingly blurred. According to Cohen, a parallelism was developing between the two. For instance, the contemporary backpackers spent significant periods of time in various backpacker enclaves or on the road from one such enclave to the other. This was not unlike the mass tourists who moved from one tourist attraction to another.

Methodology

For the purpose of this study, the operational definition of a backpacker was taken to be one who had a preference for budget accommodation and who identified himself / herself as a "backpacker" or a "traveler". A quantitative survey was conducted from 1 January to 15 March 2005. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to various backpacker hostels that were listed in the Lonely Planet guidebook or popular Internet hostel booking portals such as Hostelword.com and Hostelz.com. The questionnaire consisted of questions relating to identity, transportation, expenditure patterns, activities, information sources, motivations and personal attributes.

Quota sampling was adopted and assigned to the 4 main backpacking "hubs" in Peninsular Malaysia, namely Kuala Lumpur, Georgetown (Penang), Melaka and Kota Bharu (Kelantan). The reasons why these towns/cities were chosen are briefly described below:

❖ Kuala Lumpur (KL) being the capital city of Malaysia;

❖ Melaka being the transit point between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur and a key tourist town in the west coast;

❖ Penang being the northern gateway into Thailand; and

❖ Kota Bharu (KB) being the eastern gateway into Thailand and a base to the islands in the east coast.

A total of 403 self-administered questionnaires were distributed. 262 usable questionnaires were received, giving a response rate of 65.0%. Data were then analyzed using the SPSS Version 11. Motivation and activities variables were reduced using Factor Analysis. These factors were also tested for reliability (Cronbach alpha). Those factors with reliable scores were further recoded and analyzed using various statistical tests like chi-square (independent samples t-test) and one-way ANOVA (post-hoc) to determine if there were any statistical relationships with other variables.

Results

Demographic Profile

The sample in this study had a larger proportion of males (60.3%) than females (39.7%). The majority of respondents were young, with 71% of the sample under 30 years of age. The mean age was 29.2; the youngest being 17 and the oldest being 72. They were also well educated, with 66.1% possessing a degree qualification and above. In terms of nationality / region, the UK/Ireland/Scotland group constituted the largest group and accounted for 33.2% of the sample. By contrast, Asians, which account for a significant proportion of all tourists to Malaysia, was underrepresented here. (Please refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE		FREQ	%	% (Cum.)	MEAN	MIN	MAX
Gender	Male	158	60.3	60.3			
	Female	104	39.7	100.0			
	Total	262	100.0				
Age	≤ 20	25	9.5	9.5			
	21 – 25	92	35.1	44.7			
	26 – 30	69	26.3	71.0	29.2	17	72
	31 – 35	41	15.6	86.6			
	≥ 36	35	13.4	100.0			
	Total	262	100.0				
Education Level	Completed post-graduate	29	11.1	11.1			
	Some post-graduate	19	7.3	18.4			
	Professional qualification	40	15.3	33.7			
	Completed degree	85	32.4	66.1			
	Some Tertiary	43	16.4	82.5			
	High / Secondary School	46	17.6	100.0			
	Total	262	100.0				
Work Experience	> 20 years	19	7.3	7.3			
	$10 < x ≤ 20$ years	45	17.2	24.5			
	$5 < x ≤ 10$ years	55	21.0	45.5	8.04	0.0	60.0
	$0 < x ≤ 5$ years	123	46.9	92.4			
	0 year	20	7.6	100.0			
	Total	262	100.0				
Nationality	UK / Ireland / Scotland	87	33.2	33.2			
	Scandinavia	32	12.2	45.0			
	Europe (ex Germany & Scandinavia)	31	11.8	57.3			
	Canada	24	9.2	66.4			
	Australia / New Zealand	23	8.8	75.2			
	Germany	19	7.3	82.4			
	USA	18	6.9	88.9			
	Asia	17	6.5	95.8			
	Others	5	1.9	100.0			
	Total	262	100.0				

The demographic profile of the respondents in this study corresponded closely with previous studies on backpackers and youth travelers such as Jarvis (1994), Loker-Murphy & Pearce (1995), TNT Magazine (2003), Richards & Wilson (2003). However, the gender distribution tended to be more balanced in the other studies. The higher percentage of males in this study could be due to sampling bias when the survey was conducted..

Activities

The top five activities that backpackers did or intended to do while in Malaysia were: 'sitting in cafes & restaurants' (3.47), 'visiting historical sites & monuments' (3.21), 'shopping' (3.14), 'observing wildlife & nature' (2.53) and 'visiting museums & art galleries' (2.53). (Please refer to Table 2)

Table 2 : Descriptive Statistics of Activities

Activities	N	Mean	SD
Sitting in cafes, restaurants	262	3.47	0.961
Visiting historical sites & monuments	262	3.21	1.090
Shopping	262	3.14	1.199
Observing wildlife / nature	262	2.53	1.243
Visiting museums / art galleries	262	2.53	1.297
Hanging out on beach	262	2.51	1.237
Night clubs / Pubs / Bars	262	2.48	1.280
Trekking	262	2.25	1.245
Cultural events / performances	262	1.92	1.118
Sports / adrenaline inducing activities	262	1.74	1.081
Watching sports	262	1.37	0.833
Learning language / craft	262	1.32	0.746
Working as volunteer	262	1.13	0.467
Academic study	262	1.13	0.550
Working to earn money	262	1.05	0.285

(Measured by a 4-point Likert scale : 1 = Will not do, 2 = Probably will do, 3 = Definitely will do and 4 = Already done)

From the list of 15 activities, 5 activities component were extracted using Factor Analysis. Barlett's Test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 590.326$, df = 105, p = 0.001) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure at 0.683 was adequate for the sample. The 5 components were outdoors, learning, history & culture, shopping and clubbing, with 56.445% of the total variance explained through the rotation sums of squared loading. Reliability test showed moderate internal consistency

for the overall scale (Cronbach's Alpha, α = 0.688) and on 4 of the components: 'outdoors' (α = 0.662), 'learning' (α = 0.535), 'history & culture' (α = 0.540) and 'shopping' (α = 0.561). However, consistency was weak on the fifth factor, 'clubbing' (α = 0.261), and was excluded in subsequent analysis. (Please refer to Table 3).

The factor scores were further analyzed using t-test (independent samples) and ANOVA (one-way) test to determine if there were any difference in the mean scores among gender, nationalities and age groups. T-test results showed that there was no significant difference in the mean scores for the "activities" factors between males and females. ANOVA test result also did not show any significant difference in the mean scores among the nationalities. However, ANOVA test showed that difference in the mean scores was significant for the 'outdoor' factor between the age groups ($F = 2.786$, $p = 0.027$). Post-hoc tests (with Tukey's equality variance assumed) revealed that the difference in mean scores between the '26 - 30' (μ = 9.8696) and the 'over 36' (μ = 7.8857) age groups was significant ($p = 0.037$).

Table 3: Principal Component Factor Analysis of Activities

Activities Variables	Activities Component				
	Outdoor	*Learning*	*History & culture*	*Shopping*	*Clubbing*
Trekking	0.774				
Observing wildlife / nature	0.690				
Sports adrenaline inducing activities	0.670				
Hanging out on beach	0.563				
Academic study		0.734			
Learning language / craft		0.727			
Working as volunteer		0.554			
Working to earn money		0.447			
Visiting museums / art galleries			0.863		
Visiting historical sites & monuments			0.736		
Cultural events / performances			0.395		
Shopping				0.831	
Sitting in cafes, restaurants				0.738	
Night clubs / Pubs / Bars					0.740
Watching sports					0.596
Cronbach's Alpha	**0.662**	**0.535**	**0.540**	**0.561**	**0.261**

Varimax with Kaiser Normalization (Total Variance Explained: 56.445%)

It can be inferred here that the older group had a lesser tendency to participate in the more physical 'outdoor' activities compared with the younger group. This result seemed to suggest that even within the backpacker segment, a sub-segment comprising of older and more matured travelers exists.

Travel Motivations

The top five motivations for backpackers to visit Malaysia were: 'to experience a new and different place' (μ = 4.23), 'to enjoy the country's environmental settings' (μ = 4.01), 'to meet and interact with the local people' (μ = 3.99), 'to relax' (μ = 3.95) and 'to seek adventure and pleasure' (μ = 3.92). (Please refer to Table 4)

From the list of 20 motivation variables, 5 components were extracted using Factor Analysis. Barlett's Test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 = 1680.592, df = 190, p = 0.001) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure at 0.851 indicated that factor analysis was appropriate for the sample. The 5 motivation factors were prestige, escape, culture, excitement and education with 57.536% of the total variance explained. Reliability test showed strong internal consistency for the overall scale (Cronbach's Alpha, α = 0.872) and on the 'prestige' (α = 0.811) and 'excitement' (α = 0.722) factors. Internal consistency was moderate for 'escape' (α = 0.572), 'culture' (α = 0.661) and 'education' (α = 0.661). (Please refer to Table 5)

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics by Motivation Statements

Motivation Statements	N	Mean	SD
Experience new & different place	262	4.23	0.935
Enjoy country's environmental settings	262	4.01	0.935
Meet & interact with the local people	262	3.99	0.766
Relax	262	3.95	0.948
Adventure & pleasure	262	3.92	0.954
Improve knowledge of country's history & culture	262	3.87	0.837
Escape day to day routines of life	262	3.74	1.142
Do exciting things	262	3.73	0.974
Offers value for money	262	3.53	0.977
Recreation & entertainment	262	3.48	0.954
A country in Southeast Asia that I ought to visit	262	3.41	1.035
Experience a simpler lifestyle than back home	262	3.22	1.234
Reevaluate & discover more about self	262	3.19	1.284
Free to do as I wish in a foreign place	262	3.10	1.283
Mix with fellow travelers	262	3.07	1.107
Tell friends about my travel experience	262	3.05	1.201
Spend time with people that I care deeply about	262	3.02	1.273
A talked about travel destination	262	2.87	1.035
Fulfill a life long dream	262	2.87	1.145
Many of my friends have not visited	262	2.66	1.227

(Measured by a 5-point Likert scale: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly agree)

Table 5: Principal Component Factor Analysis of Motivation Statements
Motivation Variables   Motivation Component

Motivation Variables	Motivation Component				
	Prestige	*Escape*	*Culture*	*Excite*	*Edun*
Many of my friends have not visited	0.799				
Tell friends about my travel experience	0.776				
Mix with fellow travelers	0.691				
Reevaluate & discover more about self	0.641				
Fulfill a life long dream	0.507				
A talked about travel destination	0.498				
Relax		0.683			
Spend time with people that I care deeply about		0.661			
Escape day to day routines of life		0.565			
Free to do as I wish in a foreign place		0.458			
Improve knowledge of country's history & culture			0.811		
Enjoy country's environmental settings			0.686		
Meet & interact with the local people			0.652		
Do exciting things				0.789	
Recreation & entertainment				0.706	
Adventure & pleasure				0.605	
A country in Southeast Asia that I ought to visit					0.691
Offers value for money					0.625
Experience new & different place					0.577
Experience a simpler lifestyle than back home					0.419
Cronbach's Alpha	**0.811**	**0.572**	**0.661**	**0.722**	**0.661**

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization (Total Variance Explained: 57.536%)

Motivation factor scores were analyzed to determine if there were any differences in the mean scores between gender (using independent samples t-test), nationalities and age groups (using one-way ANOVA). Results showed that there was no significant difference in the mean scores between gender groups and among nationality groups. However, ANOVA test results showed significant difference in the mean scores for the 'excitement' motivation factor among the age groups $(F = 3.532, df = 4, p = 0.008)$. Post hoc tests using Tukey's assumption of equal variance revealed a clear cut separation in mean scores between the 'over 36' and younger age groups. This finding seems to reinforce earlier suggestion of an older and more matured sub-segment. (Please refer to Table 6)

Table 6: Age groups vs. Excitement Motivation Factor Scores

Age Group	N	Mean Score (I)	Mean Score (J)	Mean Difference (I – J)	Sig.
≥ 36	35	9.8286			
≤ 20	25		11.4800	-1.6514*	0.045
21 – 25	92		11.4022	-1.5736*	0.005
26 – 30	69		11.3478	-1.5193*	0.012
31 – 35	41		11.0732	-1.2446	0.122
Total	**262**				

* Mean difference is significant at .05 level

Exploring the Motivations and Travel Characteristics of Backpackers in Malaysia

Destination Choice Behaviors

Responses of samples taken at the various survey locations, i.e. Kuala Lumpur (KL), Melaka, Penang and Kota Bahru (KB) reflected destination choices already made. With the exception of the Penang sample, the majority of the respondents were on their first visit to Malaysia. For 58.6% of the respondents from the Penang sample, this was not their first visit to Malaysia.

Independent samples t-tests performed on these location samples showed that there were significant differences among them in terms their entry points into Malaysia and their exit points. (Please refer to Tables 7 and 8 respectively). Predictably, respondents from the KL sample would tend to enter Malaysia via the main airport gateway at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) (45.5%). Likewise, those from Penang and Melaka would tend to enter the country via Thailand (55.6%) and Singapore (60.3%) border checkpoints respectively. However, it was surprising to note that 52.6% of the respondents from the Kota Bharu (KB) sample used the KLIA rather than overland via Thailand (42.1%), despite its proximity.

In terms of exit points from Malaysia, 50.0% of the KL sample used the KLIA, 40.7% of the Melaka sample used the Malaysia-Singapore border checkpoint and 62.5% of the Penang sample used the Malaysia-Thailand border checkepoint. In an abrupt reversal, 70.0% of the KB sample exit Malaysia overland via the Malaysia-Thailand checkpoint. The high percentage among the KB sample who entered the country using the KLIA and exit via Thailand suggest that this group of travelers were quite specific in their travel routes.

Table 7: Location samples - Entry Points Cross-tab

		M'sia-Thai	M'sia-S'pore	KLIA	Total	
Location Sample	KL	17.9%	36.6%	45.5%	100.0%	% of sample
	Melaka	20.6%	60.3%	19.0%	100.0%	
	Penang	55.6%	22.2%	22.2%	100.0%	
	Kota Bahru	42.1%	5.3%	52.6%	100.0%	
	All sample	24.4%	38.6%	37.0%	100.0%	

$(\pi^2 = 42.414, df = 6, p = 0.000)$

Table 8: Location samples - Exit Points Cross-tab

		M'sia-Thai	M'sia-S'pore	KLIA	Total	
Location Sample	KL	20.8%	29.2%	50.0%	100.0%	% of sample
	Melaka	27.8%	40.7%	31.5%	100.0%	
	Penang	62.5%	25.0%	12.5%	100.0%	
	Kota Bahru	70.0%	5.0%	25.0%	100.0%	
	All sample	30.6%	29.3%	40.1%	100.0%	

$(\pi^2 = 39.580, df = 6, p = 0.000)$

Although it would be premature to conclude any definite movement patterns here, the results do provide some clues that could be used for future studies. For instance, indications seemed to suggest an overland route from Singapore to Thailand along the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia and an overland route to Thailand via the east coast through the central region. The results also seemed to agree with Jarvis' (2004) contention of the "holiday backpacker" traveling for shorter periods and often on very specific routes. The KB sample seemed to reflect this.

T-tests performed for the 4 location samples against demographic variables like gender and nationalities did not show any significant differences. However, ANOVA test showed that there was a significant difference in the age profiles among the 4 location samples ($F = 3.669$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.013$). (Please refer to Table 9)

Table 9: Mean Age of Location Samples

Sample	N	Mean Score (I)	Mean Score (J)	Mean Difference (I – J)	Sig.
Penang	29	34.59			
KL	149		29.02	5.57*	0.029
Kota Bahru	20		28.45	6.14	0.141
Melaka	64		27.41	7.18*	0.007
Total	**262**				

* Mean difference is significant at .05 level

In general, the respondents in the Penang sample tended to be older and more experienced travelers. A possible explanation for this could be because Penang served as an administrative stopover for the more seasoned backpackers who were planning on an extended trip in Thailand. They would do so by first exiting Thailand, traveling around Malaysia and then re-entering Thailand for further travels in that country. Earlier results of high proportion of repeat visitors and entry-exit using the Malaysia-Thailand checkpoint among the Penang sample seemed to support this hypothesis.

Mean motivation factor scores for the 4 location samples were analyzed using ANOVA to determine if there were any significant differences among them. No significant differences were noted for 'escape', 'education' and 'prestige' factors. However, the differences were significant for the 'excitement' ($F = 4.402$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.005$) and 'culture' ($F = 2.944$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.034$) motivation factors.

(Please refer to Tables 10 and 11 respectively).

Table 10: Location Sample vs. Excitement Motivation Factor Scores

Sample	N	Mean Score (I)	Mean Score (J)	Mean Difference (I – J)	Sig.
Penang	29	9.7931			
Melaka	64		10.9844	-1.1913	0.090
KL	149		11.4027	-1.6096*	0.003
Kota Bahru	20		11.5500	-1.7569*	0.040
Total	**262**				

* Mean difference is significant at .05 level

Table 11: Location Sample vs. Culture Motivation Factor Scores

Sample	N	Mean Score (I)	Mean Score (J)	Mean Difference (I – J)	Sig.
Melaka	64	12.4063			
KL	149		11.5973	0.8089*	0.029
Penang	29		11.7931	0.1958	0.494
Kota Bahru	20		12.3000	0.7027	0.428
Total	**262**				

* Mean difference is significant at .05 level

For the 'excitement' factor, the Penang sample scored the lowest ($\mu = 9.7931$), particularly when compared with the Kuala Lumpur (KL) and Kota Bharu (KB) samples. This result was consistent with earlier results on the age profile of the Penang sample and the relationship between age and 'excitement' motivation factor.

For the 'culture' motivation, the Melaka sample scored the highest ($\mu = 12.4063$). This did not come as a surprise considering the strong association of Melaka with history and culture. However, it is unclear if this was an inherent motivation of the backpackers. As Melaka is neither a key transportation hub in nor out of the country, it is unlikely for Melaka to be the sole destination in Malaysia for the backpackers. Hence, it is possible that the location factor itself could have influenced the way the respondents filled up the survey questionnaire

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study set out with a premise that the backpacker market might be more complex than the basis of accommodation choice alone. By and large, it has confirmed this hypothesis by exploring the activities, motivations and destination choice behaviors of backpackers in Malaysia. Backpackers' activities may be

grouped along 5 factors, namely, outdoors, learning, history & culture, shopping and clubbing factors. Backpackers' motivations may be grouped into prestige, escape, culture, excitement and education factors. Differences also exist in the destination choice behaviors of backpackers in the places that they visited and how they got there. More significantly, this study has revealed from statistical analysis, the presence of a sub-segment comprising older and more matured travelers. The older backpackers pursued different activities, had different motivations and destination choice behaviors than the younger backpackers.

Results from this study, as well as other studies, have confirmed that the backpacker segment is indeed a heterogeneous one. However, the results from this study demonstrated a certain degree of robustness in terms of what backpackers had in common with one another. Statistical analysis did not reveal any significant differences of the variables in question between genders or among the nationality groups. Within limitations of the study, it is reasonable to conclude here that backpackers, apart from their preference for cheap accommodation, also shared certain attributes that were fairly consistent.

This has practical implications to tourism stakeholders particularly, the supply side industry entrepreneurs, because it would enable them to provide a set of consistent product offerings that meet the basic needs of backpackers. It would be uneconomical for the entrepreneurs to provide a myriad of product offerings to cater to sub-segments of backpackers whose differences are intangible and difficult to discern. After all, the key features in market segmentation strategies are that the target market must be identifiable, distinguishable and sufficiently large for it to be viable.

Nevertheless, stakeholders would be ignoring these differences at their own peril. We would argue here that stakeholders could improvise in their service deliveries to meet the needs of these backpacker sub-segments. For instance, differences in age groups among the backpackers warrant different promotional strategies in order to reach out to the intended audience. Insights on nuances in backpacker motivations could also help stakeholders to personalize their service approaches according to the individual backpacker.

Backpacker tourism is invariably an emerging area in tourism research and an area that is still relatively un-researched among local academia and tourism planners in Malaysia. There is a need to progress beyond abstract concepts to more empirical validation from a home country perspective. One possible area for future research could be a study into the spatial travel patterns of backpackers in Malaysia and Southeast Asia. The significance of such a study is that tourism

planners could benefit from understanding not only the transportation choice considerations of backpackers but also in their destination selection process. This in turn would enable tourism planners of second tier destinations like Sabah and Sarawak to position their states to attract the backpackers. As noted in Riley (1988) and Cohen (1972), the roles played by the backpackers in spearheading mass tourism cannot be underestimated and these states have much to gain by them. Further research could contribute to the global understanding of the backpacker phenomenon.

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