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# Travel motivations of first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers

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## Abstract

This study explores travel motivations of first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers. Data were obtained through an online survey administered to a convenience sample of Danish backpackers. Using explorative factor analysis on 40 motivational variables drawn from the research literature, the study delineated eight push and five pull motivational factors. Among them, ‘*Stimulation*’, ‘*Host-site Involvement*’, and ‘*Nature*’ are the three most important motivational factors. *Sun and Beach*, *Gastronomic Experiences*, *Recognition* and *Volunteering* are the least rated motivational factors. Additionally, the study detects differences in motivational factors between first-time, repeat, and serial backpacker trips. While first-time and repeat backpackers only differ on self-actualisation and gaining recognition, factors which are rated higher among first-time backpackers; serial backpackers rate eight of the thirteen motivational factors lower than first-time backpackers. Thus, the results support a quest for a more detailed classification of backpackers, instead of the traditional first-time versus repeat backpacker distinction. Implications for academics and practitioners as well as suggestions for further research are provided at the end of the article.

## Keywords:

Backpacker, motivation, travel career, first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers, social influence

## Introduction

In its everyday use, the term backpacker typically describes tourists who are self-organised and travel to multiple destinations with a flexible itinerary, where not all is booked prior to departure. It is also a general belief that backpackers are youthful and cost-conscious, are on longer trips than conventional holidays and prefer accommodation that facilitates social interaction, such as hostels and/or dormitories (Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995; Pearce et al., 2009). Backpackers represent an important target group for destinations and travel providers as they tend to spend more money than mainstream travellers, due to longer durations of stay (Alves et. al., 2016). In a more general sense, backpackers have also been viewed as a particularly interesting group of tourists as they can be considered destination pioneers and travel trendsetters. Destinations that offer sights and services beyond the standard may benefit from the backpackers who tag and share travel novelties widely on social media.

The emergence and growth of backpacker enclaves and service infrastructures dedicated to backpackers' demands are well-documented (Maoz, 2007; Riley, 1988; Sørensen, 2003). O'Reilly (2006) and Sørensen (2003) reasoned that the mainstreaming of the backpacker experience has lowered the entry threshold, thus making backpacker trips more accessible to larger and more diverse groups of travellers. Consequently, several researchers have provided evidence about the significant heterogeneity across nationalities, age, gender, and individual travel experiences (Hecht and Martin, 2006; Huang and Hsu, 2009; Larsen et al., 2011; Loker-Murphy 1997; Pearce and Lee, 2005; Pearce and Foster, 2007; Richards and Wilson, 2004; Uriely et al., 2002).

Following Pearce's (1993) idea of a travel career, Loker-Murphy (1997), Paris and Teye (2010) and Uriely (2002) suggest that the backpacker's motivations are dynamic and therefore likely to change over time and evolve from the first and to the successive backpacker trips. Although remarks on repeat backpacker tourism are found in the backpacker research literature

(e.g. Jarvis and Peel, 2008; Kain and King, 2004), the question as to whether the second, third and subsequent backpacker trips over a travel career have similar features with the first trip when it comes to the motivational drivers, remains surprisingly little researched.

The main purposes of this study are twofold; to identify the push and pull factors that motivate Danish backpackers to go on a backpacker trip and to investigate how the importance of those motivational factors differs across first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers. With those purposes in mind, the study seeks to advance the current understanding of backpacker motivations in three ways. First, by providing knowledge of backpackers from a, until now, lesser researched nationality (Danish), the results add to the possibility of comparing backpacker motivations across various countries. Second, although prior studies (e.g. Paris and Teye, 2010) have examined differences in backpacker motivation in relation to the ‘travel career’ approach, this study is, to the authors’ knowledge, the first quantitative study examining differences in backpackers’ travel motivations across more stages of the ‘backpacker career’, thereby providing a more detailed categorisation of backpackers than the commonly used first versus repeat backpackers. Finally, Kelman’s (1958) three-step social influence model is introduced as a means to explain differences in backpackers’ motivations among first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers.

## **Literature review**

### *Backpackers’ travel motivations*

Why do people travel? Dann (1977, 1981) made a significant and early contribution in this direction in coining the so-called ‘push and pull framework’. Dann suggested that tourists are predisposed (‘pushed’) to travel by internal socio-psychological drivers such as escape, prestige, self-actualisation or adventure and they are attracted (‘pulled’) towards a specific destina-

tion by external forces characterizing the destination, e.g. natural sceneries, sunshine or historical sites. In other words, push factors trigger people to travel and pull factors determine where they will go. While Dann (1977, 1981) proposes that travellers use push and pull motives in a temporal sequencing, other researchers have reasoned that the factors are naturally related and may be in effect at the same time (Crompton, 1979; Uysal and Jurowski, 1994). In a study of pleasure vacationers' choice of destination, Crompton (1979) identified nine motivational factors and classified them into seven push factors (escape from a mundane environment, exploration and evaluation of self, relaxation, prestige, regression, enhancement of kinship relationships, and facilitation of social interaction) and two pull factors (novelty and education).

Since Crompton's (1979) work, several other researchers have examined the push and pull factors in different settings and among different types of travellers (Caber and Albayrak, 2016; Fodness, 1994; Jensen, 2015; Kozak 2002; Yoon and Uysal, 2005; Uysal and Jurowski, 1994). Kozak (2002) examined travel motivations of people from different countries (British and German) travelling to the same destination and he showed that people from the same country travelling to different destinations had different motivations. Although the results in many studies resemble Crompton's (1979) push and pull factors, it is generally believed that motivations are not universal for all people and may vary between destinations and travel type. Backpackers are no exception. Motivation has been at the core of backpacker research from the very beginning, both in the anthropological and the survey-based streams of research. At the risk of overly simplifying, the anthropological research stream on 'why backpackers travel' is conducted inseparably from research into social, spatial, and organisational matters of backpacker activity. Consequently, motivation is most often not theorised as a separate issue but rather viewed as something which contributes to a comprehensive understanding of backpackers (Sørensen, 2003; Maoz, 2007). In contrast, the survey-based and later arriving stream of research, displays considerable attention to distinct motivational factors (e.g. Chen and Huang, 2017; Chen et. al.,

2014; Hsu, Wang, and Huang, 2014; Larsen et al., 2011; Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995; Loker-Murphy, 1997; Ooi and Laing, 2010; Paris and Teye, 2010; Pearce and Foster, 2007). Such studies are often based on explicit theoretical motivation frameworks, i.e. the push and pull theory.

In both the explorative and the survey-based streams of research, escape from everyday work, quest for independence, personal development, making new friends, sense of discovery, and experiencing other cultures and environments are among travel motivations most often found to distinguish backpackers from mainstream tourists (Alves et al., 2016; Hecht and Martin, 2006; Maoz, 2007; Moshin and Ryan, 2003; Riley, 1988). Backpacker travel is often associated with a unique form of personal development (Chen et. al., 2014; Pearce et al., 2009). Alves et al. (2016) state that the quest for independence and search for adventure are among the most recurring travel motivations in the backpacker literature, the latter being an important part of the backpacker's identity building (Cohen, 2003; Elsrud 2001). Dayour (2013) found in a survey of 184 backpackers in Ghana that backpackers were motivated by three push factors (escapism, heritage, and adventure tourism) and three pull factors (service delivery, ecological and historical/cultural attractions) and further concluded that the backpackers' motivation differed across various background characteristics, i.e. gender, age, and nationality.

Several scholars have emphasised the importance of not viewing backpackers as one homogeneous group of travellers, different from mainstream tourists (Loker-Murphy, 1997; Chen et. al., 2014; Cohen, 2003; Sørensen, 2003; Pearce and Foster, 2007). In a study of tourists to Norway, Larsen et al (2011) identified few motivational differences between and backpackers and other tourists and they conclude that today's backpackers are not very different from mainstream tourists. Only the need for luxury and relaxation were found to differ among the groups, being less pronounced for backpackers.

The heterogeneity of backpackers' travel motivations was already suggested in Cohen's (1972) distinction between drifters and explorers. Riley (1988) found that while some backpackers were seeking pleasure, others were interested in meaningful experiences for self-development. Moshin and Ryan (2003) found country-related differences in travel motivations among backpackers in Australia. Studying backpackers across Australia, Loker-Murphy (1997) identified four clusters of backpackers based on their push and pull motives for backpacking, namely Escapers/relaxers, Social/excitement seekers, Self-developers, and Achievers.

### *Backpackers' travel career*

Researchers of travel motivations agree that travel motives are inherently dynamic and may therefore change over time, i.e., a tourist's prior experience with a destination or travel type may influence the motivations for an upcoming travel decision, being the same travel type or destination or not. In relation hereto, Pearce and Lee (2005), paralleling the five levels in Maslow's (1970) 'hierarchy of needs', coined the 'travel career ladder', describing tourist motivations as having five levels tourist motivation as having five levels, named from the bottom to the top: relaxation, safety/security, relationships, self-esteem and development, and fulfilment. One or more needs will motivate each travel decision, but one will dominate. Acknowledging that travel motives are expected to change over the course of life and as an effect of travel experience, Pearce and Lee (2005) argue that travel motivations from higher levels of the hierarchy will become more present, along with gaining more travel experience. However, later acknowledging the significant critique of the one-direction approach to the ladder, Pearce stated that travellers could start from different levels and even move in both directions throughout their travel career (Andreu et al., 2006).

Following the above-mentioned notion of changes in travel motivations, along with the traveller gaining more experience with a travel type; contributions on backpacker motivation suggest that travel motivations evolve from the first and to the successive backpacker trips (Hsu et al., 2014; Paris and Teye, 2010; Uriely et al., 2002; Yonay and Simchai, 2002). The scant evidence indicates that with more extensive travel experience, backpackers are less concerned with personal/social growth (Paris and Teye, 2010), intra-group status (Sørensen, 2003), and perceived risk (Adam, 2015).

Interestingly, backpackers' lesser concern with social personal/social growth and intra-group status over time may be explained by paralleling the backpackers' travel career to Kelman's (1958) general social influence theory, a well-established model for understanding how people adopt a particular behaviour or attitude. According to Kelman (1958), alterations in behaviour and mental status happen through three different process modes, namely compliance, identification, and internalisation. Compliance refers to the acceptance of social influence to obtain rewards and/or avoid punishment from significant others. At this stage, the person is mainly influenced by external forces, for example a wish to impress other people or prepare for upcoming work careers. This mode of influence seems applicable to first-time backpackers, who often take their backpacker trip in a gap period between education and their first job (Snee, 2014).

In the identification phase, the individual is no longer driven by the external forces but rather an inner urge to identify with a community, i.e. a sense of attachment and belonging to a backpacker community. For repeat backpackers, backpacker trips may very well be motivated by a need to retain, reinforce or ascertain his/her social identity as a backpacker, i.e. re-experiencing the backpacker life and eventually meet again with friends from the first backpacker trip. In the final stage, internationalization, the induced behaviour becomes integrated with the individual's own values and becomes a part of his/her own needs and norm, i.e. backpacker



trips become an important part of the individual's lifestyle. Cohen (2011) found that numerous backpackers go backpacking several times and even adopt backpacker travel as a part of their life, a phenomenon he conceptualised as 'life-style travellers', paralleling the term 'lifestyle consumption' central in the consumer culture theory literature (Binkley, 2007). Apart from illustrating characteristics of the backpacker heterogeneity, the term 'lifestyle-traveller' also calls attention to the ambiguities of the seemingly simple distinction between 'first' and 'repeat'.

## **Method**

### *Measurement instrument*

The data used in the present study were obtained as part of a larger online survey investigating a wide range of topics related to backpacker tourism, i.e. questions on the respondents' general travel behaviour, experience as a backpacker, motivations for backpacking and their travel planning process. An online survey was deemed an appropriate method as it made it possible to reach a large sample of backpackers with varying degrees of experience as backpackers. In the present study, only measures of travel motivation, backpacker experience and various socio-demographic variables including gender, age, and education are used.

The questionnaire included 40 motivational items selected from a thorough review of previous studies on travel motivation with a primary focus on literature focused on backpacking (e.g., Chen and Huang, 2017; Chen, Bao and Huang, 2014; Hsu, Wang, and Huang, 2014; Larsen et al., 2011; Loker-Murphy and Pearce, 1995; Loker-Murphy, 1997; Ooi and Laing, 2010; Paris and Teye, 2010; Pearce and Foster, 2007). The respondents were asked to rate the importance of the provided set of motives in relation to their recent backpacking trip. The importance was expressed on a 5-point scale, anchored from 1=not important at all to 5=very much important.

## *Data collection and sample profile*

Respondents of the survey were recruited through a convenience sampling in cooperation with a Danish travel agency specialising in backpacking. A link to the online questionnaire, along with an invitation to participate in the survey, were disseminated via the travel agency's newsletter and posted on the travel agency's homepage and Facebook site. A total of 477 questionnaires were completed. After removing 85 respondents who had not yet travelled as a backpacker, a pooled sample of 291 respondents was integrated into the present study. The first column in Table 1 displays the sample profile. With females and males representing 80.6% and 19.4% of the sample respectively, the sample is heavily skewed toward more females than males. Regarding age, most respondents, specifically 70.6%, are under 30 years of age. With respect to education, 53.3% reported upper secondary/high school as their highest education, 33.1% reported short/medium higher education, and 13.6% reported long higher education. The distribution of age and educational levels supports the commonly accepted perception of backpacking as a gap-year activity; the so-called rite-of-passage backpacker. In terms of destination, Asia and Oceania were chosen as destination by 56.0% and 21.5% of the respondents respectively, supporting those two areas as the most popular travel destinations among backpackers. Europe, Africa, and the Middle East were chosen by 12.5%, 11.0% and 5.1% of the respondents, respectively.

### INSERT TABLE 1

Of the total number of respondents, 36,8% had travelled once as a backpacker, 24.3% twice, 13.0% three times, 6.6% four times, and 19.3% five times or more. With the aim of comparing travel motivations across the three levels of backpacker experience (first-time, repeat, and serial), respondents were accordingly divided into three groups, based on their prior

number of backpacker trips. This endeavour included establishing categories represented by a reasonable number of respondents. Respondents having travelled as backpacker only once ( $n=144$ ) were named first-time backpackers. The 146 respondents having travelled as backpackers twice or three times were categorised as repeat backpackers.

Finally, the 101 respondents who had travelled as backpackers four times or more were named as serial backpackers. The last three columns in Table 1 displays sample profiles for each of the three backpacker groups. As in any other study that deals with cross-category comparisons, it is important that the characteristics of the comparison samples are as equivalent as possible on variables that are not expected to vary across the segments. In terms of age and education, it is evident that first-time backpackers are younger and have a lower level of education compared to repeat backpackers, which again are younger and have a lower degree of education compared to serial backpackers. This pattern was expected, since most backpackers in the second and third group are naturally older and have had more opportunities to pursue higher levels of educations. In contrast, the minor proportion of women among serial backpackers is not plausible and therefore, we must address this issue in our analysis.

In terms of destination, it is interesting to note that the popularity of Asia and Oceania is decreasing when backpackers move through the three experience levels. The proportion of backpacker trips to Europe and Africa is higher among serial backpackers when compared to less experienced backpackers.

## **Analysis and results**

The data analysis was conducted by means of a three-step process. First, backpackers' motivational factors were identified by using principal component analysis on the 40 motivation items. Next, the relative importance of the identified motivational factors was assessed by comparing

their computed mean-scores. Finally, ANOVA and subsequent post hoc t-tests were used to examine differences in motivation factors across the three experience levels.

### *Identifying backpackers' motivational factors*

The core aim of this study is to compare travel motivations for first-time and repeat backpackers, therefore an important element of this study is to produce reliable and valid measuring scales for those motivational factors previously found in the research literature as important for backpacking. Content validity was initially ensured by carefully reviewing the existing literature and research on backpacker motivation, followed by the authors' subjective judgments of the reasonableness of an item's inclusion in the domain of the constructs. A principal component analysis was used, followed by varimax rotation to identify the number and underlying structure of the underlying factors representing the 40 motivation items. The Kaiser-Meier-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (.900) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $p < .001$ ) proved that the data were appropriate to conduct a factor analysis (Hair et al, 2010).

#### INSERT TABLE 2

The first run produced a 12-factor solution with eigenvalues greater than 1, accounting for 70.2% of the total variance. However, an inspection of the rotated component matrix detected three items, namely 'being free, independent and open to everything on the journey', 'encounter unpredictable experiences', and 'getting away from traditional tourist areas', with low factor loadings ( $< .50$ ) or high cross-loadings ( $> .4$ ). The three items were deleted from the analysis, and a new factor solution was obtained on the remaining 37 items.

The second run produced a 12-factor solution explaining 72.3% of the total variance, thereby illustrating that most of the original variance is captured in the 12-factor solution. Results are displayed in Table 2. Most items loaded predominantly on one factor (range from 0.512 to 0.868) and minimally on others ( $< .4$ ), thereby indicating minimal overlap among the 12 dimensions (Hair et al., 2010). The communality of each variable ranged from 0.609 to 0.845, indicating that the variance in each of the 37 items was fairly captured by the 12 factors. Internal consistency between items representing each factor was assessed using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Three Cronbach's coefficients were between .60 and .70 and the remaining  $> .70$  suggesting an acceptable reliability (Hair et al., 2010).

The first factor appears to be associated with motivational aspects such as “travel in sunny countries” and “experiencing beautiful/exotic beaches”, and is labelled ‘*Sun and Beach*’. The second factor relates to “explore other cultures”, “interact with local people”, and “getting authentic and genuine experiences” and is labelled ‘*Host-site involvement*’. The third factor, labelled ‘*Self-actualization*’, relates to “challenging myself mentally”, “understanding more about myself”, and “getting new perspective on my own life”. The fourth factor, labelled ‘*Gastronomy Experiences*’ is associated with aspects such as “getting gastronomic experiences” and “experiencing different food cultures”. The fifth factor, ‘*Nature*’ relates to “nature experiences”, “being close to nature”, and “viewing beautiful nature sceneries”. The sixth factor, ‘*Low-budget Travel*’ entails “a cheap way to travel” and “getting many travel experiences for a small budget”. The seventh factor ‘*Escape*’ relates to “getting away from everyday life” and “not worrying about future”. The eighth factor, ‘*Recognition*’ is concerned with “being recognised for having travelled as a backpacker” and “visiting places that will impress my friends and family”. The ninth factor labelled ‘*Volunteering/Creating Friendships*’ includes “opportunity to perform charity work”, “creating joy and value for people living in the places I come”, and “creating friendships”. The tenth factor relates to “having once in a lifetime experiences”,

“having fun”, and “exploring the unknown” and is labelled ‘*Stimulation*’. The eleventh factor, ‘*Autonomy*’, relates to “plan my own trip” and “being independent”. Finally, the twelfth factor, ‘*Historical and Famous Sites*’ relates to “visiting famous sites and attractions” and “visiting cultural and historical sights”.

The 12 motivation factors resemble to a large extent factors found in prior travel motivation research (e.g. Chen and Huang, 2017; Chen et. al., 2014, Fodness, 1994; Hsu, Wang and Huang, 2014; Larsen et al., 2011; Paris and Teye, 2010; Pearce and Foster, 2007; Pearce and Lee, 2005; Wang, and Huang, 2014). Referring to the push-pull dichotomy, the resulting factors that this study contributes to, can be divided into seven push factors (‘*Self-actualise*’, ‘*Escape*’, ‘*Recognition*’, ‘*Volunteering/Creating Friendships*’, ‘*Stimulation*’, ‘*Autonomy*’, and ‘*Host-site Involvement*’) and five pull factors (‘*Sun and Beach*’, ‘*Gastronomy Experiences*’, ‘*Historical and Famous Sites*’, ‘*Nature*’, and ‘*Low-budget Travel*’).

### *Assessing the importance of motivational factors*

To assess the importance attributed to each factor, a ‘summated scale’ was employed by calculating the average score of the variables loaded against each factor. Summated scales are valid and reliable alternatives to factor scores (Hair et al., 2006). Summated scales are preferred over factor scores for the following two reasons; first, factor scores represent all variables loading on the factor, summated scales include only the variables loading highly on the scale. Therefore, interpretation tends to be more difficult using factor scores when compared to using summated scales. Second, the delineation of underlying factors and factor loadings (corresponding to the importance of the respective items) are data-driven, summated scales are calculated based on an initial set of variables with equal weights. Therefore, summated scales are more replicable than factor scores.

Factor mean scores and corresponding standard deviations are displayed in the last column in Table 2. Acknowledging that performing charity work and creating value for communities

are related to but basically different from seeking friendships, the three variables in factor 9 were split into two sub-dimensions; '*Volunteering*' (factor 9a) represented by the first two variables and '*Creating friendships*' (factor 9b) represented by the third variable. Mean scores are calculated for each of the two dimensions separately.

The results show that '*Stimulation*' (factor 10), '*Host-site Involvement*' (factor 2), and '*Nature*' (factor 5) are rated as the three most important motivational factors (mean scores 4.35, 4.28 and 4.25, respectively), followed by; in descending order of importance, '*Escape*' (factor 7; mean score 4.02), '*Autonomy*' (factor 11; mean score 3.92), '*Low-budget Travel*' (factor 6; mean score 3.86), '*Famous sites and Attractions*' (factor 12; mean score 3.80), '*Self-actualization*' (factor 3; mean score 3.74), '*Gastronomic Experiences*' (factor 4; mean score 3.50), '*Sun and Beach*' (factor 1; mean score 3.34), '*Creating Friendships*' (factor 9b; mean score 3.21), '*Recognition*' (factor 8; mean score 2.60), and '*Volunteering*' (factor 9a; mean score 2.46). Remarkably, four out of the five highest ranked motivational factors are push motivations, suggesting that backpackers' travel motivation is mainly triggered by internal forces, such as having fun, getting once-in-a-life-time experiences, and learning about other cultures.

Eleven out of thirteen factors have mean scores well above the midpoint of the scale (3.0), indicating that those factors are important motivations for backpackers. The last-mentioned two factors, '*Recognition*' and '*Volunteering*' have mean scores below the midpoint of the scale, suggesting that those factors are less important motivational factors. However, it is essential to notice the relatively large standard deviations on the two factors, which illustrate that the backpackers are more heterogeneous with respect to the importance hereof when compared to the importance of factors with lower standard deviations. In other words, although backpackers on the average rate those two factors lower than 3.0, there may still be a fraction of backpackers motivated by the factors when going backpacking. Indeed, an inspection of the factors' distributions detect that '*Recognition*' and '*Volunteering*' are rated 3.0 or higher by 38.1% and 37.9%,

respectively. It is also vital, when interpreting the low mean score for ‘*Recognition*’, to consider the possibility of social desirability bias in responses to this motivational factor. Respondents may simply not want to admit this motive as having importance for their decision to go backpacking. The fact that the ‘*Recognition*’ factor is generally rated low in travel motivation studies (e.g. Pearce and Lee, 2005) supports this notion.

To address the issue of our sample profile being skewed toward more females, we ran a series of independent t-tests comparing mean-scores for males and females on each of the motivational factors. Independent t-tests evidenced that males and females were similar in all motivations except two, namely recognition and gastronomic experiences; which are rated higher among males when compared to females. Thus, only for those two motivational factors, the results may be biased of skewness in gender.

### *Comparing motivational factors among first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers*

To analyse differences in motivation among first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers we ran a series of ANOVA analysis comparing mean ratings between the three backpacker groups. Group-means, standard deviations, F-test, and corresponding post hoc tests on the three experience levels are displayed in Table 3.

#### INSERT TABLE 3

The results indicate that backpackers – whether first-time, repeat, or serial backpackers – rank the 13 motivational factors in a similar order as for the backpacker population in general. Accordingly, the study cannot demonstrate a major shift in motivational priorities over the travel



career. However, when examining the importance in greater detail, eight of the thirteen motivational factors are significantly different among the segments, namely six push factors (*Stimulation, Escapes, Self-actualisation, Creating Friendships, Recognition* and *Volunteering*) and two pull-factors (*Visiting Famous Attractions* and *Sun and Beach*). The dominance of differences in push-related motivations suggests that especially the inner-driven motivations are lowered, along with gaining more experience as backpacker. A comparison across the three experience levels supports the relevance of a more detailed classification of backpacker experience instead of only distinguishing first-time and repeat backpackers. Indeed, post hoc tests show that first and repeat (second and third-time) backpackers are only significantly different from each other on two of the twelve motivational factors, namely *Self-actualisation* and *Recognition*, rated higher among first-time backpackers. Thus, apparently first-time and repeat backpackers are motivated by the same travel motivations, except for first-time backpackers' urge of self-development and gaining recognition.

Remarkably, serial backpackers rate nine of the thirteen motivations, namely *Stimulation, Escapes, Visiting Famous Attractions, Self-actualisation, Sun and Beach, Creating Friendships, Volunteering* and *Recognition* significantly lower than first-time backpackers, suggesting that serial backpackers are less pushed toward backpacking by those factors when compared to less first-time and repeat backpackers. Post hoc tests show that mean scores for *Low Budget Travel* are significantly higher among serial backpacker when compared to both first-time and repeat backpackers ( $p < .05$  and  $p < .10$ , respectively).

Reading through the lens of Kelman's three-stage social influence theory, the results suggest that when backpackers go on their second and third backpacker trips, they are moving from the compliance stage into the identification stage where external forces such as gaining status are no longer the driving motivational factor. Serial backpackers making their fourth and successive backpacker trips may enter the internalisation stage where the backpacker trip becomes part of

their lifestyle and therefore less driven by the motivational factors which triggered them to go on their first backpacker trips.

Although, Kelman's three-stage social influence model seems to fit into the three groups of backpackers, it is important to emphasise that only a fraction of backpackers and not all backpackers travel as a backpacker more than once and only a fraction of backpackers end up as serial backpackers. Also, some backpackers may do their first backpacker trip solely to identify themselves as backpackers, without being motivated by recognition or self-developing aspects.

The higher rating of *Sun and Beach* among first-time backpackers, when compared to serial backpackers, mirrors the fact that sunny "must-go" destinations such as Australia and Asia are of ritual value to first-time backpackers but become less popular among more experienced backpackers. It is likely that first timers who do not wish to make "odd decisions" in the eyes of their peers choose these destinations, while experienced travellers want to visit less crowded and intellectually and/or more physically challenging destinations, which are typically in other climate zones. Comparison of destination choice among first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers support this notion, with a higher proportion of serial backpackers travelling to Europe and Africa instead of Oceania and Asia.

## Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was twofold; to identify the push and pull factors that motivate Danish backpackers to go on a backpacker trip and to investigate how the importance of those motivational factors differ across first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers. Using factor analysis, 12 factors were extracted from a set of 40 motivational variables drawn from the literature. Acknowledging that performing charity work and creating value for communities are related to but basically different from seeking friendships, the 'Volunteering/creating friendship' factor was split into sub-dimensions, resulting in thirteen motivational factors for further

investigation. The results show that the three most important motivational factors for backpacker travel are *Stimulation*, *Host-site Involvement*, and *Nature* followed by *Escape*, *Autonomy*, *Authenticity*, *Low Budget*, *famous Sites and Attractions* and *Self-actualisation*. *Sun and Beach*, *Gastronomic Experiences*, *Recognition*, and *Volunteering* are among the least rated motivational factors. Remarkably, four out of the five highest ranked motivational factors were push motivations, supporting Hecht and Martin's (2006) notion that the majority of the time, destination (i.e. pull motivations) is less important for backpacker traveling. Notably, the four push factors, *Stimulation*, *Host-site Involvement*, *Escape*, and *Autonomy* parallel the push factors most regularly mentioned as important in the backpacker literature (Alves et al., 2016). Except for *Volunteering*, *Creating Friendships*, and *Recognition*, all factors have mean scores above the midpoint of the importance-scale (3.0), evidencing that these factors are indeed important motivations for backpackers. Yet, when interpreting the low mean score for *Recognition*, it is important to consider the fact that travellers are often reluctant to admit prestige and recognition as an underlying motive for their travel choices (Crompton, 1979).

Although push factors remain the most important motivational factors for backpackers, it is important to notice in addition that the pull factors (*Nature*, *Sun and Beach*, *Authenticity*, *Famous sites*, and *Gastronomic Experiences*) obtain means above the midpoint of the importance-scale. This suggests that the backpackers choose destinations because they are knowledgeable about them and want to get closer and be stimulated. Maybe surprisingly, gastronomy and sun and beach motivations range lower than the other pull motivations. Possible explanations may be that these motivations are more connected to conventional charter tourism, from which the backpacker seeks to create a distance. Consistent with the general backpacker studies as referred to in the literature review, it can be concluded that backpacker tourism strikes many motives and that it represents a form of travel that distinguishes itself from many other modes of travel. This paradox is recognised by both travel agencies and destinations. Backpackers like to be

autonomous but they are probably not immune to the relevant and well-presented offers of advice and services that address the sets of motivation adequately.

Comparing travel motivations among first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers demonstrated the heterogeneity of motivations and in that respect, the study verifies the substantial research on backpacking (Cohen, 2003; Pearce and Foster, 2007; Alves et al., 2016). Remarkably, while first-time and repeat backpackers are only significantly different from each other on two of the thirteen motivational factors, namely *Self-actualizing* and *Recognition*, rated higher among first-time backpackers, serial backpackers rate eight of the thirteen motivations, namely *Stimulation*, *Escapes*, *Visiting Famous Attractions*, *Self-actualisation*, *Volunteering/creating Friendships*, significantly lower than first-time backpackers. Thus, the results support the relevance of a more detailed classification of backpacker experience instead of only distinguishing first-time and repeat backpackers. The higher rating of *Self-actualisation* and *Recognition* among first-time travellers is analogous of Sørensen's (2003) and Paris and Teye's (2010) findings on experienced vs. inexperienced backpackers and further fits well into the view of first-time backpackers being gap-year travellers, motivated by a wish to impress other people and prepare for one's upcoming work career. Mean scores for *Low Budget Travel* are significantly higher among serial backpacker when compared to both first-time and repeat backpackers. This finding contradicts results from Paris and Teye (2010)'s study where experienced backpackers were found to place less weight on budget travel when compared to the inexperienced traveller.

Kelman's (1958) three-step social influence model was introduced as a means to explain differences in backpackers' motivations among first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers. It was suggested that to a large extent, first-time backpackers' travel motivation stems from a desire to gain recognition and enhance their own job-potential. Repeat backpackers seek identification by reinforcing or ascertaining their social identity as a backpacker. Following also from the

models of Kelman (1958), serial backpackers will eventually internalise the values and norms associated with backpacker travel and transmit to what Cohen (2011) labels a 'lifestyle traveler'.

On several issues, first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers share motivations such as, for example, strive to enjoy nature sites and move along with high autonomy. This suggests that these are more generic characteristics for backpacking than other factors and something which will not disappear. The autonomy which implies very high flexibility and adaptability from the backpackers themselves and from the community visited, is a persistent issue. Offering services in this context include, for example, improving possibilities of mobility and adaptability to re-configure travel routes and schemes where, for example, reservations can be changed along the way. The flexibility and adaptability of guiding opportunities or special excursions can be of importance.

## **Implications**

This study has several implications for both academics and practitioners. First, by providing knowledge of backpackers from a, until now, lesser researched nationality (Danish), the results add to the possibility of comparing backpacker motivations across various countries. Second, by detecting thirteen motivational factors of importance to backpackers, this study provides a better basis for a comprehensive understanding of backpacker motivation, compared to most prior studies, which often rely on a limited number of push and pull factors (e.g. Chen, Bao and Huang, 2013; Hsu, Wang and Huang, 2014; Loker-Murphy, 1996; Kao, Patterson, Pearce and Foster, 2007). Third, although prior studies (e.g. Paris and Teye, 2010) have examined differences in backpacker motivation in relation to the 'travel career' approach, this study is, to the authors' knowledge, the first quantitative study examining differences in backpackers' travel

motivations along with their actual 'backpacker career', i.e. solely taking experience as a backpacker into account. Fourth, the study provides a significant distinction of travel motivations between serial backpackers and backpackers travelling second and third time as backpackers, thereby emphasising the need for a more detailed division of backpackers than the commonly used first versus repeat backpackers. Fifth and as the final and more theoretical implication, changes in travel motivations along the backpacker travel career may be explained by paralleling to the three phases in Kelman's (1958) social influence framework.

Moving on to the managerial implications, this study detects several important push and pull factors of Danish backpackers. Travel agencies that organise backpacker trips for Danish travellers and destination marketers targeting Danish backpackers may use the results to better attract and serve this target group. When used for managerial purposes, it is critical to understand the heterogeneity in travel motivation for first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers. Travel companies and destinations targeting backpackers need to examine those differences and position their offers separately, in accordance with the segments, i.e. emphasising backpacking as valuable for self-development and enhancing job-opportunities when targeting the first-time backpackers. The suggestion that first-time backpackers may develop into lifestyle backpackers can inform producers and marketers of backpacker products and they may ensure a promotion through post-trip communication with the backpackers, i.e. using social media marketing. They may choose to encourage the backpackers to repeat their backpacker trip, thereby moving them further through the process and possibly effect their transition into lifestyle backpackers. Hereby they may become more loyal to the particular backpacker travel organiser or destination. In doing so, it is important to adopt the different types of influences at the three stages, i.e. portraying backpacker trips as a self-discovery tool when targeting backpackers in the identification stage and backpacker travel as a lifestyle when targeting backpackers in the third phase.

Many destinations around the world are aware of the potential of backpackers and they have come to appreciate the manners in which they drift and select their experiences, even if it is sometimes unpredictable. It seems to be essential for destinations to ensure good access to nature, cultural sights, and related experiences in order to achieve a good reputation among both first, repeat, and serial backpackers. In terms of destinations, the study shows that serial backpackers are more willing to visit less popular destinations such as Europe and Africa. Therefore, this segment may be valuable as a target for new destinations. The Arctic areas and former Soviet republics have substantial work to accommodate the motivations by backpackers to indulge in voluntary work and create relationships that may last longer and be of a more committed nature (Tiberghien, 2015). The study suggests that such strategies may be developed further. It can be considered a relevant way in which to address the needs of the backpacker segments and influence the trendsetters via conventional and social media.

## **Limitations and further research**

As with any study of this nature, there are some limitations, which also call for future research efforts. First, regarding the data used, convenience sampling was used by recruiting respondents through via means of newsletters and online community sites hosted by a Danish travel company specialising in backpackers. Backpackers in contact with a travel company are more likely to be less self-organised in their trip and therefore the sample may be biased towards more mainstream backpackers. Further studies could address groups of backpackers who chose to self-organise all elements of the trip. Although, independent t-tests evidenced that males and females were similar in all motivations except two (recognition and gastronomic experiences), it should be noted that this sample was heavily skewed towards four times more females than males. Future studies may try to include more males in their samples. Using a Danish sample

of backpackers also questions the possibility of generalising the results. Although several findings in the study parallel evidence from previous studies in other countries, literature on backpacker travel often reported that nationality plays an important role in influencing backpackers' motivation, as shown by, for example, Zhang et al (2017). Therefore, it would be valuable to conduct similar studies with backpackers from other countries. Second, the list of travel motivations captured in the study may not be exhaustive. Future studies may seek to expand the list of travel motivations to include other motivational aspects. Third, a cross-sectional survey obviously has limitations in exploring changes in backpacker motivations along Kelman's three phases. Future studies may use longitudinal approaches to investigate to which extent and how backpackers actually run through the three phases.

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**Table 1. Profile of survey respondents.**

	Total Sample n=391	First-time Backpackers n=144	Repeat backpackers n=146	Serial Backpackers n=101
	%	%	%	%
Gender				
Male	80.6	17.4	17.8	24.8
Female	19.4	82.6	82.2	75.2
Age				
20 -24	33.5	55.6	28.8	*8.9
25-29	37.1	29.9	45.2	35.6
30-34	14.3	*7.6	17.1	19.8
35+	15.1	*6.9	*8.9	35.6
Education				
Upper secondary/high school	53.3	72.0	47.9	33.3
Short/medium higher education (1-4 years)	33.1	18.9	36.8	49.0
Long higher education (5 years or more)	13.6	*9.1	15.3	17.7
Destination <sup>a</sup>				
Asia	56.0	66.0	52.7	46.5
Oceania	21.5	32.6	15.8	13.9
Europe	12.5	10.4	11.0	17.8
Africa	11.0	9.7	10.3	13.9
Middle East	5.1	8.3	2.1	5.0
Number of backpacker trips				
1	36.8			
2	24.3			
3	13.0			
4	6.6			
5+	19.3			

<sup>a</sup> sum of percentage exceed 100% as respondents could mark more than one destination

**Table 2. Factor analysis with varimax rotation for travel motivations of Danish travelers (n=391).**

Motivational factors and items <sup>a</sup>	Factor-loading	Communalities	EV <sup>b</sup>	% of variance	Reliability <sup>c</sup>	Factor means <sup>d</sup>
<i><u>Factor 1: Sun and Beach</u></i>			3.21	8.68%	.881	3.34 (1.07)
Visiting countries where the sun shines	.842	.783				
Travelling in sunny countries	.838	.807				
Getting a lot of sun	.824	.766				
Experiencing beautiful/exotic beaches	.749	.679				
<i><u>Factor 2: Host-site Involvement</u></i>			3.01	8.26%	.817	4.28 (.67)
Exploring other cultures	.786	.722				
Learning about other cultures	.764	.720				
Interacting with the local people	.754	.710				
Getting authentic and genuine experience	.547	.612				
<i><u>Factor 3: Self-actualisation</u></i>			2.67	7.24%	.832	3.74 (.99)
Challenging myself mentally	.786	.759				
Understanding more about myself	.781	.776				
Gaining a new perspective on my own	.667	.680				
<i><u>Factor 4: Gastronomic Experiences</u></i>			2.52	6.81%	.886	3.50 (1.09)
Getting gastronomic experiences	.846	.785				
Experiencing different food cultures	.826	.845				
Tasting food prepared in other cultures	.818	.835				
<i><u>Factor 5: Nature</u></i>			2.43	6.56%	.817	4.25 (.75)
Nature experiences	.868	.835				
Being close to nature	.792	.736				
Viewing beautiful nature sceneries	.751	.716				
<i><u>Factor 6: Low-budget Travel</u></i>			2.28	6.15%	.813	3.86 (.91)
Getting many travel experiences for a modest budget	.833	.774				
A cheap way to travel	.823	.734				
Travelling far away without paying a fortune	.788	.759				
<i><u>Factor 7: Escape</u></i>			2.08	5.63%	.712	4.02 (.81)
Getting away from daily routine	.828	.763				
Getting away from everyday duties	.822	.736				
Temporarily not worrying about future	.661	.609				
<i><u>Factor 8: Recognition</u></i>			2.00	5.39%	.702	2.60 (.90)
Visiting sites that will impress my friends	.802	.761				
Being recognised for having travelled as a backpacker	.730	.669				
Getting experiences that are worth telling	.668	.626				
<i><u>Factor 9: Volunteering/Creating friendships</u></i>			1.73	4.69%	.740	2.71 (1.01)
Having the opportunity to perform charity work	.818	.751				
Creating joy and value for the local people	.618	.729			.710	2.46 (1.09)
Creating new friendships	.550	.655			n/a	3.21 (1.23)
<i><u>Factor 10: Stimulation</u></i>			1.69	4.58%	.625	4.35 (.61)
Having fun	.704	.656				
Having once in a lifetime experiences	.658	.655				
Exploring the unknown	.506	.567				
<i><u>Factor 11: Autonomy</u></i>			1.65	4.46%	.652	3.92 (.75)
Planning my own trip	.775	.709				
Doing nothing but what I want myself	.666	.641				
Being independent	.561	.686				
<i><u>Factor 12: Famous Sites and Attractions</u></i>			1.42	3.83%	.620	3.80 (.87)
Visiting famous sites and attractions	.805	.762				
Visiting cultural and historical sights	.747	.740				

Note: <sup>a</sup> Eighteen vacation motives captured in six factors.

<sup>b</sup> Eigenvalue

<sup>c</sup> Cronbach's Alpha

<sup>d</sup> Mean scale: 5 = extremely important, 1 = extremely unimportant; standard deviations in parentheses

**Table 3: Motivational factor-means for first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers.**

<u>Motivational factor</u>	First-time backpackers		Repeat backpackers		Serial backpackers		F-value
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	
<i>Stimulation (push)</i>	4.45 <sup>a</sup>	(.53)	4.41 <sup>a</sup>	(.56)	4.10 <sup>b</sup>	(.72)	11.01***
<i>Host-site Involvement (push)</i>	4.33	(.62)	4.28	(.68)	4.20	(.72)	1.20***
<i>Nature (pull)</i>	4.25	(.73)	4.25	(.70)	4.25	(.83)	.01***
<i>Escapes (push)</i>	4.16 <sup>A</sup>	(.71)	4.01 <sup>A,B</sup>	(.78)	3.85 <sup>B</sup>	(.95)	4.56***
<i>Autonomy (push)</i>	3.97	(.70)	3.87	(.76)	3.92	(.82)	.58***
<i>Low-budget Travel (pull)</i>	3.77 <sup>a</sup>	(.95)	3.84 <sup>a,b</sup>	(.88)	4.02 <sup>b</sup>	(.88)	2.25***
<i>Visiting Famous Attractions (pull)</i>	3.93 <sup>A</sup>	(.77)	3.82 <sup>A,B</sup>	(.89)	3.60 <sup>B</sup>	(.95)	4.25***
<i>Self-actualization (push)</i>	3.98 <sup>a</sup>	(.83)	3.75 <sup>b</sup>	(.99)	3.36 <sup>c</sup>	(1.08)	12.27***
<i>Gastronomic Experiences (pull)</i>	3.50	(1.09)	3.60	(1.00)	3.36	(1.21)	1.40***
<i>Sun and Beach (pull)</i>	3.50 <sup>a</sup>	(.93)	3.34 <sup>a,b</sup>	(1.04)	3.11 <sup>b</sup>	(1.24)	4.18***
<i>Creating Friendships (push)</i>	3.38 <sup>a</sup>	(1.19)	3.21 <sup>a,b</sup>	(1.00)	2.97 <sup>b</sup>	(1.37)	12.42***
<i>Recognition (push)</i>	2.84 <sup>A</sup>	(.87)	2.49 <sup>B</sup>	(.56)	2.40 <sup>B</sup>	(.90)	9.59***
<i>Volunteering (push)</i>	2.61 <sup>A</sup>	(1.06)	2.48 <sup>A,B</sup>	(1.13)	2.21 <sup>B</sup>	(1.04)	4.00***

\*\*\* p < .01    \*\* p < .05    \* p < .10

Means with different superscripts are significant from one another (p < .05).

Superscripts with capital letters are based on Bonferroni post hoc test, superscripts with small letters are based on Dunnett's T3.