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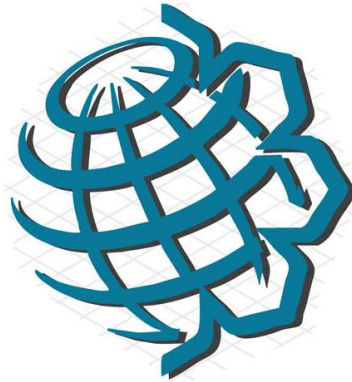*Kulliyyah of Languages and Management, IIUM Pagoh*

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CONTENT

MOTIVATIONS OF FIRST-TIME, REPEAT, AND SERIAL BACKPACKERS: A MALAYSIAN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study are to identify the main travel motivations of Malaysian backpackers and to investigate the differences in travel motivations between different groups of backpackers namely; first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers. This study used convenience sampling approach, and the data were obtained through self-administered online survey of Malaysian backpackers. Based on a sample of 249, the non-normally distributed data were analysed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), assessment of median scores and Kruskal-Wallis H tests. The findings show that the main factor which motivates Malaysian backpackers to go on a backpacking trip is stimulation (push), while the least is recognition (push). The results also indicated that there are differences in Malaysian backpackers' motivation based on their travel experience level. The limitation of the study is that the samples are skewed toward females, and the majority (87%) are aged between 21 and 35 years old.

Keywords: Backpacker; Travel Motivation; Travel Career; First-time; Repeat; Serial backpackers

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last twenty years with mass tourism in its prime, backpacking has been viewed socially as quite an unusual element of travel and very different from the standard ways of leisure travel (Ee & Kahl, 2016). According to some researchers, backpacking tourism is a phenomenon that produces an extensive contribution to both developed and developing countries (Richards & Wilson, 2003; Scheyvens, 2002, 2006). This is so since backpackers spend a large portion of their total expenditure at the destination and provide direct economic benefits to the host populations.

Backpackers are recognized as categorically different from mass tourism. Backpackers are individuals who are viewed as passionate people in discovering new tourism horizons. This segment is considered as destination pioneers and travel trendsetters which makes them a particularly interesting group of tourists. They are often self-organized and travel to multiple destinations with flexible itineraries (Jensen & Hjalager, 2018). Many researchers associated backpackers as individuals who prefer budget accommodation, longer holidays, itinerary flexibility, meeting other travellers, and involvement in participatory activities (Chen et al., 2014b; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Pearce & Foster, 2007; Pearce et al., 2009).

Previous research on backpacking tourism mostly examined travellers from developed countries on Euro-centric perspectives (Allon & Anderson, 2010; Brenner & Fricke, 2007; Chitty et al., 2007; Huxley, 2004; Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Nash et al., 2006; Pearce & Foster, 2007). Nevertheless, previous research also emphasized on the importance of intensifying and widened the research range to include populations such as Asian backpackers (Cohen, 2004; Teo & Leong, 2006; Winter, 2007, 2009). According to Wilkins and Lee (2014), several studies on backpackers originating from Asia contributed to developing towards an understanding of culture, norms, and behaviours of Asian independent youth travellers or tourists.

It is then suggested that backpackers are experiencing an ongoing evolution since it first emerged due to the changes in the social-historical context. In a study by Uriely, Yonay, and Simchai (2002), the former definition of backpacker refers to visible institutional arrangements and travel practices, such as length of trip, the flexibility of the itinerary, visited destinations, and attractions. The latter refers to more intangible psychological attributes, including travellers' motivations, their attachments to home societies, and the meanings they assign to their trips.

Backpackers are not only a social category but also a label demonstrating their social identities. Previous studies on identity factors of backpacker attributed to primarily on Western theories. According to Winter, Teo and Chang (2009), the majority of recent backpacker research also focused on Western backpackers and their encounters with Asian hosts. Though research on Asian backpackers has emerged since the early 2000s (Teo and Leon, 2006; Muzaini, 2006, among others), there is limited research on the emergence of

backpackers from Asian countries. With more Asians travelling in their homeland (domestic tourism), within their backyard (regional tourism) and further afield (international tourism) for the purpose of leisure, business and others, it leads to the implications of new tourism developments and academic research in the non-western world (Chang, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to consider their practicality in the context of Malaysian backpackers. In other words, what are the distinguishing criteria with which Malaysian backpackers practice and define their identity? Furthermore, what are the factors that motivate Malaysian backpackers with different experience level to go for a backpacking trip? This research study attempts to address these questions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Backpacker is a term introduced to describe how individuals differ from other travellers in several aspects as agreed by researchers (Cohen, 2011; Pearce, 1990). However, there are some arguments as to where the backpacker label was originated. Pearce (1990) had recognized that the emergence of backpackers was partly because of the "marginal" behaviour of the hippie or drifter type during the 1960s and 1970s (O' Regan, 2018). Whereas, other labels were applied to these travellers included independent travellers (Hyde & Lawson, 2003), drifters (Cohen, 2010) and volunteer travelers (Chen & Chen, 2011; Pan, 2012, 2014; Ooi & Laing, 2010; Wearing, 2001).

2.1 Backpackers' Travel Motivations

Dann (1977, 1981) developed the push and pull framework which categorized tourists' travel motivation into two types; namely internal socio-psychological drivers and external forces. Internal socio-psychological drivers are the push factors that motivated tourists to travel, such as escape, prestige, self-actualization, or adventure. On the other hand, external forces are considered as pull factors that attract tourists towards a specific destination, for instance; natural scenery, sunshine, or historical sites. In short, push factors to trigger tourists to travel, while pull factors determine where they will go (Jensen & Hjalager, 2018).

According to Chen, Bao, & Huang (2014), individuals may have different travel motivation to destress and satisfy their inner needs. In recent times, studies have shown that backpackers and mainstream travellers have several similarities in terms of travel motivation, pre-trip planning and risk awareness. However, factors such as escape from everyday work, seek for independence, personal development, making new friends, sense of discovery, and experiencing other cultures and environments are among the travel motivations regularly found to differentiate between backpackers and mainstream tourists (Alves et al., 2016; Hecht and Martin, 2006; Maoz, 2007; Moshin and Ryan, 2003; Riley, 1988, Jensen & Hjalager, 2018). On the other hand, Cohen (1972) classified tourists into four groups; organized mass tourists, the individual mass tourists, the explorers, and the drifters.

2.2 Backpackers' Travel Career

Following Pearce's (1993) idea of a travel career, Loker-Murphy (1997), Paris and Teye (2010), and Uriely (2002) suggested that the backpackers' motivations are dynamic and therefore likely to change over time and evolve from the first and to the next successive trips. Remarks were made previously, but little is known about the motivation influencing successive backpacker trips to reword and reconstruct (Jensen & Hjalager, 2018). Jensen and Hjalager (2018) stated, there are several studies indicated that with more broad travel experience, backpackers are less concerned with personal or social growth (Paris and Teye, 2010), intra-group status (Sørensen, 2003), and perceived risk (Adam, 2015). This can be explained through a social theory of Kelman's (1958), which is a well-established model for understanding how people adopt a particular behaviour or attitude.

According to Kelman (1958), there are three different process modes of adaptations in behaviour and mental states which are compliance, identification, and internalization. Compliance refers to the acceptance of social influence to attain rewards and/or avoid punishments from significant others. At this stage, the individual is primarily influenced by external forces; for instance, a desire to impress other people or to arrange for future work careers. Compliance seems relevant to first-time backpackers, who frequently take their backpacking trip in a gap period between education and their first job (Snee, 2014). Meanwhile, in the identification phase, the individual is no longer driven by the external forces but rather an inner desire to be recognized within a community. For instance, a sense of attachment and belonging to a backpacker community. This phrase meant for repeat backpackers where backpacker trips may well be motivated by a need to maintain, reinforce or ascertain their social identity as a backpacker. For example, re-experiencing the lifestyle of backpacker, and eventually meet again with friends from the previous backpacking trip. Next, the final phase which is internationalization, it is the induced behaviour that incorporated with the individual's values and became a part of their own needs and norms. For instance, backpacking trips become a significant part of the individual's lifestyle.

There is significantly limited research on exploring whether there is any similarity in travel motivation among first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers. Though, several researchers agreed that travel motivations are inherently dynamic and may, therefore, change over time. For instance, prior experience of the traveller through a destination or travel type may affect the motivations for future travel decision, being the same travel form or destination, or not.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Measurement Instruments

This study adopted an online questionnaire approach so that the researchers were able "to reach a large sample of backpackers with varying degrees of experience as backpackers" (Jensen & Hjalager, 2018, p. 3). The self-administered online questionnaire created using

Google Form included 36 motivational items obtained from previous studies on motivation of backpacking. Guided by Jensen & Hjalager (2018), these previous studies included Chen, Bao, & Huang, (2014); Chen, Zhao, & Huang, (2019); Chen & Huang, (2017); Hsu, Wang, & Huang, (2014); Larsen, (2011); Paris & Teye, (2010). The Sun and Beach factor from Jensen & Hjalager (2018) were not included and replaced with Destination Attributes from Kim (2014).

The questionnaire measured were divided into sections which covered travel motivation, backpackers' experience and socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, and education. The respondents were requested to attempt the items provided based on their most recent backpacking trip. Screening questions to exclude non-Malaysian and nonbackpackers were included at the beginning of the questionnaire. To categorize and gauge their behaviour, the respondents were asked on how many trips they have had as a backpacker, the destination they have visited (Asian, European, African, Middle Eastern, American countries or domestic), duration of their trip and travelling partner(s) if any. The motivation items were measured using the 5-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree.

3.2 Sampling Procedure

The survey respondents were selected through convenience sampling. The link to the online questionnaire was disseminated to respondents through several electronic channels, namely WhatsApp groups and Facebook pages. In the WhatsApp groups, the researchers requested participation from those who have been on a backpacking trip. The researchers further requested that the link be snowballed to their friends. On Facebook, the researchers posted the request for participation and the questionnaire link on several Facebook pages on backpacking such as Backpackers Buddies Malaysia and Malaysia Backpackers. The request for participation and the questionnaire link were also placed in the researchers' personal Facebook page.

3.3 Sample Profile

The total number of respondents obtained was 364. There were 108 respondents who have yet to travel as a backpacker and seven respondents who were non-Malaysian. These nonqualifying respondents were excluded, leaving 249 respondents available for analysis. The sample size is acceptable following the formula N>50+8m (where m = the number of independent variables) as provided by Tabachnick & Fidell (2007, p. 123). Table 1 below displays the sample profile.

The percentage of respondents were 23.3% males and 76.7% females. Approximately 74.4% of the respondents were under 30 years of age. Concerning education, 72.3% of the respondents were reported to have a bachelor's degree as their highest education, 12.9% holds master degrees, and 12.0% earned certificate/diploma education. From the total number of respondents, 13.3% were reported to have travelled once as a backpacker,

31.7% twice or three times, and 55.0% four or five times or more.

Table 1: *Profile of survey respondents*

	Total sample. *n= 249*	First-time backpackers, *n= 33*	Repeat backpackers, *n= 79*	Serial backpackers, *n= 137*
	%	%	%	%
Gender				
Male	23.3	27.3	24.1	21.9
Female	76.7	72.7	75.9	78.1
Age				
< 20	4.1	15.2	5.1	0.7
21-25	55.4	72.7	74.7	40.1
26-30	14.9	0.0	12.7	19.7
31-35	12.4	9.1	1.3	19.7
36-40	6.0	3.0	1.3	9.5
41-45	2.8	0.0	1.3	4.4
46-50	1.6	0.0	0.0	2.9
51+	2.8	0.0	3.8	2.9
Education				
Primary School	0.4	3.0	0.0	0.0
Secondary School	1.2	0.0	0.0	2.2
Certificate/Diploma	12.0	12.1	8.9	13.9
Bachelor's Degree	72.3	84.8	86.1	61.3

Master's Degree	12.9	0.0	3.8	21.2
Ph. D	0.8	0.0	0.0	1.5
No formal education	0.4	0.0	1.3	0.0
Occupation				
Public Sector	12.4	3.0	5.1	19.0
Private Sector	30.5	27.3	15.2	40.1
Student	42.6	54.5	60.8	29.2
Freelance	8.4	9.1	10.1	7.3
Unemployed	6.1	6.1	8.9	4.4
Income (MYR)				
<1500	23.3	30.3	29.1	18.2
1501-3000	20.5	18.2	16.5	23.4
3001-4500	0.3	0.0	5.1	14.6
4501-6000	7.2	0.0	1.3	12.4
6001-7000	0.8	0.0	0.0	1.5
>7001	17.4	9.1	1.3	11.7
No Income	30.5	42.4	46.8	18.2
Destination*				
Domestic				65.0
Asia		57.6	68.4 50.6	75.9
Europe		36.4	10.1	27.7
Africa		6.1 0.0	2.5	1.5
America		0.0	0.0	3.6
No of days based on last trip				
<3 days		42.4		
4-6 days		48.5		
7-10 days		6.1		
>11 days		3.0	5.1	17.5
			43.0	16.8

| | 43.0 | 45.3 | 8.9 |
| | | 20.4 | |

The respondents were categorized into three different groups of travel experience level (first-time, repeat, and serial) based on their previous number of backpacking trips. Respondents who had travelled as backpackers only once (n= 33) were grouped as firsttime backpackers. The 79 respondents who had travelled as backpackers twice or three times were classed as repeat backpackers. Lastly, 137 respondents who had travelled four times or more were labelled as serial backpackers.

The majority (55%) of the respondents were aged between 21 to 25 years and have earned their bachelor's degree (72%). While 42% of the respondents were categorized as students, 51% were employed. The largest employment category (30%) indicated that the respondents were employed in the private sector. Of the total respondents, 6% of the respondents were classified as unemployed, and 30% had no source of income. The income of the employed respondents was mainly (23%) less than MYR 1,500 per month. The second-largest group by income (20%) earned a monthly income of between MYR 1501 to MYR 3,000. This is followed by the next group (17%) of which the respondents earned more than MYR 7,001 per month.

A total of 36 items were subjected to principal components analysis (PCA) using SPSS version 24. Before performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed the presence of many coefficients of .3 and above. The Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin value was .922, exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Kaiser 1970, 1974) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett 1954) reached statistical significance, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix.

With one item removed (FS3), principal components analysis revealed the presence of twelve (12) components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, as depicted in Table 2 of the variance, respectively. An inspection of the scree plot revealed twelve (12) breaks. The twelve (12) component solution explained a total of 85.95% of the variance and converged in seven (7) iterations. To aid in the interpretation, varimax rotation was performed and revealed the presence of simple structure (Thurstone 1947), and strong loadings accordingly to the factors. All of the correlations were found to be weak (ranging from 0.04 to 0.356) except for one component (r = 0.62) suggesting the scales are separated (Watson, Clark & Tellegenm 1988). The structure was found to be almost identical to Jensen & Hjalager (2018).

4. RESULTS

4.1 Assessing the Importance of Motivational Factors

The data were subjected to preliminary analyses as recommended by Pallant (2010) and were found to be non-normally distributed. When involving non-normally distributed data, the median is a better option at measuring the central tendency as it continues to reflect the centre of the distribution more closely.

Based on Table 2 below, the results show that Stimulation PS has the highest median value (5.0). This is then equally followed (4.67) with Autonomy PS, Escape PS and Nature PL sharing the same median value. Both Destination Attributes PL and Famous Sites and Attractions PL have the same median value (4.5). This is then followed in descending order of importance, Low-budget travel (4.33) PL, Host site involvement (4.25) PS, Volunteering / Creating Friendship (4.0) PS, Gastronomic Experiences (4.0) PL, Self-actualization (4.0) PS and lastly Recognition (3.33) PS. The top three highest-ranked motivational factors are push motivations which may suggest that the backpackers' travel motivations are internally motivated. Out of the twelve motivations, only one factor (recognition) was below the midpoint scale of 3.0.

Table 2: *Factor analysis with Varimax rotation for travel motivations of Malaysian backpackers*

Motivational factors and items	Loadings	EV	% of variance	Reliability	Median
Factor 1: Host-site Involvement (HI) - Push		2.378	6.795	.888	4.25
HI2 Learn about other cultures	.783				
HI1 Explore other cultures	.759				
HI3 Interact with the local people	.635				
HI4 Get authentic and genuine experiences	.577				
Factor 2: Self-actualization (SA) - Push		1.275	3.643	.889	4.000
SA2 Understand more about myself	.825				
SA3 Gain a new perspective of my own life	.814				
SA1 Challenge myself mentally	.685				
Factor 3: Gastronomic Experiences (GE) - Pull		1.735	4.958	.896	4.000
GE2 Experience different food cultures	.855				
GE3 Taste food prepared in other cultures	.848				
GE1 Get gastronomic experiences	.791				
Factor 4: Nature (N) - Pull		1.203	3.437	.895	4.667
N1 Have nature experiences	.819				
N2 Be closed to nature	.785				
N3 View beautiful nature sceneries	.659				

	Loading				
Factor 5: Low-budget travel (LB) - Pull		1.404	4.012	.928	4.333
LB3 Travel far away without paying a fortune	.837				
LB2 Use cheap way to travel	.829				
LB1 Get many travel experiences for a modest budget	.734				
Factor 6: Escape (E) - Push		16.368	46.765	.904	4.667
E2 Get away from everyday duties	.870				
E1 Get away from daily routine	.846				
E3 Temporarily not worrying about future	.833				
Factor 7: Recognition (R) - Push	.874	.940	2.686	.845	3.333
R2 To be recognized for having traveled as a backpacker	.853				
R1 Visit sites that will impress my friends and family	.582				
R3 To get experiences that are worth telling others about					
Factor 8: Volunteering / Creating Friendship (VF) - Push	.851	1.855	5.3	.913	4.000
VF2 To create joy and value for the local people VF1	.846				
To have the opportunity to perform charity work	.763				
VF3 To create new friendships					
Factor 9: Stimulation (S) - Push		.530	1.514	.976	5.000
S2 To have once in a lifetime experiences	.602				
S3 To explore the unknown	.559				
S1 To have fun	.540				
Factor 10: Autonomy (A) - Push		1.022	2.921	.927	4.667
A1 To plan my own trip	.793				
A2 To do what i want	.728				
A3 To be independent	.624				
Factor 11: Famous Sites and Attractions (FA) - Pull		.723	2.067	.961	4.500
FA1 To visit famous sites and attractions FA2 To visit cultural and historical sites	.757				
	.719				
Factor 12: Destination Attributes (DA) - Pull		.649	1.855	.966	4.500
DA2 To experience a well preserved area	.758				
DA1 To visit different "ecology zone" (climate, land-forms and land-covers)	.756				
DA3 To experience awe-inspiring landscape	.754				

4.2 Comparing Motivational Factors among First-time, Repeat, and Serial backpackers

As the data were found to be non-normally distributed, the Kruskal-Wallis H Test was employed to analyse the differences in motivation score among the three different groups; first-time, repeat, and serial backpackers. The Kruskal-Wallis H test (also known as the "one-way ANOVA on ranks") is a rank-based non-parametric test to determine statistically significant differences between two or more groups of an independent variable on a continuous or ordinal dependent variable (Laerd-Statistics, 2015).

There are four assumptions of Kruskal-Wallis H test; 1) one continuous or ordinal dependent variable, 2) one independent variable which consists of two or more categorical independent groups, 3) independence of observations, and 4) obtaining a similar shape of score distribution across each independent variable group (Laerd-Statistics, 2015). An individual Kruskal-Wallis H test was run on all twelve (12) motivational factors to determine if there were any differences in the score between the three groups of backpackers. The distributions of all factors scores were similar for all groups, as assessed by visual inspection of boxplot for each motivational factors. The prior examination was performed to identify and remove any outliers for each factor.

The median of motivational scores which were found to be statistically significantly different between groups were then further processed with posthoc analyses. These analyses involved pairwise comparisons were performed using Dunn's (1964) procedure with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. The posthoc analyses were primarily done to locate the differences.

Table 3: *Sample size by group, Chi Square values and difference results*

HSI	"First-time" (n = 30) "Repeat" (n = 75) "Serial" (n = 137)	$\chi^2(2) = 7.425$, p = .024	Significant difference between repeat backpacker (4.00) and serial backpacker (4.50) (p = .020)
SA	"First-time" (n = 33) "Repeat" (n = 79) "Serial" (n = 137)	$\chi^2(2) = 2.087$, p = .352	No significant difference between the groups
GEX	"First-time" (n = 32) "Repeat" (n = 78) "Serial" (n = 137)	$\chi^2(2) = .786$, p = .675	No significant difference between the groups
NATURE	"First-time" (n = 33) "Repeat" (n = 77) "Serial" (n = 134)	$\chi^2(2) = 1.446$, p = .485	No significant difference between the groups

LBT	"First-time" (n = 33) "Repeat" (n = 77) "Serial" (n = 129)	χ2(2) = 7.529, p = .023	Significant difference between repeat backpacker (4.00) and serial backpacker (4.33) (p = .018)
ESC	"First-time" (n = 33) "Repeat" (n = 79) "Serial" (n = 137)	χ2(2) = 3.094, p = .213	No significant difference between the groups
RECOG	"First-time" (n = 32) "Repeat" (n = 77) "Serial" (n = 137)	χ2(2) = 5.821, p = .540	No significant difference between the groups
VOL	"First-time" (n = 33) "Repeat" (n = 78) "Serial" (n = 137)	χ2(2) = .799, p = .671	No significant difference between the groups
STI	"First-time" (n = 32) "Repeat" (n = 77) "Serial" (n = 116)	χ2(2) = 7.852, p = .023	Significant difference between repeat backpacker (5.00) and serial backpacker (5.00) (p = .018)
AUT	"First-time" (n = 33) "Repeat" (n = 77) "Serial" (n = 133)	χ2(2) = 13.361, p = .001	Significant difference between repeat backpacker (4.33) and serial backpacker (5.00) (p = .003) Significant difference between first time backpacker (4.00) and serial backpacker (5.00) (p = .049)
FS	"First-time" (n = 31) "Repeat" (n = 78) "Serial" (n = 135)	χ2(2) = 2.472, p = .291	No significant difference between the groups
DA	"First-time" (n = 31) "Repeat" (n = 79) "Serial" (n = 136)	χ2(2) = 3.275, p = .194	No significant difference between the groups

Based on Table 3, there are four motivational factors which are different among groups. The first motivational factor is Host Site Involvement, which indicates that there is a significant difference between repeat backpacker and serial backpacker groups (p = .020). The second motivational factor is Low Budget Travel, with a significant difference between repeat backpacker and serial backpacker (p = .018). The third motivational factor is Stimulation with a significant difference between repeat backpacker and serial backpacker

(p = .018). Finally, the fourth motivational factor is Autonomy which suggests that there are significant differences between repeat backpacker and serial backpacker (p = .003) and between first -time backpacker and serial backpacker (p = .049).

Based on the results, the highest motivational factor for Malaysian backpackers is stimulation, and this is similar to the previous findings (Jensen & Hjalager, 2018). This is followed by Nature. Though it is ranked as second, Nature is the highest-ranked pull factor for Malaysian backpackers which suggests that they are interested in nature-related experiences. When examined carefully, both push and pull motivations are equally represented in the top 50% factors. Unlike previously suggested (Hecht & Martin, 2006; Jensen & Hjalager, 2018), this finding suggests that more or less both push and pull factors are equally crucial to Malaysian backpackers. Surprisingly, Gastronomic experience is among the least important factor (median score of 4) alongside Self-Actualization and Volunteering. Similar to previous findings, Recognition is the least significant (median score of 3.33) motivational factor for backpackers.

5. CONCLUSION

This study provides important information for both academics and practitioners. First, by providing knowledge on Malaysian backpackers, it creates the possibility of comparing backpackers' travel behaviour and motivational factors across Asian countries. Second, by detecting the highest push and pull travel motivational factors for Malaysian backpackers', this study offers a better basis for a comprehensive understanding of the current trend among Malaysian backpackers. Third, although prior studies (e.g. Hsu et al., 2014; Paris & Teye, 2010; Uriely et al., 2002; Yonay & Simchai, 2002, as cited from Jensen & Hjalager, 2018) have observed differences in backpackers' travel motivation in relation to the travel career (from the first and to the sequential backpacker trips) approach, however, this study showed that Malaysian backpackers differ where they have the same pattern of travel motivation across three different groups of experience level. Fourth, this study provides a significant distinction in terms of the destination visited during a backpacking trip between serial backpackers with first-time and repeat backpackers. Thereby, it emphasizes the need for a more detailed division of backpackers in order to identify their interest and preferences.

Travel motivation has become a central focus of tourism research for decades. It is seen as one of the key elements in understanding tourist decision-making behaviour. A thorough understanding of travel motivation plays a critical role in predicting future travel pattern. By understanding the characteristics of backpackers and analysing their travel motivations, the service provider will have the opportunity to cater to the demands of these individuals who have made a significant contribution to the tourism industry.

6. DISCUSSION

There are several limitations of the current study that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, there is little prior research that could be found in investigating Malaysian backpackers' travel motivational factors. Therefore, the motivational items that are adopted in this study have to be referred from previous studies on other countries. Therefore, as suggested by Chen, Bao, and Huang (2014), future studies could conduct several qualitative approaches in order to generate more comprehensive variables. Thus, it allows a more thorough understanding of Malaysian backpackers' travel motivations. Secondly, it should be noted that this sample is heavily skewed towards more females than males. Hence, the result would be biased as gender can influence the choices. Future studies may try to balance between the number of males and females in the samples. Thirdly, the motivational items should include several religious attributes such as visiting worship sites, understanding the rituals of other religious, improving religious knowledge, and observing the uniqueness of sacred architecture (e.g. mosque, temple, church, and etc.). The results may provide the basis for tourism-related business operators in broadening and targeting their market.

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