

FLASHPACKER AND THE INFLUENCE OF TECHNOLOGICAL
ADVANCEMENT:
A CASE STUDY IN KOTA KINABALU, SABAH

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DEDICATION

*This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents,
Abd Rahman bin Yaacob and Wan Jah binti Wan Hassan,
whose affection, love, encouragement and prayers of day and night make me able to
get such success and honour.*

*To my family & fiancé,
thank you for your unconditional and endless support during my study.*

*And to my supervisor,
Assoc. Prof. Tpr. Dr. Hairul Nizam bin Ismail,
for his positive and supportive guidance*

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of backpackers started from Grand Tours to Tramping, and from Drifter to Hippy's. On 1990's, the term backpackers have been used in academic literature and 'backpackers' has been a trendsetter as a latest travel lifestyle. From time to time, the development of the technology has created another new segmentation of backpackers, which is called flashpackers, who is tech savvy that connect with other people virtually as long as they bring technology tools such as smartphone. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to study on the flashpackers' travel behavior towards technological advancement. In depth, the travel behavior of the flashpackers which associated with physical travel, backpacker culture and the convergence of the information and communication technologies were looked at. Technology has contributed to the emergence of the new term flashpacker, where traditional backpacker has now become more involved with technology. This has led to the motivation of this study, by looking at the effect and relationship of technology towards the traditional backpacker's behavior and culture. Furthermore, there are a major gap in the study of flashpackers and technology in tourism research, and there are no established criteria to distinguish the term of flashpacker. The objectives of this thesis are achieved by using quantitative method has been applied in the main research. A total of 100 respondents participated in the survey. The respondents of this study represent backpackers from international and local tourists through different background. The Data gathered from the survey stage via self-administered questionnaire (SQA) and online questionnaire. The questionnaire was coded and entered into a database system in SPSS. There are three analysis data in this research, which is descriptive analysis, crosstabulation and mean analysis. Finally, the findings provide important insight into the usage and meanings associated with flashpackers travel behaviour and the role of technological in flashpackers' life.

ABSTRAK

Kemunculan backpacker bermula dari Grand Tours, ke Tramping, dan dari Drifter ke Hippy's. Pada tahun 1990-an, istilah backpackers telah digunakan dalam kesusasteraan akademik dan 'backpackers' telah menjadi ikutan sebagai gaya hidup perjalanan terkini. Dari masa ke masa, perkembangan teknologi telah mewujudkan satu lagi segmen baru backpackers, yang dipanggil flashpackers, yang celik teknologi dan boleh berhubung dengan orang lain hampir sepanjang perjalanan mereka dengan membawa alat teknologi seperti telefon pintar. Oleh itu, tujuan tesis ini adalah untuk mengkaji tingkah laku perjalanan flashpackers ke arah kemajuan teknologi. Secara mendalam, kelakuan perjalanan flashpacker yang berkaitan dengan perjalanan fizikal, budaya backpacker dan kemunculan teknologi maklumat dan komunikasi dilihat. Teknologi telah menyumbang kepada kemunculan flashpacker istilah baru, di mana backpacker tradisional kini semakin terlibat dengan teknologi. Ini telah membawa kepada motivasi kajian ini, dengan melihat kesan dan hubungan teknologi ke arah tingkah laku dan budaya backpacker tradisional. Selain itu, terdapat jurang utama dalam kajian flashpackers dan teknologi dalam penyelidikan pelancongan, dan tidak ada kriteria yang ditetapkan untuk membezakan istilah flashpacker. Objektif tesis ini dicapai dengan menggunakan kaedah kuantitatif telah digunakan dalam penyelidikan utama. Sebanyak 100 responden mengambil bahagian dalam tinjauan itu. Responden kajian ini mewakili backpacker dari pelancong antarabangsa dan tempatan melalui latar belakang yang berbeza. Data yang dikumpulkan dari peringkat kaji selidik melalui soal selidik diri (SQA) dan soal selidik dalam talian. Soal selidik itu dikodkan dan dimasukkan ke dalam sistem pangkalan data dalam SPSS. Terdapat tiga data analisis dalam kajian ini, iaitu analisis deskriptif, penyebaran dan analisis min. Akhirnya, penemuan memberikan wawasan penting ke atas penggunaan dan makna yang berkaitan dengan perilaku perjalanan flashpackers dan peranan teknologi dalam kehidupan flashpackers.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SAQ	-	Self-administered questionnaire
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for the Social Science

LIST OF SYMBOLS

n	-	Sample size
N	-	Population size
e	-	Probability on commenting error

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with a background of the study and an overview of important terms in this study. Next, there were also problems statement been identified. While, research question and research objective were address in the following sections followed by scope of study. Finally, the chapter were determined with structure of thesis.

1.2 Background of Study

The world is so competitive and evolving quickly, due to influencing factor, for example, the persistent increment of fuel costs, the significance of internet-based in people life, and the speed of new technology advancements. However, the most steady factor right now is even ‘change’. The travel industry isn’t just the biggest growing segment in the world, but it is also the most unsecured one.

Lots of factors can lead to the change in the field of tourism. The travel behaviour of the tourist can be influenced by the supply side of the tourism. Despite the backpackers give an important position to the tourism sector, however backpacking doesn’t get much attention from other academics (Sørensen, 1999). The backpacker market change from time to time and backpackers seems to makes a typology movement towards “flashpackers”, the latest terms that driven the tourism becoming more wealthy and making used of technological tools in their daily life as well as during travelling.

The old-fashioned backpacker, a light traveller with a backpack that travelling to all around the world, is now turning flashpacker when it is fully relies on the internet and its technological progress. The transition of backpackers to flashpackers changing the travel behaviour of the flashpacker. The obvious changes from backpackers to flashpackers is mainly driven by the higher budget during travelling, more technological tools be taken while travelling (Paris, 2012) , and higher demand on comfort (Chia-Yuan Hsu, Wen-Hsin Lee & Wen-Yu Chen, 2016). The use of technological advancement such as mobile phone and laptop may avoid traveller from feeling homesick during their journey. The communication tools able to engage friends and relative to virtually join the trip by having a video call or posting the photos in social media. In addition, the GPS system and mobile applications for travelling have made the flashpacker more easier to plan and simplify their itinerary, however, this may prevent the flashpacker getting contact with the local host community.

1.3 Problem Statement

Technology has become threatening to the backpacker's social activities and to dependent businesses (Pearce, Murphy, and Brymer,2009). Backpackers are now attaching with technology and there is limited communication towards other people due to social media that replace the traditional backpacker's style who should be mingle with other people and their surroundings. Therefore, in this context, either the backpacker market will be able to maintain its traditional since many travelers let themselves lead by technological (Valls, 2013).

In addition, the study of flashpacker in tourism research and practice have a major gap in researching, understanding and managing technology enhanced experience. (Neuhofer & Buhalis, 2012). Furthermore as there are no established criteria to distinguish the term of flashpacker, these people cannot answer if their age, travel behaviour, budget, duration of travel, nature of accommodation, transport or facilities used, or else possession of certain digital devices, is appropriate enough to label them as a backpacker or flashpacker (Khan, 2015). Thus classification of the backpackers and flashpackers should have a clear identity and either the culture of backpackers is still maintain or have been diminish by the technological so that further research can be done to understand the emergence of backpackers.

1.4 Aim and Objective of the Study

The aim of this research is to examine the influence of technological advancement on flashpacker travel behavior. By examining the travel behavior of the contemporary backpackers, this study attempts to investigate if the term “flashpacker” is actually different from backpackers. In addition, by knowing the right term on certain type of traveler, tourism business might benefit from gaining more knowledge about the current changes and can enable themselves to anticipate on the changes in demand. This goal could be achieved through the following objectives:

- i. To examine the flashpackers characteristics towards physical spaces, cultural spaces and virtual spaces.
- ii. To distinguish the differences between travel behavior of flashpacker and backpackers.
- iii. To identify the importance of technology advancement to the flashpacker

1.5 Research Question

For the purpose of this study, the following research questions are examined:

- i. How flashpacker associates with physical spaces, cultural spaces and virtual spaces?
- ii. What is the travel behavior of flashpacker?
- iii. Why is technological advancement being important to the flashpacker?

1.6 Scope of Study

The purpose of this study is to focus on the flashpacker travel behavior towards technological advancement. This study will explore the travel behavior of the flashpacker which associated with physical travel, backpacker culture and the convergence of the information and communication technologies. In the meantime, this thesis also focused on travel behavior of the flashpacker and a deep understanding on the important of the technological advancement to the flashpacker.

To achieve this study, researcher use quantitative method to gain the data. The self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) form were used in this study as the instrument to capture respondent socio-demographic profiles, characteristics of flashpacker, and backpacker mobilities towards flashpacker. In this survey, researcher focusing the centre of Kota Kinabalu City as a research location and target respondent focus on backpackers who have been to or currently backpacking in Kota Kinabalu. Face to face method as well as online survey have been done in order to get 100 respondents.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

In order to analyze the influence of technological advancement on flashpacker travel behavior, researcher has adopted the backpackers mobilities framework by Paris (2010a). The framework illustrates three spaces of backpacking, and the intersection or mobilities between the spaces. The spaces consist of physical spaces, cultural spaces and virtual spaces of backpackers. The framework as follows: -

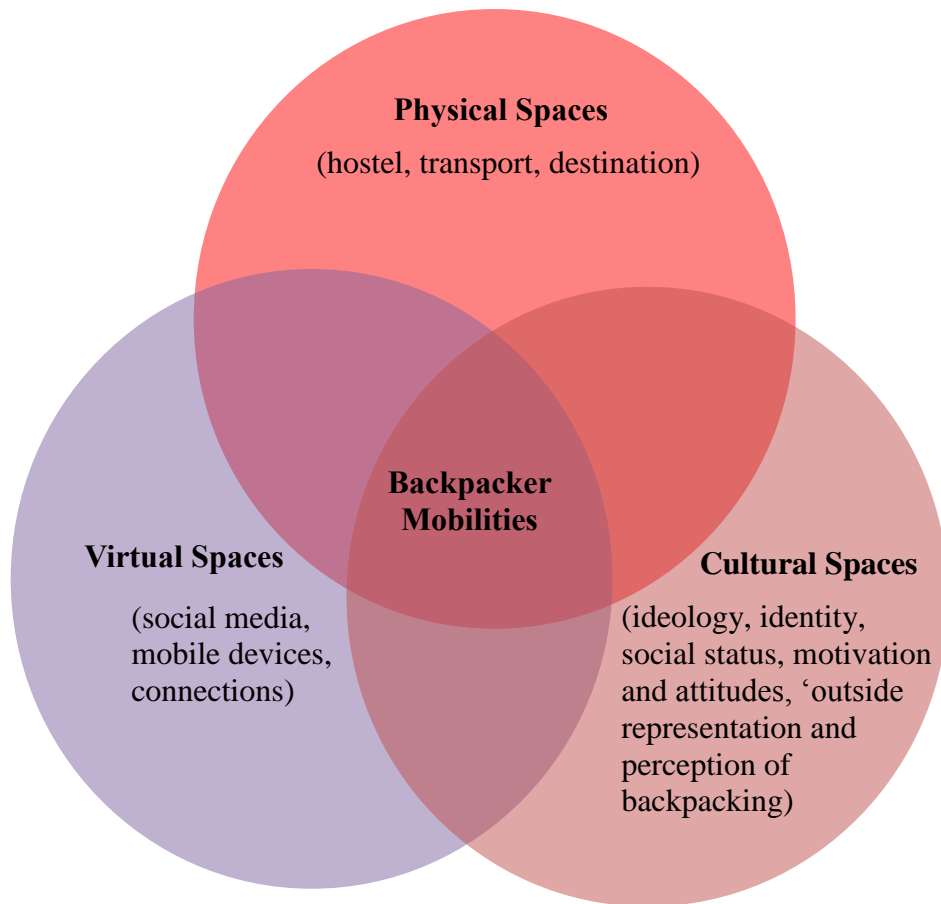


Figure 0-1 Conceptual framework adapted from Backpacker Mobilities (Source : Paris, 2010a)

1.8 Significant of the Study

This study provides both academic and practical importance in the field of tourism industry. The findings will be useful for tourism industry and hostel industry.

1.8.1 Tourism industry

Flashpacker are known as a person who have little time to travel but have a relative high travel budget. Therefore, the flashpacker will eventually buy excursion packages as they want to involve as what backpackers' activities done, but they will need someone to organize the trip for them since they only have limited time to spend. Thus, on site facilities, it will help the flashpacker to spend their money, and more

facilities and services will be needed in the future in order to cater flashpacker demand. In addition, as flashpacker will be overnight in different form of accommodation, not only budget accommodation such as hostel will focus on flashpacker, but also luxurious resort could expect from the flashpackers. Therefore, the tourism industry will experience a different term of travel preference from the flashpacker.

1.8.2 Hostel industry

Through the finding of the thesis, hostel industry can upgrade their service and facilities of the hostels in order to widen their target market not only for backpackers, but as well as flashpackers. To maintain an effective business, the provider sector must consider the effectiveness of technology tools by the hostel. Furthermore, with the emergence of the flashpacker, the research of this topic is now started to increase (Paris, 2011). Therefore, the tourism industry need to identify and adopt the flashpacker as a new and strong developing niche to the hostel industry.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis includes five chapters: (i) Introduction, (ii) Literature Review, (iii) Research Methodology, (iv) Analysis and Findings, and (v) Discussion and Conclusion.

Chapter I : Introduction. The first chapter elaborates the background of the research and an overview of backpackers. Next, there were also problems statement been identified. While, research question and research objective were address in the following sections followed by scope of study and significant of this study.

Chapter II: Literature Review. The second chapter will investigate the previous research and theories of the backpackers and flashpackers. This chapter gain by secondary data which also focusing on review on the reading materials, previous research, journals, articles, academic papers and other related of the topic.

Chapter III: Research Methodology. The third chapter focuses on the research design, research approach, study site, population & sampling, and the method of data collection. Finally, the evaluation of research results will be discussed.

Chapter IV: Analysis and Findings. The fourth chapter presents the outcome of data collection from the online and face to face survey. This chapter represents the outcome of data collection from the self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) and is divided into three sections. The first section of the chapter addresses the demographic of the respondents. The second section presents on the characteristics of the flashpacker. The third section presents on the backpackers' mobilities.

Chapter V : Conclusion and Recommendation. In this chapter, it will discuss and summarize the research findings following with research objectives. The contributions of this study will be elaborated based on the findings and discussions. Lastly, the limitations of the study will be explained as well.

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