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FLASHPACKERS:
An Emerging Sub-Culture?

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to examine the emerging flashpacker sub-culture in relation to the backpacker culture. Cultural Consensus Analysis is employed to examine the potential cultural divergence between flashpackers and non-flashpackers. A mixed-mode dual-frame sampling procedure was employed for data collection, as surveys were administered through Facebook backpacker-groups and in hostels in Cairns, Australia. The results indicate that flashpacker and non-flashpacker groups have a shared cultural understanding of backpacking. In addition to the conceptual clarity of the emerging flashpacker, this study also provides some interesting insights into contemporary backpacker culture and the continuing convergence of physical travel with information and communication technologies.

Keywords: Flashpacking, Social media, Cognitive anthropology, Facebook, Information Technology.

INTRODUCTION

The recent convergence of information technology and physical travel has been embraced by backpackers. Advancements in communications allow individuals to connect instantly with their social networks, thus overcoming isolation and physical distance (Mascheroni, 2007).

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Communication technology allows many small backpacker businesses to compete and connect to their markets directly instead of relying completely on word of mouth on the backpacking trail or backpacker guide books. Understanding the impacts of emerging technologies on the backpacking experiences and businesses is a major area for future backpacker research. Findings from Pearce, Murphy, and Brymer (2009) suggest that not enough is understood about how technology is impacting the backpacking experience and industry. This article explores one such impact new technologies, the emergence of the 'flashpacker.'

The flashpacker has been viewed as a 'key constituent of contemporary society' emerging from the economic, demographic, technological, and social changes in the world (Hannam & Diekmann, 2010). In addition to being generally older, having more disposable income, and traveling as a 'backpacker' by choice rather than budgetary necessity, flashpackers' tourist experience is mediated by communications technology often through mobile devices (Paris, 2010a; Hannam & Diekmann, 2010). Flashpackers, seemingly, embody both the backpacker culture and that of the 'digital nomad', individuals that embrace mobile technologies allowing them a live a location independent lifestyle by working from anywhere they have an internet connection (Makimoto & Manners, 1997). Flashpackers could also be considered part of a new global elite (Bauman, 2007). These elite are hypermobile mentally, corporeally, and virtually. They have the means to move fluidly across the globe through the various travelscapes using the 'nomadic institutional structure' (including transportation systems, credit cards, accommodations, travel agents, travel booking and information websites), and they have the ability to connect instantly with multiple networks from virtually anywhere through an array of mobile technologies (O'Regan, 2008, p. 111).

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The flashpacker has been embraced as an increasingly important sub-segment of backpacking both in the academic literature and the tourism industry (Jarvis & Peel, 2010). In industry backpackers are classified as flashpackers if they are affluent and/or tech-savvy. For example, Hostelbookers.com, one of the main online hostel booking sites, suggests that flashpackers are usual backpackers who are "looking for something a bit more up-market from their digs" and are "just part of the growing number of techno-travelers" (Hostelbookers.com, 2010).

The notion of the flashpacker is representative of changing demographics and trends in the Western World, including increased amounts of leisure time, older age at marriage, older age having children, increased disposable incomes and technological innovations (Hannam & Diekmann, 2010). Flashpackers backpack with 'style,' and 'bucks and toys.' Hannam and Diekmann (2010) define the flashpacker as,

> …the older twenty to thirty-something backpacker…stays in a variety of accommodation depending on location, has greater disposable income, visits more 'off the beaten track' locations, carries a laptop, or at least a 'flash drive' and a mobile phone, but who engages with the mainstream backpacker culture. (p. 2)

In their study of flashpackers in Fiji, Jarvis and Peel (2010) suggest that policy makers at destinations need to recognize the flashpacker market as a potential niche for future sustainable tourism development, and that destinations should focus on supporting local industry to address new demands associated with 'flashpackers'. While flashpackers engage with the mainstream backpacker culture, the growing interest and research by the backpacking sector and tourism academics, suggest that there needs to be further understanding of the potential divergence of these two groups. Several recent studies have examined the interaction of backpackers and

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innovations in information and communication technology (Paris, 2008; 2010a; Sorensen, 2003; Mascheroni, 2007). The two key characteristics that are used to differentiate backpackers from flashpackers are travel expenditure and technology use.

The purpose of this study is to examine the emerging flashpacker sub-culture in relation to the backpacker culture with a particular focus on the differences between flashpackers and non-flashpackers. In order to do this, Cultural Consensus Analysis (CCA) is employed to examine the potential cultural divergence between flashpackers and non-flashpackers by determining if there is a shared cultural understanding among backpackers and if flashpackers and non-flashpackers have a shared cultural understanding of backpacking.

Cultural Consensus Analysis

Cultural consensus analysis (CCA) was developed in the field of cognitive anthropology as a way of objectively measuring and describing the amount and distribution of culture among a group of individuals (Romney et al., 1986). CCA is based on the propositions that individuals with a common culture have shared cultural knowledge and that individual's agreement with the shared cultural knowledge varies according to each individual's possession of culturally correct knowledge (Romney et al., 1986; Weller, 1987). Cultural consensus analysis is based on a cognitive theory of culture, such as that championed by Goodenough (1957), "a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members" (p. 167).

Culture is often defined by cognitive anthropologists in terms of shared knowledge (D'Andrade, 1981; Kroeber & Kluckholm, 1952; Romney et al. 1996; Weller, 1987). Chick (2009) suggests that CCA provides a means of defining and operationalizing culture, thus allowing researchers to, "actually measure and compare cultural content of different groups

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rather than simply assume that because groups have different names, they also have different cultures" (p. 308). In this study, CCA is applied to determine if there is homogeneity in the backpacker cultural domain for the whole group as well as for flashpacker and non-flashpacker subgroups. Additionally, instead of assuming cultural homogeneity of the flashpacker and non-flashpacker subgroups and then testing for differences using more traditional statistics, CCA provides a basis from which differences between the two groups can be tested.

CCA makes the assumption that there is a fixed answer key and that individuals come from a common culture. This has been perceived as a bounded conceptualization of culture, which Handwerker (2002) finds to be unrealistic. Handwerker argues that individuals in reality participate in multiple cultures all of which can affect their cultural competence. Caulkins and Hyatt (1999), however disagree, suggesting that consensus analysis does not have to be limited to a singular cultural test. Instead it can be expanded to "reveal contested meanings, overlapping understandings, and value diversity" (Caulkins, 2001, p. 117). Taking both of these arguments into consideration, CCA can be useful for examining the cultural models of sub-cultural groups to see if there are multiple cultural models for an overall group.

CCA is a useful tool for cultural domain analysis, which is the empirical determination that a set of items are related according to an informant group (Borgatti, 1994). When applied to a set of cultural norm statements related to a specific cultural domain, such as backpacking, CCA can simultaneously provide an estimate of knowledge or cultural competence of each individual and an estimate of the culturally correct answer to each question (Romney et al., 1996). CCA does not require the knowledge of culturally correct answers in advance because of the robustness of the mathematical model that has been developed (Romney et al., 1996). CCA is often applied to natural or common categories of items such. The backpacker cultural domain

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that is being examined in this study is better understood as an ad-hoc category (Barsalou, 1983). Ad-hoc categories are made up of specialized lists of items for specialized context and are not commonly or naturally categorized together.

CCA has been employed in several sub-fields of anthropology to study diverse populations and knowledge domains. CCA has also been suggested as a useful method for gaining a more complete and deeper understanding of leisure behavior (Chick, 2009). Li, Chick, Zinn, Absher, and Graefe (2007) used CCA to examine the usefulness of ethnicity as a construct in leisure research. Students' perceptions of leisure, leisure professionals and the professional body of knowledge were examined using CCA by Parr and Lashua (2005). Recently, CCA has been applied to a tourism context. Gatewood and Cameron (2009) employed CCA to examine the extent to which respondents in the island country of the Turks and Caicos had a common cultural understanding of tourism. Ribeiro (2011) employed CCA to examine spring break tourist behavior. Paris, Musa, and Thirumoorthi (2010) used CCA to examine the differences in cultural understanding of backpackers from Australia and New Zealand and backpackers from South East Asia. CCA was also applied to the study of sense of place meanings among Fijian Highlanders in the midst of nature-based tourism development (Kerstetter, Bricker, & Li, 2010).

Study Methods

A questionnaire was designed to gather respondents' demographic information including age, gender, education, employment status, nationality, previous travel experience, and a set of cultural norm statements concerning the backpacker cultural domain. To develop the statements results were first compiled from a previous survey of 217 respondents conducted by the author in 2008 in which respondents were asked to list ten items they felt best represented "backpacking culture." An initial set of statements were formed and then revised based upon participant

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observations made by the author during fieldwork in the last three years, informal interviews with backpackers, and an analysis of the backpacker literature (Paris, 2008; Mascheroni, 2007; Sorensen, 2003; Richards & Wilson, 2004; Jarvis & Peel, 2010; Paris & Teye, 2010; O'Regan, 2008; O'Reilley, 2008; Prideaux & Coughlin, 2006; Scheyvens, 2002; Spreitzhofer, 1998; Hannam & Diekmann, 2010; Molz, 2006; Murphy, 2001).

Cultural domain analysis usually starts with the selection of the set of cultural norm statements. Borgatti (1994) argues that employing a free listing method is most appropriate way to elicit items directly from informants. While a strict free listing procedure was not employed in this study, the starting point for selecting the cultural norm statements was based upon input from a group of backpacker informants. Borgatti (1994) also mentions that free listing is best suited for categories that have one-word names. Because of the ad-hoc nature of the category, the additional revisions of the items based upon the previous fieldwork by the author and the literature was necessary to form a more complete set of items including items related to technology use. Reflecting back on the compilation of the items for this study, a more optimal approach could have been to employ a free listing method with a small subset of the overall sample of respondents shortly before the full survey was administered, and then refine them. Whether the items constitute the backpacker cultural domain, is an empirical question (Borgatti, 1994), which is analyzed using CCA in this study. Sixty dichotomous (Yes/No) cultural norms statements representing the backpacker cultural domain were used in this study are included in Table 3.

Targeting backpackers for survey research entails some unique issues and considerations (Paris, 2008). This study used a mixed-mode dual frame sampling procedure combining self administered surveys through ten backpacker specific groups on Facebook.com and self-

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administered surveys at backpacker hostels in Cairns, Australia. Mixed-mode dual frame sampling approaches are typically used in international research when a unimode approach is not feasible or optimal (de Leeuw, 2005). Combining these two modes allowed for a diverse sample of backpackers that included individuals from many different nationalities, individuals at home or traveling and not in a backpacker enclave, individuals that do not use Facebook or participate in online groups, older backpackers, and individuals traveling for an extended period of time.

The surveys were designed using principles outlined by Dillman (2007). The survey was pre-tested with a small group of individuals through a Facebook backpacker group and a small group of ten graduate and undergraduate students at Arizona State University in the U.S.A. Taking into account recommendations from both pre-tests, particularly with respect to any compounding issues, the survey instrument was revised.

To select the Facebook backpacker groups, first a search was conducted using the internal search engine on Facebook, and the first twenty five backpacker groups that fit the criteria for the study were selected. In order to be selected the group had to have recent activity among members, and the groups' content was reviewed to sure that they were not aimed at hikers and trekkers. While every effort was made to limit potential biases in the selection of the Facebook groups, some were unavoidable. First, the primary language of each group was English, although some groups' members interacted in a multitude of languages. While geographical bias cannot be completely ruled out, it does appear to be limited based upon the variety of respondents' nationalities. The administrator for each of the twenty five groups was contacted of which 15 responded. Ten of these administrators made the researcher an administrator of the group, allowing complete access to the group. This allowed direct messages to be sent to members of the Facebook Groups. A link to the 'backpacker survey' and a short message explaining the

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purpose were sent to members. Two follow-up/reminder messages were sent after one week and two weeks.

In Cairns, Australia, surveys were administered at fifteen backpacker hostels in June 2009, which were selected after considering past backpacker surveys administered in Cairns (Prideaux & Coghlan, 2006). Cairns is a well developed backpacker enclave, as it has a dense collection of backpacker hostels in the downtown area providing access to a large number of potential respondents. Using a purposive sampling method, respondents were approached in common areas of each hostel and asked if they could take a few minutes to complete the 'backpacker survey'. Local residents were excluded from the survey. Collecting data at both backpacker destinations and in online communities reduces limitations that have been associated with both methods of data collection in the past.

The data collection resulted in a total of 519 surveys of which 493 were usable. Out of the 275 surveys distributed in Cairns, Australia, 230 were completed for a response rate of 83.6%. The online survey was distributed via ten Facebook backpacker groups to a total of 1453 individuals, of which 283 were completed for a response rate of 19.5%. Response rates for email surveys are commonly under 20% (Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant, 2003). The data analysis for this study included several parts. First, descriptive analyses, using SPSS 16.0, were used to provide background information of the respondents. Then UCINET version 6.232 (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002) was used to conduct the Cultural Consensus Analysis. Third, A Quadratic Assignment Procedure (QAP) Linear Regression Model (Krackhardt, 1988) was used to test for differences between cultural models using UCINET.

The sample of this study was divided into two a priori groups: non-flashpackers and flashpackers. The selection criterion for the flashpacker group was based upon recent literature

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(Hannam & Diekmann, 2010; Jarvis & Peel, 2010; Paris, 2010a) and included individuals who met at least two of the following criteria: brought a laptop or video camera on their trip, had a budget of at least $1000 a week on their most recent trip, and indicated a score greater than three (on a 1-5 Likert, with 1- never, 3-often and 5- always) on questions about their social media usage while traveling. These include blogging, tweeting, and uploading videos to YouTube while traveling. Overall there were 99 individuals who fit the criterion and were separated into the flashpacker group. The non-flashpacker group was composed of the rest of the 394 individuals. Differences between the two groups were examined including their demographic profiles, technology use, and responses to the cultural norm statements.

FINDINGS

Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the profile of respondents (n=493) and the two subgroups (flashpackers=99 and non-flashpackers=394). There were slightly more female respondents than male respondents. The majority of the respondents were 30 years old or younger (87.8%). The sample was generally well educated with over 80% indicating at least some college/university-level education and nearly 30% of the respondents indicating that they are currently students. The sample surveyed included individuals of 41 different nationalities. While the majority of these were from North America, Western Europe, and Australia/New Zealand, there were a large number of respondents from Asian, Eastern European, Middle Eastern, and Latin American countries.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

Technology Use of Flashpackers and Backpackers.

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Table 2 illustrates some of the differences in technology use by flashpackers and non-flashpackers. Overall the findings indicate that flashpackers are more tech-savvy than the non-flashpacker group, as would be expected. Several similarities were found between the two groups including more than 90% of each group had brought a digital camera with them while traveling, the amount of time spent online each time respondents logged on while traveling, and the number of times respondents logged onto the internet while at home.

More than 75% of flashpackers carried a laptop compared to only 14% of the non-flashpackers. Both of these numbers illustrate an increasing trend for all backpackers when compared to two previous, but unrelated studies on backpackers (Paris, 2008; 2010a). There was a major difference in the percentage of individuals carrying Wi-Fi enabled mobile devices (40% of flashpackers compared to 4% of non-flashpackers). Flashpackers also greatly preferred hostels with Wi-Fi access, and the flashpacker group utilized the mobile devices and connections by logging onto the internet more often while traveling.

The table also illustrates that flashpackers use of technology to document and share their trips to a greater extent than the non-flashpackers as more flashpackers brought a video camera, had a YouTube account (needed to upload or comment on videos on YouTube), maintained a personal blog, and used Twitter. The flashpacker group also used Facebook and email to a greater extent than the non-flashpacker group. The non-flashpackers do use Facebook and email often to connect and share their experiences while traveling, and most of them do log in daily while traveling. Overall the results illustrate some significant differences in the use of technology while traveling between the two groups. The next section begins to examine the potential differences between these two groups in relation to the backpacker cultural domain.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

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Cultural Norms Statements:

The percentage of individuals responding "yes" to each of the items about backpacking culture was examined for non-flashpackers and flashpackers (Table 3). The most agreed with and most disagreed with items, are reflective of the characteristics of backpacker culture discussed in the academic literature. Several items with at least 80% agreement related to the independence and freedom travelers perceive while backpacking. Characteristics of backpacker culture that received the highest levels of agreement among respondents related to traveling on a budget and the ability to have authentic tourist experiences by traveling as a backpacker. Several items offer important implications for the backpacker industry. There was a high level of agreement among all the backpackers in the study that "It's ok to spend extra money on once in a lifetime experiences." This agreement suggests that while traveling on a budget is important to backpackers, most will pay for unique experiences.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 3 HERE

There were several items for which the flashpacker and non-flashpacker groups had significantly different levels of agreement, and these are noted in Table 3. One of them is "Backpacking alone is not risky," which flashpackers agreed with more than non-flashpackers. Flashpackers are generally older (Table 1) with more financial security allowing them to pay for more comfort and security and are more likely connected to their social networks via social media and mobile devices. The perception of time was also a point of departure between the two groups. Specifically, the level of agreement with the item, "Time doesn't matter when traveling," was significantly different between the two groups with fewer flashpackers agreeing with the statement. There was disagreement between the flashpackers and non-flashpackers with regards

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to the two other items “The more countries the better” and “A good backpacker does lots of research before leaving home.”

The results in Table 3 suggest that the perception of technology and communication was the greatest difference between flashpackers and non-flashpackers. The flashpacker group disagreed with the statement; “If you tweet or Facebook all the time while backpacking you diminish the experience,” while the non-flashpacker group agreed. Additionally, the items, “Backpackers never carry laptops with them,” “Posting a video on Youtube.com is great way to display travel experiences,” and “The internet provides a better source of information than guidebooks” were all significantly different, with flashpackers answering more positively.

The results thus far have indicated that there are some differences between the flashpacker and non-flashpacker groups in terms of their demographics and technology use. Additionally there are significant differences between the two groups for some of the backpacker cultural domain items. To examine if these differences translate into differences in overall cultural knowledge for the two groups, the next section presents the results of the cultural consensus analysis. The CCA was used to see if there is an overall shared cultural model for the whole sample and to examine any differences in the shared cultural understanding among technologically savvy and affluent flashpackers and the non-flashpackers.

CCA Results

CCA was used to measure the level of agreement and individual cultural competence for three groups: the full sample of backpackers, a sub-group of flashpackers, and a sub-group of non-flashpackers (Table 4). For all three groups the three assumptions of consensus analysis (Romney et al., 1987) were fulfilled. The three assumptions include the existence of a common truth between informants, the informants are from a shared culture, and the cultural reality is the

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same for all informants in the sample, local independence and each informant has a fixed cultural competence, and that each questions is the same difficulty level. When all three of these assumptions hold, the resulting model provides culturally correct answer keys, as well as measurements of the degree with which individuals approximate it (Hruschka, Sibley, Kalim, & Edmonds, 2008). Two main indicators were used to determine that these assumptions were fulfilled, which would indicate good model fit. First, the ratio between the eigenvalues for first and second factor should be at least three-to-one (Romney et al, 1986).

The second indicator is the individual loadings on the first factor, which should all be positive to indicate general agreement with the single factor (cultural model) (Romney et al., 1986). The loading is essentially the individual's correlation with the first factor, and the scores typically range from 0 to 1.0, with a score of .5 indicating that the individual provided the culturally correct answer 50% of the time. Additionally, the mean of all of the loadings should be greater than .5 to indicate a cultural pattern of agreement among the whole sample. Weller (2007) suggests that an average of competency scores greater than .66 indicates a strong cultural pattern. CCA also calculates the culturally correct answer for each question (Table 3). The UCINET software produces the 'answer keys' by accumulating the agreements between responses. The agreements are derived on the assumption that agreement between individuals, based on Bayesian weightings, is a function of the level of culturally-correct knowledge each individual possesses (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002).

All three of the samples had similar results with eigenvalue ratios around nine-to-one and mean competence scores of .53-.56 (Table 4). While the mean average competency scores are all over .5, they are less than the .66 (Weller, 2007), suggesting that there is a culturally agreed upon model, but that the level of agreement is not exceptionally strong. Additionally, the similarity in

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the agreement scores and eigenvalue ratios could indicate that the pattern of agreement for each sample is similar, and that there is not a difference in the cultural models for flashpackers and non-flashpackers for the backpacking knowledge domain represented by the sixty items used in this analysis.

PLEASE INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

To complement the comparison between the flashpacker and non-flashpacker subgroups, three additional sub-group comparisons were made based upon gender, age (24 years or younger vs. 25 years or more), and previous travel experience (six or fewer international trips vs. seven or more international trips). The results of the cultural consensus analysis of the six additional groups are included in Table 4. All six groups had eigenvalue ratios greater than 3:1 and average competency scores greater than 0.5. However, only the male and 25 or older age group had no negative competency scores. The other four groups had one or two negative competency scores indicating that there was not complete agreement with the cultural model.

These results provide some interesting insights and some potential biases in the cultural domain items used in this study. The shared cultural model of the older backpackers could be because they are more experienced backpackers with more familiarity with the backpacker culture (Paris & Teye, 2010; Paris, 2010a). On the other hand, the lack of a shared understanding of backpacking by the younger group could suggest a potential bias towards the backpacking experience of many younger or 'new' backpackers, such as those gained during a Gap Year or Overseas Experience. The negative competency scores of the female subgroup could suggest a gendered bias in the domain items used in this study, and could be the basis for further research. To summarize the results of the CCA there is no apparent support that flashpackers and non-flashpackers draw from different cultural models. The quadratic

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assignment procedure (QAP) linear regression model was used to test if there was increased similarity within each of the two sub-groups than between them. This test will indicate if the flashpacker and non-flashpacker sub-groups draw from different cultural models.

QAP Results

While the cultural model 'passed' the diagnostic criteria for consensus analysis (Romney et al., 1986; Batcherfeld and Romney, 1988; Weller, 2007), to determine if there is a shared model further analysis is needed. A priori groupings were first specified, and then tested for increased similarity of the models held within the groups. If greater similarity exists within groups, then individuals in the groups draw upon distinct and/or overlapping models. QAP regression is the appropriate method to test for differences in the two cultural models for two reasons. The QAP examines the non-independence of observations while analyzing pairs of individuals (Hubert & Shultz, 1976). QAP allows whole matrices to be treated as variables in regression analysis. The data in the matrices cannot be assumed to be independent because of the dyadic nature of the dependent variables, and standard regression analysis would result in underestimation of the standard errors (Krackhardt, 1988). The QAP algorithm overcomes this issue through several steps. A standard multiple regression is run across the cells of the dependent and independent matrices. QAP randomly permutes the rows and columns of the dependent matrix, and then regresses the dependent matrix on the unpermuted independent matrices. The procedure is then repeated through multiple iterations (in this case 2000), thus creating an empirical sampling distribution of regression coefficients. Then the original matrices are compared to the sampling distribution to determine if a significant relationship exists between the matrices that is unlikely to have happened by chance (Borgatti et al., 2002)

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The QAP analysis in this study followed a two-step procedure recommended by Hruschka et al. (2008) and Romney, Moore, Batchelder, and Hsia (2000). First a person-by-person (493x493) agreement matrix was calculated. Each cell included the raw proportion of the 60 items upon which the two individuals agreed. Next, two person-by-person identity structure matrices (493x493) were constructed, one for non-flashpackers and one for flashpackers. The non-flashpacker matrix included 1s in the cells if the pair of individuals were both members of the non-flashpacker group and 0s where they were not. Similarly, the flashpacker identity matrix included 1s in the cells if the pair of individuals were both members of the flashpacker group and 0s where they were not. A fourth matrix was constructed from the individuals' competency scores to control for response similarity due to individual competence. The second step was to fit a QAP linear regression model to the matrices. In order to determine if there is more within-group agreement than between group agreement, the agreement matrix was set as the dependent variable, and the two identity structure matrices (flashpacker and non-flashpacker) and the competency matrix as the independent variables.

The QAP linear regression model indicated that there was not a significant proportion of variance of the agreement matrix (R^2=.000, p=.384) explained by the independent variables. Neither the flashpackers nor non-flashpackers agreed more among themselves than individuals in the other group. The results indicate that the flashpacker and non-flashpacker groups do not draw from significantly different cultural models. The QAP results also support the initial speculation resulting from the similarity of the results of CCA for each of the three groups; they each draw from a similar cultural model. In other words, they have a shared cultural understanding of backpacking. The QAP regression analysis was also used to test for greater within-group than between-group similarity between the three pairs of subgroups based on gender, age, and travel

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experience (Table 4). The QAP results indicated that there were no significant differences between each of the pairs of subgroups. These findings further support the results of the initial analysis of the overall sample and the flashpacker and non-flashpacker subgroups.

PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

Latent Identities

Each backpacker carries with them personal identities formed through the participation in multiple cultures, which in-turn shape their experience and understanding of the backpacker culture. A scatter-plot of the consensus factor loadings on the first two factors was used to visualize the potential differences between the non-flashpacker and flashpacker groups as well as to look for any underlying latent cultural patterns (Figure 1). The second factor loadings, which represent the potential impact of one or more shared latent cultural identities (Becker & Greer, 1960) on the individuals' shared cultural competence (represented by the first factor), were low (mean=.003, S.D.=0.19) as all of the loadings were less than ±.52. Handwerker (2002) argues that high loadings on the first factor combined with low loadings on the second factor represent evidence of a single culture.

However the range of scores on the second factor and the nearly even split in the flashpacker and non-flashpacker groups with negative and positive scores on the second factor could suggest that there are some latent pattern(s). The second largest source of intra-cultural variation is represented by the second factor, but the analysis of the second factor must be done on a case-by-case basis (Gatewood & Cameron, 2010). The best way to determine its meaning is to explore the correlations of the second factor loadings with demographic variables (Gatewood & Cameron, 2010). Pearson correlations between several variables (gender, age, travel experience, and fulltime employment or study) and the second factor loadings for the flashpacker

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and non-flashpacker groups were calculated. For the flashpacker group, the second factor loadings were significantly correlated with the "fulltime employment or study" (r=-0.228, $p<.05$), suggesting that individuals with lower second factor scores are less likely to be employed fulltime or studying full time. This flashpacker sub-group could represent the group that Jarvis and Peel (2010) refer to as Flashpacker Career Gapers. The non-flashpacker group's second factor loadings were significantly correlated with past travel experience (r=-0.312, $p<.001$), which echoes the results of the CCA for the two sub-groups based on travel experience and previous research that found variations in travel motivations for backpackers with low travel experience (Paris & Teye, 2010). While each of these cases provides some explanation of the variance of the second factor loadings, a very large proportion of the variance is left unexplained, and an area of continuing exploration for CCA researchers.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

One of the main objectives of this study was to undertake an examination of the contemporary backpacker culture and the apparent emergence of a flashpacker sub-culture. In addition to being a population reflective of contemporary global trends, flashpackers are individuals who are hypermobile, physically and virtually, that embody both the backpacker culture and the ongoing convergence of technology and daily life. They are embedded in complex hybrid virtual-physical spaces, which allow them to maintain constant states of personal mobility. Flashpackers are the early adopters, explorers, and creators of the virtual spaces of backpacking. In essence, they are virtual 'drifters,' early trailblazers of the virtualization of backpacking culture, performing a similar role in virtual spaces as Cohen's (1972) drifter in the physical spaces of backpacking. Flashpackers can be considered true lifestyle travelers who maintain a constant connection to backpacker culture both on the road and virtually, often

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blurring the cyclical dichotomy between home and the road that Cohen (2011) observed in a study of lifestyle backpackers. In addition to the conceptual clarity of the flashpacker, this study also provides some interesting insights into the backpacker culture and continuing convergence of physical travel with information and communication technologies.

Backpacker culture has endured major social, economic, geopolitical, geographical, and technological changes. Similar traits can be traced from the tramps of the 1880s to the drifters of the 1960s to the modern mainstream backpackers of the present. The results of this study suggest that as a cultural phenomenon, backpacking is relatively homogeneous, as evidenced by the overall cultural consensus in this study. Paris (2010) suggests that this is a result of the virtualization of the backpacker culture. From former 'hippie trail' travelers uploading scanned photos of their trips in the 1970s to backpackers today sharing videos instantly through social media and mobile devices, the virtualization of the backpacking culture has allowed the once geographically and temporally fragmented backpacker culture a platform to be accessible instantly from anywhere. Many individual travelers, and in particular flashpackers, perceive their personal web presence as their online home (Paris, 2011; Molz, 2008), and often their email address or social media profiles are their only stable or permanent address at which they can be contacted consistently (Mascheroni, 2007; Molz, 2008). All of these individuals' identities, when woven together, represent the basis of the virtualized backpacker culture.

Nearly paradoxically, the convergence of technology and backpacker *culture* has also contributed to increased heterogeneity and individualization within the backpacker *market* (Sorensen, 2003). The continued embracement of social media and mobile devices by backpackers are resulting in a hybridization of personal identities (home identities vs. 'road' identity), increased independence while traveling, increased freedom and choice in travel

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decisions, and increased ability to 'perform' while traveling by constructing the photos, stories, places, and experiences that they share with their virtual networks. While there is a coherent backpacker culture, how that culture is experienced and manifested for each individual is dependent upon their individual choices, latent identities, past experiences, and the technological mediation of their backpacker experiences.

The increasing use of technology, both by flashpackers and non-flashpackers, suggest a rise of 'networked individualism', as the backpacker culture is no-longer limited the linking of the individuals to and through places, but instead the backpacker cultural ties have also shifted to virtual spaces (Wellman, 2001; Burns & O'Regan, 2008). Mobile devices, mobile connectivity, and social media are not just technological objects used by backpackers, but are in themselves social objects (Molz, 2006) and part of the backpacker sociality. This backpacker sociality traditionally was maintained through face-to-face interactions 'on the road' (Murphy, 2001), but now it is also mediated through information and communication technologies creating an intersection between physical travel and more interactive travel. Mobile technologies allow backpackers now to be 'monitored' by geographically dispersed audiences online, thus allowing them to share their experiences and maintain contact from increasingly remote destinations (Molz, 2006).

In addition to the personal and cultural impacts of the virtualization of the backpacker experience, the global visibility of previously remote destinations and small businesses is increasing as they engage with the online backpacker culture through social media. The businesses and destinations are now in more control of their global visibility. Previously, they were largely dependent upon word-of-mouth or travel guides such as *Lonely Planet*, to increase their popularity and businesses. In order to be successful in this new hybrid-virtual environment

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several things need to be considered. Businesses and destinations need to focus on being active contributors and social participants in the virtual spaces of backpacking by developing reciprocal relationships that provide utility, entertainment, and accessibility. As backpacker hostels, cafes, enclaves, and other physical spaces were so instrumental in the development of the backpacker 'road' culture, each of these spaces need to be integrated into the virtual culture as well. This requires a shift in perception of social media as a tool to 'target' customers, and instead to provide virtual spaces where the backpacker culture can be manifested through organic social interactions.

Another issue that needs to be considered in the attempt to accommodate the networked-travelers is the potential alienation of travelers that want to truly escape. Burns and O'Regan (2008) warn that some 'out-ward' looking backpackers could potentially be alienated by hostels that have catered to their mobile-networks. They argue that offering services and facilities such as Wi-Fi access could drive up prices and reduce face-to-face interaction, thus making them less attractive to a majority of travelers. This issue was also noted by a traveler interviewed by Paris (2010b) who observed: "I've sat in hostel common rooms where 10 backpackers were silently staring at screens gathering information about the city they are in on Twitter rather than talking to each other, meeting new friends, and sharing information through the 'traveler network' that is right in the room" (p. 115). Maintaining the backpacker experience at destinations is important, particularly in enclaves and spaces like hostels, even for flashpackers.

By creating a different infrastructure for flashpackers, businesses could potentially alienate both flashpackers and more budget-minded travelers. Businesses targeting flashpackers should be careful to develop services and products within the backpacking industry landscape that already exists by creating products that complement the current backpacking industry. By

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adding amenities, addressing high-tech needs, and providing 'mixed-use' facilities for both flashpackers and other backpackers, a business could maximize the perceived value to their customers, not alienate flashpackers, and differentiate themselves from the competition. The findings of this study open up a broad range of questions about the future of the social convergence of increasingly networked daily life, physical travel, and tourist experiences, particularly as the Digital Native generation start to travel on their own. For some individuals, including flashpackers and digital nomads, already living in geographically independent lifestyles, the distinction between daily life and tourist experiences is becoming increasingly blurry.

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Table 1

Profiles

Attribute	Flashpackers (n=99)	Non-Flashpackers (n=394)	Whole Group (n=493)
Gender**			
Male	61 (61.6%)	174 (44.1%)	235 (47.7 %)
Female	38 (38.4%)	216 (54.8%)	254 (51.5%)
Total	99 (100%)	390 (99%)	489 (99.2%)
Age (years)			
18-20	10 (10.1%)	51 (12.9%)	61 (12.4%)
21-24	32 (32.3%)	155 (39.3%)	187 (37.9%)
25-30	40 (40.4%)	145 (36.8%)	185 (37.5%)
31-35	9 (9.1%)	20 (5.1%)	29 (5.9%)
>36	6 (6.1%)	21 (5.3%)	27 (5.5%)
Total	97 (98%)	392 (99.5%)	489 (99.2%)
Education			
High School (up to year 12)	20 (20.2%)	76 (19.3%)	96 (19.5%)
College (4 year)	58 (58.6%)	230 (58.4%)	288 (58.4%)
Graduate School (advanced degree)	19 (19.2%)	77 (19.5%)	96 (19.5%)
Total	97 (98%)	383 (97.2%)	480 (97.4%)
Employment			
Student	29 (29.3%)	117 (29.7%)	146 (29.6%)
Employed (Part-Time)	48 (48.5%)	168 (42.6%)	55 (11.2%)

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Employed (Full-Time)	12 (12.1%)	43 (10.9%)	216 (43.8%)
Unemployed	9 (9.1%)	61 (15.5%)	70 (14.2%)
Total	98 (99%)	389 (98.7%)	487 (98.8%)
Travel Experience			
0-6 International Trips	44 (44.4%)	201 (51.0%)	245 (49.7%)
7+ International Trips	55 (55.6%)	193 (49.0%)	248 (50.3%)
Daily Budget	$74.28	$58.46	$61.69
Total Trip Budget*	$6466.26	$4460.59	$4896.85

Note: * ($p<.05$) and **($p<.01$) indicate significant differences between flashpacker and non-flashpacker groups

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Table 2.

Differences in Technology Use of Flashpackers and Non-Flashpackers

Technology	Flashpackers	Non-Flashpackers
Facebook and Email[1]		
How often do you use Facebook?**	4.01	3.68
How often do you use Facebook to connect to the backpacker culture?***	2.67	2.21
How often do you post pictures of your trips on Facebook?**	2.44	2.14
How often do you add people you met on your trip to Facebook?***	2.92	2.57
How often do you check your email while traveling?***	3.70	3.19
Technological Devices on Trips (% that brought device with them on travel)		
Laptop***	75.8%	14.0%
Digital Camera*	97.0%	90.4%
Video Camera***	35.4%	5.1%
International Cell Phone	49.5%	40.9%
Wi-Fi Enabled Device (ex. cell phone, PDA, iPhone)***	40.4%	4.1%
Prefer to stay in hostels with Wi-Fi access***	65.7%	29.6%
Other Social Media Use (% answering yes)		
Maintain a personal blog***	43.4%	13.6%
Have a YouTube account***	56.6%	26.7%
Use Twitter***	29.3%	7.9%
Internet Usage		
How often do you long onto the internet while traveling?***		
Never	6.1%	2.6%
Once every few days	14.3%	21.5%
Once a day	46.9%	63.8%
Several time a day	32.7%	12.1%
How long do you spend online when you log on while traveling?		
Less than 30 minutes	36.7%	43.4%
30 minutes- 1 hour	56.1%	54.0%
More than 1 hour	7.1%	2.6%
How often do you log onto the internet while at		

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home?		
Never	1.0%	1.0%
Once every few days	8.1%	12.1%
Once a day	23.2%	28.5%
Several time a day	67.7%	58.4%
How long do you spend online when you log on at home?**		
Less than 30 minutes	10.1%	12.3%
30 minutes- 1 hour	30.3%	45.5%
More than 1 hour	59.6%	42.2%

[1] 1-5 scale (1-Never, 2-Sometimes, 3-Often, 4-Very Often, 5-Always)
*(p<.05), **(p<.01), ***(p<.001)

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Table 3.

Proportions of agreement with cultural norms statements backpackers and flashpackers

Statement Text		Proportion Answering "Yes"		
Agree with the statement:	Culturally Correct	FP	Non-FP	Whole
It's ok to spend extra money on once in a lifetime experiences.	Yes	92.80%	95.00%	95.90%
Backpackers help each other.	Yes	96.90%	93.70%	95.70%
Backpacking is a more free way to travel.	Yes	93.80%	94.50%	95.70%
Backpackers develop an understanding of other cultures.	Yes	93.80%	92.70%	94.30%
Socializing with other backpackers is an important part of the experience.	Yes	89.70%	92.40%	93.20%
Backpackers often share their experiences online through Facebook, Email, and Blogs.	Yes	92.80%	90.20%	92.00%
The best travel tips are spread by word of mouth.	Yes	91.80%	89.40%	91.20%
Facebook is useful to stay in contact with other people met during the trip.	Yes	92.80%	89.20%	91.20%
People who take short-term trips can still be considered backpackers.	Yes	87.60%	89.20%	90.10%
Eating weird food is all part of the experience.	Yes	86.60%	88.70%	89.50%
Traveling with other backpackers is a good way to save money.	Yes	85.60%	85.90%	87.10%
The journey is more valuable than the destination.	Yes	87.60%	83.10%	85.20%
Backpackers arrange things themselves.	Yes	87.60%	82.40%	84.60%
Backpacking is a better way to interact with locals.	Yes	76.30%	82.90%	82.80%
Backpacks are better than suitcases.	Yes	79.40%	81.40%	82.10%
It's ok to go to Starbucks or McDonalds while traveling to get a break	Yes	78.40%	81.40%	81.90%
Backpacking allows people to see the world as it really is.	Yes	83.50%	79.30%	81.30%
Backpackers seek extreme experiences when they travel.	Yes	75.30%	78.80%	79.30%
It's better to travel off the beaten track.	Yes	79.40%	76.80%	78.40%
It's essential to get the best deal and	Yes	83.50%	75.60%	78.20%

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pay local prices.				
Bad experiences make for better stories.	Yes	76.30%	76.30%	77.40%
Most backpackers are from North America, Europe or Australia.	Yes	70.10%	77.30%	77.00%
Backpackers want find themselves while traveling.	Yes	77.30%	74.60%	76.20%
Backpackers are more patient and tolerant of people. **	Yes	85.90%	72.30%	75.10%
Backpackers like to brag about their experiences.	Yes	72.20%	72.50%	73.50%
Sex while backpacking is more free than when at home ***	Yes	63.90%	71.00%	70.60%
Taking local transportation is better than flying. *	Yes	60.60%	71.60%	69.40%
Major tourist attractions are too touristy.	Yes	76.30%	66.00%	69.00%
A good backpacker always goes with the flow.	Yes	69.10%	67.00%	68.40%
Time doesn't matter when traveling. *	Yes	57.60%	69.50%	67.10%
Exotic destinations are preferred.	Yes	63.90%	63.50%	64.50%
Posting a video on Youtube.com is great way to display travel experiences. **	Yes	75.80%	61.70%	64.50%
Drinking is apart of backpacking.	Yes	59.80%	62.50%	62.80%
Lonely Planet is the backpacker bible.	Yes	58.80%	60.50%	61.00%
Backpackers don't need to shower every day.	Yes	55.70%	60.70%	60.60%
The internet provides a better source of information than guidebooks.*	Yes	69.70%	58.10%	60.40%
Going on organized tours makes the travel experience less authentic.	Yes	53.60%	60.70%	60.20%
If you tweet or Facebook all the time while backpacking you diminish the experience. ***	Yes	40.40%	59.10%	55.40%
The cheaper the trip, the better the thrill.	Yes	54.60%	53.40%	54.40%
The more countries the better.	Yes	56.70%	49.60%	51.70%
A good backpacker does lots of research before leaving home.	Yes	54.60%	47.60%	49.70%
Backpacking alone is not risky. **	No	60.60%	45.70%	48.70%
Backpackers who go to Australia are different than backpackers who go to Peru.	No	48.50%	42.60%	44.40%
Sleeping in a park, on a bench, or in an	No	39.20%	43.60%	43.30%

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airport builds status.				
Backpackers party too much.	No	40.20%	35.50%	37.00%
Most backpackers are just like regular mass tourists.	No	39.20%	33.50%	35.10%
It's better to have sex with other backpackers than with locals.	No	27.80%	35.50%	34.50%
There is something odd about backpacking when older.	No	29.90%	27.20%	28.10%
Backpackers shun technology like IPods, Cell phones, and Laptops while traveling.	No	22.70%	28.50%	27.70%
Hostels are just for backpackers.	No	26.80%	26.40%	26.90%
Backpackers prefer to talk to locals rather than to other backpackers.	No	21.60%	23.40%	23.40%
Backpackers never carry laptops with them. ***	No	10.10%	25.10%	22.10%
There are too many hippy type backpackers	No	26.80%	20.40%	22.00%
Its not a good idea to go 'local'	No	19.60%	20.70%	20.70%
Locals don't like backpackers.	No	19.60%	18.90%	19.30%
Sex with locals is sort of gross.	No	18.60%	18.40%	18.70%
Backpacking is really for the young.	No	16.50%	18.90%	18.70%
To be considered a backpacker a person must travel for a long time, like 1 year.	No	16.50%	12.10%	13.10%
Real backpackers never use guidebooks.	No	12.40%	12.60%	12.70%
Real backpackers do not take photos while traveling.	No	12.40%	10.30%	10.90%

Note: * notes significant at *p<.05, **p<.01, and ***p<.001*

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Table 4.

Results of Cultural Consensus Analysis

Backpacker Sub-Group	Ratio of Eigenvalue (Factor 1/Factor 2)	No. of Negative Factor Loadings on Factor 1	Mean Competency Score
Full Sample	9.33	0	0.54 (sd=0.16)
Flashpacker	9.55	0	0.56 (sd=0.15)
Non-Flashpacker	9.11	0	0.53 (sd=0.16)
Gender			
Women	9.31	2	0.55 (sd=0.15)
Men	8.83	0	0.52 (sd=0.17)
Age			
Age 24 years or younger	8.75	2	0.51 (sd=0.18)
Age 25 years or older	9.71	0	0.56 (sd=0.15)
Travel Experience			
Low travel experience (7 or fewer international trips)	8.98	1	0.54 (sd=0.16)
High Travel Experience (More than 7 international trips)	9.27	1	0.54 (sd=0.16)

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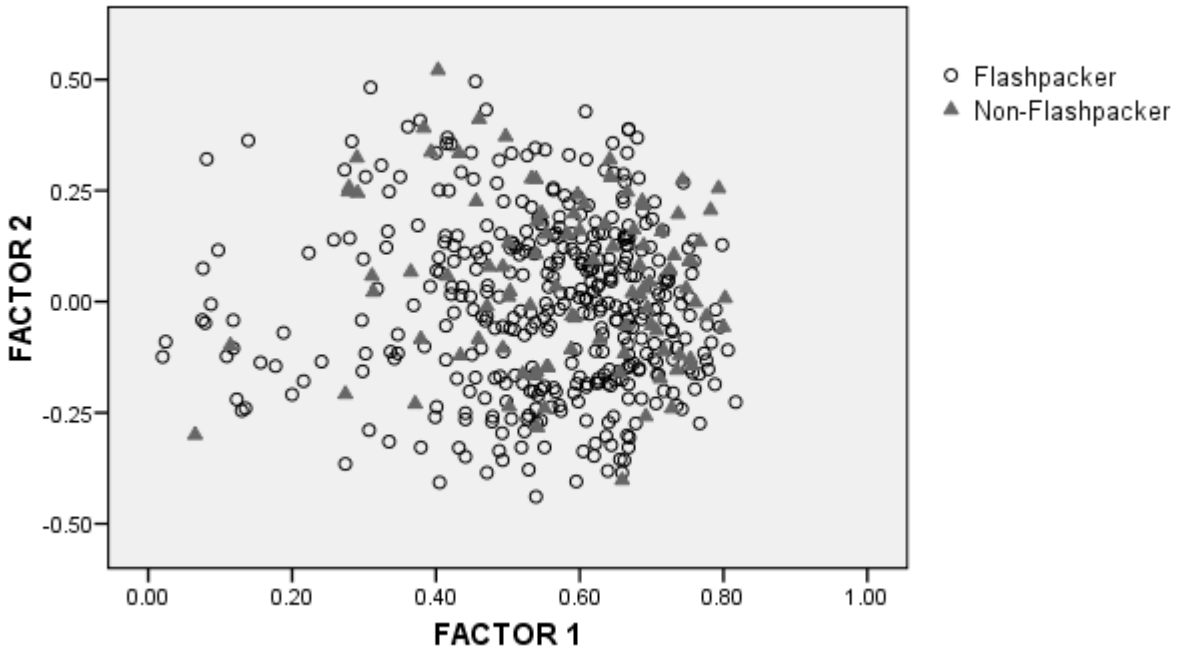

Figure 1. Visualization of Consensus Factor Loadings.

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