

# Characteristics of budget travelers: the case of backpackers in the Cape Coast-Elmina area, Ghana

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## Abstract

The purpose of the research was to examine the characteristics of backpackers in the Cape Coast-Elmina area, Ghana. In all, 184 backpackers were contacted through questionnaire administration. The data was analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics and the Chi-Square test for independence. The study found that backpackers were mostly, young European students, who organised their trips independently. Also, backpackers used 'trotro', the cheapest form of public transport in Ghana; and preferred group tours. Further, their background characteristics had an effect on their travel characteristics. It is concluded that there are difference between the background characteristics of backpackers and their travel characteristics. It is recommended that public transport owners in Ghana should improve on the quality of services, especially in the areas of cleanliness and safety, so as to increase the patronage of their services while positively projecting the image of Ghana as a tourist destination. It is also imperative for local travel intermediaries/consultants to cash in on the growing backpacker segment in the country, by packaging tailored tours for backpackers.

**Keywords:** Backpackers, characteristics, Cape Coast, Elmina, Ghana

## Introduction

Backpackers or budget travellers are more and more, becoming noticeable in the tourism industry (Richards & Wilson, 2004). Rogerson (2005) posits that the contemporary backpacker is viewed as a vital and growing element of international tourism and in countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, and Canada they are also primary elements of their domestic tourist markets. For instance, Ateljevic and Doorne (2004) estimated that over 400,000 backpackers were to visit Australia. For Brenner and Fricke (2007), the growing interest in backpacking can be attributed to its rapid territorial expansion and its considerable socio-economic impact on various destinations. In examining their

motivations, Dayour (2013) argues that historical/cultural attractions, heritage, service delivery, ecological attractions, escape, and adventure seeking, were the main reasons that motivated backpackers to travel to Ghana. He also found that on daily basis, backpackers spent up to Gh¢ 83.45 (circa \$44.00), with almost 24% of this expenditure going in local budget accommodation.

In an effort to conceptualise backpackers, Cohen (1997) maintains that a 'backpacker' is a term that has historically been used to denote a form of low-cost, independent international traveller. It noteworthy at this point that terms, such as 'hippies', independent and/or budget traveller, are often used interchangeably with the name – backpacker. (Cohen, 1973; Pearce, 1990; Loker-

Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Westerhausen, 2002). For Pearce (1990), backpackers can be identified by their preference for budget accommodation; independence and flexibility of itinerary; interaction with other travellers; and participation in temporary informal jobs in order to augment their limited budgets.

Since the 1970s, long-haul backpacker tourism has grown steadily and has come to constitute a specific segment of the international tourism market (Wilson, 1997; Hampton, 1998). Research has addressed this phenomenon from its very beginnings (Cohen, 1973). In Ghana, the backpacker segment is steadily gaining grounds in tourist market as accentuated by Dayour (2013). Nevertheless, there is still a dearth of empirical information on their travel characteristics, and how these travel characteristics could be affected by their background characteristics. As a result, the study aims to examine the travel characteristics of backpackers and also determine the extent to which their background characteristics, such as sex, age, marital status, education, profession, and continents of origin could affect these travel characteristics

The study is expected to advance empirical contributions to existing literature and proffer practical advice to industry practitioners. Consequently, the following hypotheses are formulated to help address the problem:

H<sub>0</sub>: The background characteristics of backpackers (sex, age, marital status, level of education, profession, and continent of origin) have no effect on their transport choice to Ghana.

H<sub>0</sub>: The background characteristics of backpackers have no effect on their transport choice within the country.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference between the background characteristics of backpackers and how they plan or organise their trips.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant difference between the background characteristics of backpackers and preference for group tours.

### **Theoretical framework**

Cohen (1972, 1973) and Vogt (1976) have tried to conceptualise tourists using some typologies. Theoretical studies focusing on the sociological aspects of tourism role were developed in the 1970s through the work of Cohen (1972). For the purposes of this study, albeit not conceptualised

within the context of a specific tourist segment, Cohen's (1972) theory on tourists' typology was adapted for this research.

Cohen (1973) first wrote about a new class of travellers that began to emerge in the 1960s and 70s, young people travelling *en masse* due to cheap international airfares. This was based on his own analysis in 1972, differentiating between institutionalised and non-institutionalised tourists. Cohen (1972) divides the non-institutionalized tourists into two – *drifters* and *explorers* and institutionalized tourists into *individual mass tourists* and *organized mass tourists*. He suggests that drifters avoid contact with the tourist industry and assimilate more into the local community, to learn their culture and values. Drifters can also take up temporary jobs at destinations in order to augment their budget. They immerse themselves into the host culture; have relatively longer stays; and have the desire for novelty. Explorers, on the other hand, differ slightly because they still want to use comfortable tourists' accommodation and retain the basics of normal life style, though they also seek to get off the 'beaten track'. On the other hand, individual mass tourist prefers standard facilities and services at destinations but plan their own travel itinerary, while the organised mass tourists rely mostly on travel consultants for the planning and development of itinerary. The desire for standardised facilities and services, familiar settings and brands, as well as keeping away from local communities, is symptomatic of this group of travellers.

The conceptual origins of the present-day backpacker emerged in the 1970s, and were informed by disciplinary viewpoints from the humanities (Richards & Wilson, 2004). In Cohen's (1973) classic typology of tourists he contended that the 'drifter' is the antecedent or precursor of a backpacker, travelling to new destinations with no pre-planned itinerary; interacting with local communities; and involving in extended stays at the destinations.

### **Characteristics of backpackers**

Backpackers are conceptualized by Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) as young and budget-minded tourists who prefer low-priced accommodation, who put an emphasis on meeting other people (locals and fellow travellers), who organise their travel itineraries independently, who are on extended rather than short holiday, and who have a taste for participatory recreational activities. For his part, Kininmont (2000) argued that about 89% backpackers are between the ages of 18-30, noting that the majority are young students. In support, various studies have maintained that

students make up a greater percentage of the backpacker market (Richards & Wilson, 2004; Hannam & Ateljevic, 2008).

Pearce (1990) first introduced the term 'backpacker' into academic literature, positing that the best way to identify a backpacker is to use budget accommodation facilities. He stressed that backpackers engage in extended participatory holidays while having interest in the local community.

Characteristically, the majority of backpackers receive information on potential destinations, through word-of-mouth recommendations and the internet. Additionally, the 'grapevine', that is, the exchange of information and tales among backpackers, which constitutes their social interaction and identity, reinforces the popularity of certain routes (Murphy, 2001). Hannam and Ateljevic (2008) established that as to length of stay, there is a considerable variation among backpackers. They however, argued that the majority of them travel for less than a year while the average length of stay is 18 weeks. On mode of transportation, Moshin and Ryan (2003) observed that backpackers mainly resort to the use of air planes for long haul travels; and due to limited budgets, backpackers use public transport services for in-country movement. Most trips to various destinations are however, independently planned and organised by backpackers themselves (Westerhausen, 2002) and thus travel alone (Slaughter, 2004).

### **The research setting**

Elmina and Cape Coast are both located along the coastline and are surrounded by Twifo Heman Lower Denkyira, Mpohor Wasa East and Shama districts in the Central Region of Ghana. Cape Coast and Elmina are largely inhabited by the Fante, with fishing and trading being the dominant economic activities in these areas.

The Cape Coast-Elmina area was selected as the study area because of the following reasons: The Central Region of Ghana holds and receives the highest number of attractions and tourist arrivals respectively. The region is endowed with a diversity of attractions including, historical, ecological, and cultural attractions. Within the Central Region, the Cape Coast-Elmina area attracts a greater number of tourists because of the three (3) main United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) world heritage sites, namely, Cape Coast castle, Elmina castle and Fort St. Jago.

### **Methodological issues**

The data was collected from inbound

backpackers in the Cape Coast-Elmina area through the use of questionnaire. The questions in the instrument were developed based on a review of related literature (Pearce, 1990; Ryan & Moshin, 1999; Scheyvens, 2002; Niggel & Benson, 2007). However, since tourism studies are unique in terms of cultural, social, economic, and political landscapes, necessary adjustments were made in order to make the instrument reflect the local situation. A sampling frame of all 22 budget accommodation facilities was obtained from the office of the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) in Cape Coast. Using the lottery method of the simple random sampling technique, 11 budget accommodation facilities were selected from Cape Coast and Elmina. The data were collected between September and October, 2011 through face-to-face interviews. In all, 200 questionnaires were administered through a convenience sampling technique, but 184 of that were found useful after cleaning/editing. It is noteworthy that the inherent shortcomings of the sampling procedure used, and the general exploratory nature of the study give rise for caution to be taken about generalisations and extrapolations from the data. The data analysis was mainly done with the use of the SPSS version 16. Furthermore, descriptive statistics and the Chi-Square test for independence were involved in the data analysis.

## **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS**

### **Background characteristics of backpackers**

A description of the background characteristics of the respondents was pivotal for the interpretation and understanding of backpackers' travel characteristics. Generally, more females (72.3 %) than males (27.7%) were found in the study. The majority (75.0%) of backpackers who visited the Cape Coast-Elmina area were between the age cohort of 20-29 while 15.2 % were below 20 years. A relatively few (1.6%) of them were aged 40 years and above. The average age was found to be 23 years among all backpackers. Again, more unmarried (84.2%) than married (15.8%) respondents were noticed in the study. As to their level of education, a little more than half (53.3%) of the respondents had had tertiary education while more than a third (36.4%) had gone through high school. Almost two-thirds (57.6%) of backpackers indicated that they were students while 21.2% were working in the formal and informal sectors, respectively. The majority (74.5%) of them were of European origin, followed by those from Australia (13.6%). Conversely, the minority were those from North America (10.3%) and Africa (1.6%).

### **Exploring the effects of background**

**characteristics on travel characteristics**

The Chi-Square tests of independence tests were performed to ascertain whether or not the background characteristics of backpackers had any effect on their travel characteristics. Further, the post hoc or *posteriori* tests were computed to determine the categories that account for the difference, if any. The independent variables involved were the respondent's sex, age, marital status, educational level, occupation, and continent of origin. The dependent variables consisted of mode of transport to Ghana and mode choice within Ghana, arrangement of trips, and preference for group tours.

**Mode of travel to Ghana by background characteristics**

The Chi-Square test result in Table 1 suggests that there was no significant difference ( $X^2=0.144$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.675$ ) between the sex of backpackers and their transport choice to Ghana. This means that regardless of sex, more backpackers used airlines as their mode of transport to Ghana. Ninety eight percent (98.0%) of males and 95.5% of females used this mode of transport to Ghana. Hence, per the study, there was no basis to reject the hypothesis that respondents' sex does not

affect their transport choice.

Table 1 also indicates that all backpackers, who were less than 20 years, between 30-39 years, and more than 40 years, came to Ghana by air. On the other hand, a substantial majority (95.0%) of those between 20-29 years came by air while 5.0% also came by road. The Chi-Square test revealed that there was no significant difference ( $X^2=2.356$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.502$ ) between the age of backpackers and the mode of transport they travelled in to Ghana. Hence, the hypothesis that age does not affect backpackers' transport mode choice to Ghana was not rejected.

It was also found that marital status had no effect on the choice of transport to Ghana ( $X^2=0.407$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.599$ ). Irrespective of marital status, backpackers used airlines to Ghana, with 95.5% being those who were unmarried and 100.0% being those who were married. Therefore, the hypothesis that age does not affect backpackers' transport choice to Ghana was not also rejected.

**Table 1: Mode of travel to Ghana by background characteristics**

| Background characteristics   | N   | Mode of transport to Ghana |               | X <sup>2</sup> Statistic |
|------------------------------|-----|----------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
|                              |     | Airline (%)                | Bus/Coach (%) |                          |
| <b>Sex</b>                   |     |                            |               |                          |
| Males                        | 51  | 98.0                       | 2.0           | 0.144<br>(0.675)         |
| Females                      | 133 | 95.5                       | 4.5           |                          |
| <b>Age</b>                   |     |                            |               |                          |
| <20                          | 28  | 100.0                      | 0.0           | 2.356<br>(0.502)         |
| 20-29                        | 139 | 95.0                       | 5.0           |                          |
| 30-39                        | 14  | 100.0                      | 0.0           |                          |
| 40+                          | 3   | 100.0                      | 0.0           |                          |
| <b>Marital status</b>        |     |                            |               |                          |
| Unmarried                    | 155 | 95.5                       | 4.5           | 0.407<br>(0.599)         |
| Married                      | 29  | 100.0                      | 0.0           |                          |
| <b>Educational level</b>     |     |                            |               |                          |
| High school                  | 67  | 100.0                      | 0.0           | 6.386<br>(0.041*)        |
| Tertiary                     | 98  | 92.9**                     | 7.1**         |                          |
| Postgraduate                 | 19  | 100.0                      | 0.0           |                          |
| <b>Profession/occupation</b> |     |                            |               |                          |
| Students                     | 106 | 99.1                       | 0.9           |                          |

|                               |     |       |        |          |
|-------------------------------|-----|-------|--------|----------|
| Formal sector                 | 39  | 84.6  | 15.4** | 18.204   |
| Informal sector/Self employed | 39  | 100.0 | 0.0    | (0.000*) |
| Continent of origin           |     |       |        |          |
| North America                 | 19  | 68.4  | 31.6** |          |
| Europe                        | 137 | 99.3  | 0.7    | 44.697   |
| Africa                        | 3   | 100.0 | 0.0    | (0.000*) |
| Australia                     | 25  | 100.0 | 0.0    |          |

\*significance level  $\leq 0.05$

\*\*Cells that produced statistically significant difference (using critical value of  $\pm 1.96$ )

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

It was also found that marital status had no effect on the choice of transport to Ghana ( $X^2=0.407$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.599$ ). Irrespective of marital status, backpackers used airlines to Ghana, with 95.5% being those who were unmarried and 100.0% being those who were married. Therefore, the hypothesis that age does not affect backpackers' transport choice to Ghana was not also rejected.

From the analysis, it came out that all respondents with high school (100.0%) and postgraduate (100.0%) qualifications, travel by air to Ghana. On the other hand, while significant proportion (92.9%) of tertiary level graduates chose air transport, 7.1% of their counterparts came by bus/coach. Therefore, Chi-Square test revealed that there was a significant difference ( $X^2=6.386$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.041$ ) between educational level of respondents and their respective means of transport to Ghana. Per the *posteriori* test, the difference occurred in the category of respondents with tertiary level of education, who used both modes of transport. Consequently, the conjecture that there is no difference between respondents' level of education and their choice of transport to Ghana was rejected.

With respect to profession and modes of transport to Ghana, 100.0% of informal sector/self employed workers and 99.1% of students, used airlines to Ghana. On the other hand, the majority of formal sector workers (84.6%) used airlines in travelling to Ghana while 15.4% travelled by bus/coach. The Chi-Square statistic shows that there was a significant difference ( $X^2=18.204$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) between the occupational status of respondents and their respective preference for transport mode in country. The post hoc test indicated that the difference occurred within the category of respondents who used bus/coach as a mode of transport to Ghana. The hypothesis that

respondents' profession has no effect on their choice of transport to Ghana was also rejected.

The analysis further revealed that there was a significant difference ( $X^2=44.697$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) between respondents continents of origin and modes of transport to Ghana. The significant difference occurred between respondents who used bus/coach as a means of travel to Ghana. All respondents that were from Africa and Australia travelled to Ghana by air, whereas a little over two-thirds (68.4%) of those originating from North America came by air and nearly one-thirds (31.6%) of them came to Ghana by road. The majority (99.3%) of Europeans came by air as well. Hence, the hypothesis that respondents' continent of origin has no effect on their choice of transport to Ghana was rejected.

#### Mode of transport within Ghana by background characteristics

The analysis was further advanced to determine the effects of respondents' background characteristics on mode of transport within Cape Coast and Elmina. The major modes of transport used were taxis, tour buses and 'trotros', the commonest and cheapest mode of public transport in Ghana. It was disclosed from Table 2 that there was no significant difference ( $X^2=1.171$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.557$ ) between sex of backpackers and their mode of transport within the destination. About half (51.0%) of male respondents preferred to use 'trotro', a third (33.3%) preferred using taxis and 15.7% also preferred using tour buses as mode of transport within the area. Conversely, about a third (31.6%) of females used taxis while more than half (57.9%) used 'trotro'. As a result, the hypothesis that the sex of backpackers' does not have an effect on their transport choice within Ghana was maintained.

Most (58.3%) of the respondents aged between 20-29 years, frequently used 'trotro' and nearly a third (31.7%) of them used taxis for

commuting within the destination. Also, respondents below 20 years preferred using 'trotro' (57.1%) compared to 28.6% of their counterparts who patronised the services of taxi drivers. It also emerged that 42.9% of the subjects in the age cohort of 30-39 used taxis in the country while 35.7% relied on the services of 'trotro'. The Chi-Square test showed that there was no significant difference ( $X^2=4.800$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p=0.570$ ) between age and mode of transport within the two towns (Cape Coast and Elmina). This resulted in the non rejection of the hypothesis that there was no difference between respondents' age and their mode of transport within the country.

Further, the study found no significant difference ( $X^2=1.024$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.599$ ) between marital status and mode of transport within the destination. More than half (56.1%) of backpackers, who were unmarried preferred to

use 'trotro' whereas about a third (32.9%) used taxis. For those who were married, 55.2% used 'trotro' and about a quarter (27.6%) used taxis. Based on the test statistic shown, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

In relation to educational levels attained by backpackers and mode of transport, more than half (55.2%) of the respondents who had attained high school qualification used 'trotro' whereas more than a third (37.3%) used taxis. Also, 60.2% of those who had attained tertiary status preferred to use 'trotro', with 10.2% of them using tour buses. Respondents who had attained postgraduate degrees and used 'trotro' and tour buses were at par (36.8%), with more than a quarter (26.3%) using taxis. The difference between educational level attained and modes of transport within the area was significant ( $X^2=13.745$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p=0.008$ ) at  $p=0.05$ .

**Table 2: Mode of transport within Ghana by background characteristics**

| Background characteristics   | N   | Mode of transport in Cape Coast and Elmina |          |          | $X^2$ Statistic |
|------------------------------|-----|--|----------|----------|-----------------|
|                              |     | Taxi                                       | Tour bus | 'trotro' |                 |
| <b>Sex</b>                   |     |  |          |          |                 |
| Males                        | 51  | 33.3                                       | 15.7     | 51.0     | 1.171           |
| Females                      | 133 | 31.6                                       | 10.5     | 57.9     | (0.557)         |
| <b>Age</b>                   |     |  |          |          |                 |
| <20                          | 28  | 28.6                                       | 14.3     | 57.1     |                 |
| 20-29                        | 139 | 31.7                                       | 10.1     | 58.3     | 4.800           |
| 30-39                        | 14  | 42.9                                       | 21.4     | 35.7     | (0.570)         |
| 40+                          | 3   | 33.3                                       | 33.3     | 33.3     |                 |
| <b>Marital status</b>        |     |  |          |          |                 |
| Unmarried                    | 155 | 32.9                                       | 11.0     | 56.1     | 1.024           |
| Married                      | 29  | 27.6                                       | 17.2     | 55.2     | (0.599)         |
| <b>Educational level</b>     |     |  |          |          |                 |
| High school                  | 67  | 37.3                                       | 7.5      | 55.2     |                 |
| Tertiary                     | 98  | 29.6                                       | 10.2     | 60.2     | 13.745          |
| Postgraduate                 | 19  | 26.3                                       | 36.8**   | 36.8     | (0.008*)        |
| <b>Profession/occupation</b> |     |  |          |          |                 |
| Students                     | 106 | 34.0                                       | 11.3     | 54.7     |                 |

|                     |     |      |      |        |          |
|---------------------|-----|------|------|--------|----------|
| Formal sector       | 39  | 30.8 | 5.1  | 64.1   | 4.909    |
| Informal sector     | 39  | 28.2 | 20.5 | 51.3   | (0.297)  |
| Continent of origin |     |      |      |        |          |
| North America       | 19  | 0.0  | 36.8 | 63.2** |          |
| Europe              | 137 | 37.2 | 8.8  | 54.0   | 21.061   |
| Africa              | 3   | 66.7 | 0.0  | 33.3** | (0.002*) |
| Australia           | 25  | 24.0 | 12.0 | 64.0   |          |

\*significance level  $\leq 0.05$

\*\*Cells that produced statistically significant difference (using critical value of  $\pm 1.96$ )

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

This result therefore, led to the rejection of the null hypothesis, which suggested that there was no difference existing between educational attainment of respondents and t

heir choice of local transport.

The study also sought to find out whether or not there was a significant difference between backpackers profession and mode of transport in the destination. To this end, the Chi-Square test showed no significant difference ( $X^2=4.909$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p=0.297$ ) between the two variables. This outcome therefore, resulted in the non rejection of the null hypothesis. The percentage distribution indicated that more than half (54.7%) and s

lightly over a third (34.0%) of backpackers who were students used 'trotro' and taxis respectively. Also, nearly two-thirds (64.1%) of formal sector workers used 'trotro' and 5.1% of them used tour buses. In addition, 51.3% of informal sector workers preferred the use of 'trotro', 28.2%, taxis, and 20.5%, buses.

As to their continents of origin, whereas nearly two thirds (63.2%) of North Americans patronised 'trotro' services in Ghana, more than a third (36.8%) of their counterparts used tour buses. In addition, 54.0% of Europeans used 'trotro' while 36.8% decided to use taxis. Also, nearly two-thirds (64.0%) of the backpackers from Australia used 'trotro', with nearly a quarter (24.0%) using taxis. The result indicated that continents of origin had an effect ( $X^2=21.061$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p=0.002$ ) on the choice of

transport within the country hence the null hypothesis was rejected.

### **Organisation of trip to Ghana by background characteristics**

This study was extended to examine the effects of background characteristics on the planning and arrangement of trips. Per Table 3, nearly three quarters of male backpackers (74.5%) organised trips themselves, with 11.8% having their trips organised by other organisations. Also, a majority (60.5%) of female backpackers had their trips organised by themselves, with 13.5% of them having their trips being organised by tour operators and friends and relatives. The Chi-Square test found no significant difference ( $X^2=4.105$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.250$ ) between organisation of trips and background characteristics hence there was a failure to reject the null hypothesis.

Furthermore, age had no effect ( $X^2=14.845$ ,  $df=9$ ,  $p=0.095$ ) on the organisation of trips thus, there was no basis to reject the null hypothesis. It was found that more than a third (39.3%) of backpackers below 20 years, organised trips by themselves, with those who had their trips organised by tour operators and other organisations being at par (21.4%). Also, nearly two thirds (65.5%) of backpackers between 20-29 years organised trips themselves. In addition, a vast majority (92.9%) between 30-39 years planned their own itineraries.

**Table 3: Organisation of trip to Ghana by background characteristics**

| Background characteristics   | N   | Organisation of trips |               |                    |                    | X <sup>2</sup><br>Statistic |
|------------------------------|-----|-----------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
|                              |     | Self                  | Tour operator | Friends /relatives | Other Organisation |                             |
| <b>Sex</b>                   |     |                       |               |                    |                    |                             |
| Males                        | 51  | 74.5                  | 7.8           | 5.9                | 11.8               | 4.105                       |
| Females                      | 133 | 60.5                  | 13.5          | 13.5               | 12.8               | (0.250)                     |
| <b>Age</b>                   |     |                       |               |                    |                    |                             |
| <20                          | 28  | 39.3                  | 21.4          | 17.9               | 21.4               |                             |
| 20-29                        | 139 | 65.5                  | 11.5          | 11.5               | 11.5               | 14.845                      |
| 30-39                        | 14  | 92.9                  | 0.0           | 0.0                | 7.1                | (0.095)                     |
| 40+                          | 3   | 66.7                  | 33.3          | 0.0                | 0.0                |                             |
| <b>Marital status</b>        |     |                       |               |                    |                    |                             |
| Unmarried                    | 155 | 58.1                  | 14.2          | 13.5               | 14.2               | 15.944                      |
| Married                      | 29  | 96.6**                | 0.0           | 0.0                | 3.4                | (0.001*)                    |
| <b>Educational level</b>     |     |                       |               |                    |                    |                             |
| High school                  | 67  | 50.7                  | 23.9**        | 10.4               | 14.9               |                             |
| Tertiary                     | 98  | 70.4                  | 6.1           | 11.2               | 12.2               | 17.646                      |
| Postgraduate                 | 19  | 78.9                  | 0.0           | 15.8               | 5.3                | (0.007*)                    |
| <b>Profession/occupation</b> |     |                       |               |                    |                    |                             |
| Students                     | 106 | 59.4                  | 13.2          | 8.5                | 18.9**             |                             |
| Formal sector                | 39  | 56.4                  | 17.9          | 20.5               | 5.1                | 19.349                      |
| Informal sector              | 39  | 84.6                  | 2.6           | 10.3               | 2.6                | (0.004*)                    |
| <b>Continent of origin</b>   |     |                       |               |                    |                    |                             |
| North America                | 19  | 42.1                  | 0.0           | 47.4**             | 10.5               |                             |
| Europe                       | 137 | 70.1                  | 9.5           | 5.8                | 14.6               | 48.205                      |
| Africa                       | 3   | 66.7                  | 33.3          | 0.0                | 0.0                | (0.000*)                    |
| Australia                    | 25  | 44.0                  | 36.0**        | 16.0               | 4.0                |                             |

\*significance level  $\leq 0.05$

\*\*Cells that produced statistically significant difference (using critical value of  $\pm 1.96$ )

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

In relation to marital status, the study noted a significant difference ( $X^2=15.944$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) between that and the organisation of trips. The difference was found to have occurred within the category of those who organised their own trips. To dilate on this analysis, it was realised that more than half (58.1%) of unmarried backpackers organised their own trips to Ghana, while those who organised trips with the help of tour operators and other organisations being at par (14.2%). However, a

substantial majority (96.6%) of married backpackers organised their own trips, with a few (3.4%) receiving assistance from other organisations. None of them patronised the services of tour operators or friends and relatives. Consequently, the significant difference recorded resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Besides, with regard to the educational level attained by backpackers and their means of



organising trips, it was found that more than half (50.7%) of backpackers, who had attained high school status, organised trips on their own, with nearly a quarter (23.9%) coming to Ghana through the help of tour operators. About seventy percent of backpackers who had tertiary education, organised trips themselves, with 12.2% having their trips planned by other organisations. More than three quarters (78.9%) of backpackers, who had attained postgraduate qualification, organised their own trips with, 15.8% and 5.3% also organising their respective trips through the assistance of friends and relatives and other organisations respectively. It was deduced from the analysis that there was a significant difference ( $X^2=17.646$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p=0.007$ ) between educational level attained by backpackers and how they planned or organised their trips. The post hoc test revealed that the difference occurred within those who sought help from tour operators. In light of this analysis, there was every basis to reject the null hypothesis.

Furthermore, occupation was cross tabulated against organisation of trips, to determine the relationship between these two variables. It was deduced that for students, 59.4% of them organised their own trips while those, who organised trips through the help of other organisations and tour operators recorded 18.9% and 13.2% respectively. Backpackers who are formal sector workers and organized their own trips constituted more than half (56.4%) of respondents. Also, a greater majority (84.6%) of backpackers within informal occupation organised their own trips, with those, who organised their trips with the help of tour operators and other organisations being at par (2.6%) with each other. The Chi-Square statistic showed a significant difference ( $X^2=19.349$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p=0.004$ ) between occupation and organisation of trips and this difference seemed to have occurred within the category of other organisations. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected per the Chi-Square statistic computed.

The study established that 47.4% and 42.1% of backpackers from North America organised their trips through the help of friends and relatives and they themselves respectively. About 70.1% of backpackers from Europe organised their own trips while 14.6% had their trips planned and organised by other organisations. Almost sixty seven percent of backpackers from Africa organised trips on their own while 33.3% sought assistance from tour operators. There was a significant difference ( $X^2=48.205$ ,  $df=9$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) between

backpackers' continent of origin and their organisation of trips. The post hoc test suggests that the difference occurred within the categories of tour operators and that of friends and relatives. Therefore, the conjecture that continents of origin had no effect on how respondents planned and organised trips was rejected.

#### **Preference for group tours by background characteristics of respondents**

The study sought to also find out the variations among background characteristics of backpackers and their preference for group tours. It could be deduced from Table 4 that more than half (56.9%) of male respondents favoured group tours whereas 43.1% did not. Also, a majority (85.7%) of female backpackers also had preference for group tours whereas 14.3% also indicated that they did not. Table 4 shows a significant difference ( $X^2=17.720$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) between sex of backpackers and their preference for group tours. This outcome formed the basis for rejecting the null hypothesis. This significant difference was deemed to have occurred within those who had no preference for group tours.

Besides, there was a significant difference ( $X^2=26.110$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) between age and preference for group tours hence the null hypothesis was also rejected. This significant difference seemed to have occurred within those who had no preference for group tours. In furtherance it could be deduced that the majority (96.9%) of backpackers who were less than 20 years had preference for group tours. In addition, more than three quarters (79.1%) of backpackers, who were within the age group of 20-29 years also preferred group tours whereas less than a quarter (20.9%) noted otherwise. Interestingly, more than half (57.1%) of those between 30-39 years did not prefer group tours as well as all those who were 40 years and more.

In exploring the variations between marital status and preference for group tours, it was deduced that 85.2% of unmarried backpackers had preference for group tours whereas 14.8% had no preference for it. It was fascinating to realize that about two-thirds (62.1%) of backpackers, who were married did not have preference for group tours, whereas only 37.9% did have preference for group tours. These variations were deemed to be significant ( $X^2=31.468$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), with the difference arising from both categories. Hence, there was a basis for rejecting the null hypothesis, which conjectured that there was no significant

difference among the two groups in relations to preference for group tours.

**Table 4: Preference for group tours by background characteristics of respondents**

| Background Characteristics   | N   | Preference for group tours |         | X <sup>2</sup> Statistic |
|------------------------------|-----|----------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
|                              |     | Yes (%)                    | No (%)  |                          |
| <b>Sex</b>                   |     |                            |         |                          |
| Males                        | 51  | 56.9                       | 43.1**  | 17.720                   |
| Females                      | 133 | 85.7                       | 14.3**  | (0.000*)                 |
| <b>Age</b>                   |     |                            |         |                          |
| <20                          | 28  | 96.4                       | 3.6**   |                          |
| 20-29                        | 139 | 79.1                       | 20.9    |                          |
| 30-39                        | 14  | 42.9                       | 57.1**  | 26.110                   |
| 40+                          | 3   | 0.0                        | 100.0** | (0.000*)                 |
| <b>Marital status</b>        |     |                            |         |                          |
| Unmarried                    | 155 | 85.2                       | 14.8**  | 31.468                   |
| Married                      | 29  | 37.9**                     | 62.1**  | (0.000*)                 |
| <b>Educational level</b>     |     |                            |         |                          |
| High school                  | 67  | 89.6                       | 10.4**  |                          |
| Tertiary                     | 98  | 74.5                       | 25.5    | 12.913                   |
| Postgraduate                 | 19  | 52.6                       | 47.4**  | (0.002*)                 |
| <b>Profession/occupation</b> |     |                            |         |                          |
| Students                     | 106 | 84.9                       | 15.1**  |                          |
| Formal sector                | 39  | 71.8                       | 28.2    | 8.127                    |
| Informal sector              | 39  | 64.1                       | 35.9**  | (0.017*)                 |
| <b>Continent of origin</b>   |     |                            |         |                          |
| North America                | 19  | 84.2                       | 15.8    |                          |
| Europe                       | 137 | 75.9                       | 24.1    | 1.502                    |
| Africa                       | 3   | 66.7                       | 33.3    | (0.682)                  |
| Australia                    | 25  | 84.0                       | 16.0    |                          |

\*significance level  $\leq 0.05$

\*\*Cells that produced statistically significant difference (using critical value of  $\pm 1.96$ )

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

For educational qualification and nature of tours, a whopping 89.6% of backpackers, who had attained high school status, had preference for group tours while 10.4% did not favour group tours. Moreover, while 74.5% of those who had tertiary qualification showed interest in group tours, about a quarter (25.5%) disliked it. Also, more than half (52.6%) of postgraduates showed interest in group tours. Table 4 showed a significant difference ( $X^2=12.913$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.002$ ) between educational level attained by backpackers and their preference for group tours. The post hoc test was conducted and the difference seemed to have occurred within those who had no preference for group tours. This outcome justified the rejection of the null

hypothesis.

In addition, the study also tested the effect of occupation on preference for group tours. The result indicated that there was a significant difference ( $X^2=8.127$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p=0.017$ ) between occupation and preference for group tours, with the post hoc test indicating that the difference occurred within the region of those who had no preference for group tours. About 84.9% of the respondents, who were students, had preference for group tours whereas 15.1% disliked it. Also, the majority (71.8%) of formal sector workers had preference for group tours and so do 64.1% of those in the informal sector. The significant difference shown, resulted in the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Lastly, the study found that continents of origin had no effect ( $X^2=1.502$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.682$ ) on respondents' preference for group tours hence there was no basis for rejecting the null hypothesis formulated. Table 4 indicates that most (84.2%) backpackers from North America had preference for group tours, compared to three quarters (75.9%) of those who came from Europe and had preference for group tours. It also emerged that 33.3% of African backpackers had no preference for group tours while 66.7% of them showed interest in group tours. In addition, the majority (84.0%) of backpackers from Australia had preference for group travel while 16.0% demonstrated an aversion for it.

## Discussion

The study indicated that the majority of the respondents were within the age cohort of 20-29 years. This finding affirms the argument that backpackers are mostly young student travellers, who travel to less developed destinations (Kininmont, 2000). Furthermore, the result that most subjects had tertiary educational status supports the assertion by Richards and Wilson (2004) and Hannam and Ateljevic (2008) that most backpackers might have finished high school, and decides to embark on a holiday, before continuing with the next level of education or work.

In the effort to determine the effect of background characteristics on travel characteristics, the Chi-Square tests of independence produced some results. It was interesting to note that almost all backpackers came by air into the country. It was also found that most backpackers who travelled to Ghana used airplanes because the majority came from Europe. This result agrees with Pearce et al. (2009) finding that the predominant mode of transport for backpackers is the airplane. However, the study found that unlike respondents' sex, age and marital status, respondents' level of education, profession and continent of origin had an effect on their choice of transport to Ghana.

In terms of movement within the country, 'trotro' (a form of public transport in Ghana), was largely patronised by these budget travellers. This result was consistent with Moshin and Ryan (2003) and Noy's (2004) findings that public transport systems are best options for backpacking since they are affordable. The results indicated that apart from sex, age, marital status and profession, respondents' level of education and continent of origin had an influence on the decision to

use a mode of transport within the country.

Furthermore, the study indicated that most of the respondents took the decision to plan and organise their own trips to Ghana. The result confirms Westerhausen's (2002) conclusion that most backpackers organise trips by themselves. This trend could be attributed to the increasing proliferation of online booking facilities and user-generated content, which enables potential travellers to organise and plan trips with little difficulty. Moreover, the fact that most backpackers were found to be students might have accounted for this, since most of them are proficient in internet usage and capable of obtaining information on Ghana via the internet. In terms of whether or not there were any variations, the research revealed that marital status, educational level, profession, and continent of origin had an effect on the choice of local transport while sex and age had no influence on their decision.

In addition, it was found that the majority of respondents favoured group tours in the country. This observation was inconsistent with Slaughter's (2004) claim that a greater number of backpackers make their own travel plans and travel alone. The discrepancy here could be attributed to the fact that most backpackers, while on the move, are interested in sharing experiences with friends and colleagues. Moreover, the fact that the sample for this study was dominated by females suggests that movement in groups could be a strategy for providing security for themselves. Statistically, it was found that almost all the background characteristics, including sex, age, marital status, educational level, and profession had an impact on the decision to be with a group or not while continent of origin had no effect.

## Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to examine the characteristics of backpackers in the Cape Coast-Elmina area, Ghana. Hence, issues concerning the background and travel characteristics of backpackers were examined in the research. In that regard, Cohen's (1973) theory on tourists' typology was used as the theoretical framework for the survey. The study involved 184 backpackers, who travelled to Ghana between September and October, 2011.

The study found that almost all the respondents, who travelled to Ghana, did so

by air. However, the Chi-Square tests revealed that backpackers' level of education, profession, and continent of origin have an effect on their choice of transport to Ghana. With respect to in-country movement, most budget travellers preferred the use of 'trotro', an affordable and most accessible mode of public transport service in the country while the patronage of taxi services cannot be overemphasised. The study found that respondents' level of education and continent of origin have an effect on the decision to use a local mode of transport.

In addition, it is concluded that most of the respondents took the decision to organise their own trips to Ghana, as espoused by existing literatures. However, the research disclosed that marital status, educational level, profession, and continent of origin also have an impact on the choice of organising trips to Ghana. Furthermore, most respondents claimed that they preferred group tours to individual tours. Based on the statistical analysis, it is inferred that sex, age, marital status, educational level and profession have an influence on the preference to be with a group or not.

All in all, it can be argued that the study explored and provided empirical information on the extent to which the background characteristics of backpackers could affect their travel characteristics. Existing literatures have seldom provided any empirical information as regards the aforementioned point. As to its practical implications, public transport owners in Ghana should improve on the quality of services, especially in the areas of cleanliness and safety, so as to increase the patronage of their services and also positively project the image of Ghana as a destination. Lastly, it is important for local travel intermediaries to cash in on the growing backpacker segment in the country, by packaging tailored tours for backpackers.

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