BACKPACKING AS PERCEIVED BY BALIUAG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the perceptions of the Baliuag University students on backpacking. Descriptive type of research was utilized in the study with survey questionnaire checklist as instrument in gathering pertinent data. Random sampling was used to determine the one hundred (100) participants of the study from the different colleges of Baliuag University. Based on the results of the study, most of the respondents have been to historical places like Intramuros, National Museum and Biak na Bato. Most of them are allocentric type of travelers and travel once to twice a year with their extended family. Respondents plan their travel in one to three months and considered budget, time and weather as the first three factors in choosing a travel destination. More-over, to satisfy curiosity and explore new ideas, be entertained and see new places/things were the reasons of most of the respondents in travelling. Majority of them perceived that backpacking is about experiencing authentic adventures and local cultures not a risky travel adventure. Furthermore, it is recommended that historical destinations should be preserved and protected by the local government and the community residents not only to sustain its attraction or appeal but also for the future generations. Travel agencies/tour operators also should continuously provide more discounts, lower rates to travelers and access to various destinations to promote and support the tourism industry in the country.

Keywords: perception, backpacking

Travelling is a kind of activity and experience which almost all people love. For some, it is an opportunity to relax and abstract from everyday busy life. For others, it is interesting to observe the way people of other cultures and mentality live. Some people consider it to be the best way to have fun and always try to visit as many clubs, restaurants, resorts and cafes. Most people at some point in their life will have an urge to travel. This may be a two week holiday to somewhere or this could be a life changing year longer trip. People have their own reasons why they decide to travel but most people are triggered by something. This is often a life-changing event or it could be a sudden change of feeling giving the traveler to fly from the nest and set off on an adventure. According to Matty (2015), people travel because of the following reasons, namely; (1) to visit the family, (2) to spend time with friends, (3) to find better weather, (4) to discover new culture, (5) to find themselves, (6) to find love and (7) wanderlust.

The reason for travelling is to learn something, experience something and to change something and this fact has nothing to do with the materialistic issues. With the experience of travelling and discovering places, the travelers become less materialistic, giving more importance to the experience in their travels. Motivation in tourism is understood to be a meaningful state of mind that allows a traveler to travel and achieve his/her goals. By achieving those goals, he/she will satisfy his/her needs (Matty, 2015).

In planning for a trip, there are several factors that one should consider in order to make the experience exciting, more enjoyable and worth your money and time (Nielsen, 2018).

Budget. This is the first and most important consideration in choosing travel destinations since different attractions/places will require varying budgets. There are those that will require so much while others will require less. Depending on how much you have saved and what portion you want to spend during your vacation is how you can quickly arrive at your vacation destination.

Safety. Wherever you go for your holiday, you must be safe at all times. Your safety must inform your choice of destination. There are green and red countries when it comes to visitors' safety. Go to places praised for their safety to visitors. Never go against travel advisories

Companion. Make your choice based on who you will be going with for your holiday. They can be your friends, siblings, colleagues, or family. Ensure everyone can have all the fun and make it a worthwhile time out together.

Means of Transport. You should categorically make your destination choice based on your means of travel whether by plane, by land or sea travel.

Activities. You should be able to forget all the busy life back at home. If you love the beaches, choose a place that will offer plenty of fun and leisure activities. Go to a destination with the activities you would love to do.

Destination. Plan on where you want to go such as somewhere in Europe, a place in Asia, a more well-known destination, or a lesser known spot. Looking online such as on blogs, or even on Instagram, are great ways to find inspiration on where to go for your next trip.

Trip Duration. Determine how long you want your trip to be. The longer you have then the more flexibility you have on where to go, and this would help you to go further. If you have enough time, you may even be able to go on a multi-destination trip.

Booking. Another thing to consider is whether to book a package holiday or book everything independently. There are definitely pros and cons to both types, such as booking independently takes a bit more work, but can provide more flexibility.

According to Stanley C. Plog's Model of Tourists Behavior (1977), tourists are classified into three categories as described below.

Allocentric (The Wanderers). A tourist who seeks new experiences and adventure in a wide range of activities is an allocentric. This person is outgoing and self-confident in behavior. An allocentric person prefers to fly and to explore new and unusual areas before others do so. They enjoy meeting people from foreign or different cultures. They prefer good hotels and food, but not necessarily modern or chain-type hotels. For a tour package, an allocentric would like to have the basics such as transportation and hotels, but not be committed to a structured itinerary. They would rather have the freedom to explore an area, make their own arrangements and choose a variety of activities and tourist attractions.

Psychocentric (The Repeater). A tourist falling in the psychocentric category is usually non-adventuresome. They prefer to return to familiar travel destinations where they can relax and know what types of food and activity to expect. Such tourists prefer to drive to destinations, stay in typical accommodations, and eat at family-type restaurants.

Midcentric (Combination). This category of tourists covers the ones who swing between the above said two types.

Before, the only reason of the people to travel is to fill their stomachs. As the time passed by, a new form of travelling developed, people tend to travel for the purpose of finding out and discover new things and gain more knowledge. Also, there are people travelled to enjoy life and different culture.

Backpacking

Internet and travel guide books were abundant in the early 1990s and now became a huge vehicle for communication, tips, advice and facts. Travel guides however, became available online and a level of planning was easily achievable before departing one's home country. Most travellers carried a Discman, a camera and a guide book (with some also taking a mobile phone). Travellers could share their photos via email and upload them to the web. With this influx of accessible knowledge, people had less worry for the 'unknown' and new countries, trails and routes opened up. The digital camera allowed travellers to upload photos whilst on the road and international call cards made for a quick and affordable check in back at home. Guesthouses and activities could soon be researched ahead and a quick phone call enabled a pre-arrival booking (Tobias, 2017).

Backpackers' scene has become an essential part of the tourism industry in recent years and has also increased the supply of facilities like hostels as the representation of backpackers and young travelers lodging accommodations.

According to Groundwater (2017), backpackers used to be risk-takers and adventuresome. Travelers today think on how their social media image look like and through that, they influence other people because of their experiences.

Unlike early explorations, backpacking today seems less about exploring the unknown than heading smack bang into the well-known and the highly celebrated. It is a way to discover the world in completely new way. Backpacking does not teach you independence but rather it teaches you how to survive in tough and sometimes violent environment. The well trodden trail of South East Asia, sometimes referred to as "The Banana Pancake Trail" is one of the most popular routes for backpackers today (Nikki,2017).

Backpacking is very popular in Europe. It is surmised in 3 main points - freedom of movement, financially wise and scenic. Delving deeper into the reasons, backpackers have the freedom to go wherever and however they wish, whether it is through capitals or small towns that have been unchanged for years and years (e.g. small towns of Slovakia). It can also be expensive to travel throughout Europe if they are going to stay in 3-5 star hotels. However, when you backpack throughout Europe, you are traveling in areas that have been at the center of many works of art, literature and cinema. It will take you through these beautiful locations on foot, witnessing the most epic landscapes, amazing architecture and various cultures and foods you will find in every destination you go through (Han, 2015).

Backpackers travel farther and stay longer than other travelers. They travel from one place to another and may take

them up to a week, a month or a year of stay in the destination. Backpackers are usually motivated to explore the cultures of the places that they visit and follow real experiences. Backpacking is an independent and a low-budget way of travelling. They like to organize their travel, they save money for a long time just to travel and this includes all the things that they would need for the trip, such as clothes, foods, gears, and personal items depending on the chosen kind of trip (Tourism NSW, 2008).

According to the official website of Aswetravel.com (2010), there are three different types of backpacking, namely: Ultralight Backpacking, Flashpacking and Backpacking Round the World Travel. Ultralight Backpacking goes all the way counting every ounce, cutting their tooth brushes into their halves in order to ease the weight. When traveling with a lot of things, travelers will consider finding ways on how to lessen the weight of the things that should be brought inside the backpack. Because if it is inside the backpack, it only means that it will be needed during the travel. Flashpacking is generally more expensive travel with higher living standards. Flashpacker is someone who tends to travel with a lot of technologies such as mobile phones, laptops, ipods, ipads, latest cameras, etc. They are those people who travel without saving money for the trip and just spend their money on drinking, partying and they tend to stay to a more expensive place. They go to places where they are told to go. Backpacking Round the World Travel is a type of budget traveling wherein the backpacker travels to far distances for an extended period of time in different countries. They travel to experience other cultures, see new things, and experience something that they have not yet done in their lives or just escape from the real world. Traveling with a backpack is like the only way to travel before having any commitments in life that might prevent them from travelling and may not be able to find another moment to travel.

The Philippines is a place that manages to remain in the average budget in backpackers' Southeast Asian itineraries, with great places to travel to. Cheap internal flights link many of the 7000+ islands and good local transport where you can get around the islands. The Philippines is absolutely blessed with natural beauty and has its own distinct character. Backpacking is a blast and there is a good backpacker vibe on many of these stunning islands (Goats on the Road, 2012).

Because of tourism, a lot of remote places are being discovered and backpacking tourism helps other people to be aware of those attractions/destinations. Backpacker's spaces are divided in three parts, namely; physical, virtual and cultural. Physical space includes places where the traveler is going to stay such as hostels, lodges, cafes, resorts, and home locations. It also includes transportations and travel agencies. Virtual space has become so important to backpackers that through it they can ensure their culture of backpacking as connected at home as they can share their experiences and virtually take part of other's experiences. It is where mobile devices and connections come in such as e-mails, blogs, online forums, own websites and many other things that involves technology that has contributions on the development of the culture of the backpackers. Cultural space represents the perception of backpacking, ideology, social status, attitudes and identity (Paris, 2010).

As mentioned in Andrew Skurka's (2017) article about beginner backpackers, backpacks are divided into four categories, namely;

Daypacks. It ranges from 20 liters to 35 liters on the high-end. While smaller backpack is usually sufficient for ½ day hikes, a larger pack in the 35 liter range for whole day hikes can carry extra water, food, clothing, and other essentials.

Weekend packs. Backpack has a 40 to 50 liters of volume and could be used for a 1-3 night weekend trips. This can be used when you plan to go on a trip on more than 2 days because you cannot use daypacks for overnights and weekend backpacking trips because you need to carry a lot more gear, such as a sleeping bag, sleeping pad, sleeping clothes, ten/shelter/hammock, stove, cooking pot, utensils and more food. These extra stuffs will need more space, even if you choose an ultralight approach on gearing up.

Multi-day packs. Multi-day pack has 50 to 70 liters of backpack volume. The difference between shorter weekend and multi-day backpacking trips is the need to carry more food and possibly a bit more technical gear, depending on what kind of activities or climate of the chosen destination.

Expedition packs. Backpack that has 80 to 110 liters or more of volume. This kind of bag is designed to hold a lot of food and gear. It is usually used for professionally guided mountaineering trips. This is being used by those who are traveling for 5 or more nights.

Unlike other tourist types, backpacker communities do not always stick to the main tourist sites and hotels. They merge more closely with communities as they gain employment, providing more opportunities for social interactions with community members. This can build feelings of well-being and belonging, and allows different types of people to interact thereby creating social connections – a key element of community engagement for community development practitioners (Tourism NSW, 2008).

Given the abovementioned information, this research study sought to assess the perceptions of Baliuag University students on backpacking. Specifically, the researchers sought to answer the following sub-problems:

1. How may the travel preferences of the respondents be described in terms of:
   1.1 type of attraction/destination;
   1.2 frequency of travel;
   1.3 travel companion;
   1.4 time frame in planning a travel; and
   1.5 type of traveler?

2. What are the factors considered by the respondents when they travel?

3. What are the reasons of the respondents why they travel?

4. What is backpacking as perceived by the respondents?

This research study can help the students specifically the BSHM and BSTM students of Baliuag University students in understanding the motivations and reasons for backpacking trips and tours. This will also further enhance the students' knowledge in the latest trends in the tourism industry and how this travel practice would lead to the development of more tourist attraction/ destinations.
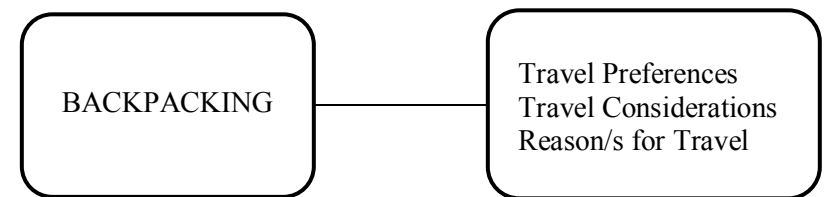
Model of the Study

Figure 1. Model showing the perceptions of Baliuag University students on backpacking

Method

The descriptive type of research was utilized in the research study to determine the awareness of Baliuag University students on backpacking. The researcher used a self-made questionnaire as the main instrument. It was composed of 11 structured questions with open-ended questions. It was divided into two parts; the first part consisted of questions about the travel preferences of the respondents while the second part focused on the familiarity of the respondents in backpacking. The survey questionnaires were distributed to the selected 100 First Year students from the different departments/colleges of Baliuag University.

The responses to every item in the questionnaire were tabulated and transmitted into percentages. The percentages of responses to every item were determined by dividing the total number of responses by the total number of respondents.

Frequency counts and weighted means were used to determine the awareness of the respondents in backpacking. The weighted mean was obtained by dividing the total the total weighted product (WP) by the total frequency (f). The weighted product was obtained by multiplying the total number of responses by the degree of response, which was 1 for Strongly Agree, 2 for Disagree, 3 for Agree, 4 for Strongly Agree. The sum total of the weighted product was divided by the frequency and the result was rounded off to the nearest hundredths. The mean average was interpreted using the following scale:

3.5	-	4.00	-	Strongly Agree
2.50	-	3.49	-	Agree
1.50	-	2.49	-	Disagree
1.00	-	1.49	-	Strongly Disagree

Results and Discussions

Table 1. Attractions and Destinations Respondents have Visited Already

Attractions/Destinations	f	%	Rank
Intramuros	72	27	1
National Museum of the Philippines	68	25	2
Biak na Bato National Park	43	16	3
Taal Lake/Taal Volcano	27	10	4
Banaue Rice Terraces	17	6	5
San Agustin Church in Paoay	14	5	6.5
Mt. Manalmon	14	5	6.5
Pagsanjan Falls	10	4	8
Interaction with the Whale Shark, Donsol	3	2	9
Total	268	100%	

Based on the results of the survey, the top 4 destinations/attractions that were visited already by the respondents were Intramuros with 27% of the total population followed by National Museum of the Philippines with 25% respondents, Biak na Bato National Park with 16% respondents and Taal Lake/Taal Volcano with 10% responses. The

respondents answered multiple responses.

Table 2. Respondents' frequency of travel.

Frequency	f	%	Rank
Once to twice a year	63	63	1
3-5 a year	27	27	2
6 or more times a year	10	10	3
Total	100	100%	

Table 2 shows that more than half of the respondents (63%) travel once to twice a year, 27% travel 3-5 times a year, and only 10% travel 6 or more times a year. It may be assumed that since the respondents are still students, their travel activities are limited to once to twice a year.

Table 3. Respondents' travel companion.

Companion	f	%	Rank
Extended Family	71	52	1
Friends	40	29	2
Immediate Family	14	10	3
Alone	13	9	4
Total	138	100	

As shown in table 3, almost half (52%) of the respondents travel with their extended families while 29% travel with their friends. It may be assumed that since respondents' frequency of travel is limited, most of them preferred to go out with a group of extended family rather than just the immediate family. Some of the respondents answered more than one item.

Table 4. Length of time respondents plan for travel adventure.

Time of the Year	f	%	Rank
1-3 months before	51	51	1
4-6 months before	19	19	2
More than a Year	17	17	3
7-12 months before	7	7	4
Last minute	6	6	5
Total	100	10%	

Table 4 shows that more than half (51%) of the respondents plan their travel adventure 1-3 months while 19% plan 4-6 months before travelling. Seventeen percent (17%) said that it took them more than a year in planning for their travel adventure. Very few (6%) of the respondents plan their travel just near the preferred date of travel.

Table 5. Respondents' classification as traveler.

Classification	f	%	Rank
Allocentric	66	66	1
Psychocentric	19	19	2
Mid-centric	15	15	3
Total	100	100	

Based on the results of the survey, it was revealed that more than half (66%) of the respondents were allocentric type of traveler, 19% were psychocentric type and the remaining 15% were mid-centric type of travelers.

It may mean that most of the student respondents prefer new adventure and experiences in traveling with a wide range of activities as explained by Plog in his Model of Tourist Behavior.

Table 6. Factors to consider in choosing a travel destination.

Factor	f	%	Rank
Budget	62	27.2	1
Time	58	25.4	2
Weather	56	24.5	3
Activities	36	15.8	4
Companion	16	7.0	5
Total	228	100%	

Table 6 shows that budget ranked 1 in the factors considered by the respondents in choosing a travel destination followed by time and weather with 62, 58 and 56 responses respectively. The result was supported by Nielsen (2018), which states that budget is the first important factor that is considered when choosing a travel destination. Most of the respondents answered more than one item.

Table 7. Respondents' consideration when planning for a travel.

Item	f	%	Rank
Destination	58	28.4	1
Length of Travel	44	21.6	2
Price of the Tour Package	41	20.0	3
Activities	35	17.2	
Weather	26	12.7	4
Total	204	100	

Table 7 presents the factors that the respondents consider when planning for a travel. Destination ranked 1(28.4%) as the first important consideration when planning for a travel. Length of travel was reflected as second consideration by 21.6% respondents while price of the tour package ranked three with 20.0% responses. Moreover, activities (17.2%) are also included in the list since student respondents prefer more of adventure and challenging travel activities.

Table 8. Respondents' reason/s for traveling.

Reasons	f	%	Rank
To satisfy their curiosity and explore new ideas.	71	17.0	1
To have fun and to be entertained	61	14.6	2
To see new places or new things.	57	13.7	3
To learn about new things	46	11.0	4
To do things that have never done before	42	10.0	5
To meet different people	32	7.7	6
To improve skills and ability as a traveler	30	7.2	9
To be active and keep physically shaped	28	6.7	10
To interact with both local residents and other travelers	27	6.5	11
To avoid the hustle and bustle of daily life.	23	5.5	12
Total	417	100%	

Based on the data presented in Table 8, it appeared that respondents have multiple reasons for traveling. To satisfy curiosity and explore new ideas ranked 1 (17.0%) as the top reason of the respondents why they like to travel. Traveling to have fun and to be entertained ranked 2 with 61 responses, and to see new places and new things got ranked 3 (13.7%) among the various reasons.

People travel for several reasons. It may depend on the type of place they are going to visit, activities to be done and cost of travel. It can be assumed therefore that since the respondents were students, they are mostly allocentrics or wanderers who travel to explore, satisfy curiosity, have fun and be entertained.

Table 9. Respondents who considered backpacking as a flexible way of traveling.

	f	%
YES	66	66
NO	34	34
Total	100	100

Table 9 shows that 66% or more than half of the respondents agree that backpacking is a flexible way of traveling while 34% said no.

Table 10. Respondents' who considered going on a backpacking trip in the future.

	f	%
YES	67%	67
NO	33%	33
Total	100	100%

Table 10 revealed that majority (67%) of the respondents considered going on a backpacking trip in the future, while 33% of the respondents did not consider it.

Table 11. Respondents' perceptions about backpacking.

Items	WA	Interpretation
Backpackers often share their experience.	3.83	Strongly Agree
Backpacking is about experiencing authentic adventures and local cultures.	3.82	Strongly Agree
Backpacking is not a risky travel adventure	3.47	Strongly Agree
Backpacking trip gives a better thrill to the traveler	3.35	Agree

Table 11. Continuation

Items	WA	Interpretation
Backpacking is a more convenient way of traveling	3.25	Agree
A good backpacker does a lot of research before leaving home.	2.99	Agree
Backpacking is an independent and a low budget way of traveling.	2.98	Agree
Backpackers seek extreme experiences when they travel.	2.48	Disagree
Backpacking is only for the young.	2.33	Disagree

As reflected in the results of the survey, respondents perceived that backpacking is about experiencing authentic adventures and local cultures, is not a risky travel adventure and backpackers often share their experiences. However, some respondents disagreed that backpackers seek extreme experiences when they travel and it is only for the young group of people.

Conclusions

1. Most of the respondents have been to historical places such as Intramuros, National Museum of the Philippines and Biak na Bato National Park.
    1.1 More than half of the respondents travel once to twice per year.
    1.2 Majority of the respondents travel with their extended family.
    1.3 The respondents plan 1-3 months before their travel.
    1.4 Most of the respondents are allocentric type of travelers.

2. The respondents consider budget, time and weather as the first three factors when choosing a travel destination.

3. Most of the respondents travel because they want to satisfy their curiosity and explore new ideas, be entertained and see new places/things.

4. Majority of the respondents strongly agree that backpacking is about experiencing authentic adventures and local cultures, is not a risky travel adventure and an opportunity for the backpackers to share their experiences.

Recommendations

1. Historical destinations should be preserved and protected by the local government and the community residents not only to sustain its attraction or appeal but also for the future generations.

2. Encourage more travelers to go on a backpacking trip since it is a convenient way of traveling.

3. Travel agencies/tour operators should continuously provide more discounts, lower rates to travelers and access to various destinations to promote and support tourism industry in the country.

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