An Investigation of Working Holiday Experiences: A Means-End Analysis Approach

Chaang-Iuan Ho
Department of Leisure Service Management, Chaoyang University of Technology, Taiwan

Shu-Chin Huang
Department of Business Administration Chaoyang University of Technology, Taiwan

Pi-Yueh Lin
Department of Leisure Service Management Chaoyang University of Technology, Taiwan

An Investigation of Working Holiday Experiences: A Means-End Analysis Approach

Chaang-Iuan Ho
Department of Leisure Service Management,
Chaoyang University of Technology, Taiwan
E-mail: ciho@cyut.edu.tw

Shu-Chin Huang
Department of Business Administration
Chaoyang University of Technology, Taiwan

and

Pi-Yueh Lin
Department of Leisure Service Management
Chaoyang University of Technology, Taiwan

ABSTRACT

Once a marginal activity undertaken by backpackers, working holiday tourism has now gradually become accepted by young people. This study extends the means-end approach to examine the factors associated with the tourists' experiences. The main purpose is to learn more about the role and meaning of the benefits from this type of travelling. By using the "laddering" technique, a total of 60 subjects participated in one-on-one in-depth personal interviews and the interviewing data were then analyzed. These outcomes generally referred to positive consequences or benefits. Of these benefits, those involving being independent in personal finances, escapism, experiencing a different culture, developing a range of skills, and making relationships have received the most prior research attention. The subjects provided information regarding the higher-level meanings related to these intermediated-level benefits, such as self-change and being open-minded. The results also highlighted several key personal values (in particular, accomplishment, self-confidence, unforgettable memories and satisfying one's curiosity) that appeared to serve as the higher level "ends" of the experiences. The study's findings have important implications for researchers and practitioners interested in the study of working holiday tourism.

Keywords: *working holiday tourism, means-end chain theory, backpackers.*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, working holiday travel has grown in popularity. Once a marginal activity undertaken by backpackers, it has now gradually become accepted by young people. According to Wikipedia, a working holiday is defined as a trip which allows travelers to undertake employment in a foreign country for the purpose of supplementing their travel funds. Such travel allows young people to experience living in that country, without undergoing the usual costly expenses of finding work sponsorship in advance, or going on expensive university exchange programs. Associated with the merits of backpacker travel, a working holiday further encourages cultural exchange between travelers and the citizens with whom they work with.

As a matter of fact, working holiday tourists are similar to the backpackers who work as they travel. The discrepancy between these two groups is that the latter includes those who work and also those who do not work while the former are obligated to work for a period of time while staying in a destination. Previous research has detailed discussions regarding to backpackers. The research findings can be placed along a continuum ranging from the benefits, needs, motivations, personal identity, or personal values that travelers seek to satisfy (e.g., Elsrud, 2001; Scheyvens, 2002; Noy, 2004; Maoz, 2007; O'Reilly, 2006). However, very few studies noted the conceptual relationship among several of these phenomena. In other words, researchers typically treat the extremes of this continuum as being distinct and independent of each other in their studies on backpackers' behavior.

To develop a better understanding of the range of benefits that result from participating in a working holiday program, this present study that was drawn from the perspective referred to as means-end theory was conducted to examine the fundamental relationship between tourists and the working holiday program. This type of analysis provides insight into outcome to other established research approaches. As such, it has important implications for researchers and practitioners interested in understanding and influencing working holiday tourist behavior. There have been a few means-end studies conducted in leisure and tourism settings (e.g., Klenosky, Gengler and Mulvey, 1993; van Rekom, 1994; Klenosky et al., 1998; Goldenburg et al., 2000). These researchers have demonstrated the usefulness of the associated methodology and that is well suited to that purpose for leisure and tourism research.

Therefore, this study has extended the means-end approach to examine the factors associated with the experiences of working holiday tourists. The purpose of this study was to learn more about the role and meaning of the benefits associated with this type of travelling. More specifically, the objectives were to identify the different benefits that participants derived from completing a working holiday program and examine the means-end relationships that helped explain why and how tourists regard these benefits as important.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON BACKPACKER TOURISM

Among the studies reported in the backpacker tourism and associated tourist behavior literature in the past, the backpacker's personal identity has received the most attention from the researchers (e.g., Scheyvens, 2002; Noy, 2004; White & White, 2004; O'Reilly, 2006). Other issues that have been discussed include backpackers are portrayed (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Riely, 1988; Uriely, Yonay and Simchai, 2002), needs and motivation (Loker-Murphy, 1996; Maoz, 2007), culture (Sørensen, 2003; Muzaini, 2006; Teo and Leong, 2006), social interaction (Murphy, 2001), risk taking and creation (Elsrud, 2001) and learning (Pearce & Foster, 2007). As for the specific focus, however, the research findings reveal or confirm the effectiveness of backpacker tourism in providing beneficial outcomes to participants. Table 1 summarizes the major characteristics and benefits typically associated with backpacker tourism.

The approaches used to explore backpackers' behavior in the past include open-ended qualitative methods that rely on observation and in-depth interview techniques (White & White, 2004). Furthermore, some studies adopt an auto-ethnographical approach of drawing data from field diaries, which are supplemented with interviews (e.g., Muzaini, 2006). The qualitative approaches have focused on using the respondents' perspective and language to identify and develop a

better understanding of the key outcomes. The means-end approach employed in the present study is similar in emphasis to the above qualitative approach in that the goal is to uncover outcomes and develop a richer understanding of them. However, the difference between the two is that the means-end approach seeks to obtain an understanding by examining the relationship among outcomes and other particular types of meanings; that is, the meanings at different levels of abstraction.

Table 1 Tour Characteristics and Benefits of Backpackers

Tour characteristics	Tour benefits
Low levels of advance planning	A sense of freedom
No fixed timetable	Personal development & fulfillment
Openness to change of itinerary	Fun & enjoyment in life
Long-term international low-budget travel	Being dependent
Multiple-destination journey	Self-confidence
Recreational activities focusing around nature, culture and adventure	Experiencing a new and different culture
	Linguistic skills
	Self-growth and maturity
	Willingness to take risk
	Self-change
	A new self-identity
	Escaping from daily routine
	Accomplishment
	Excitement

USING MEANS-END THEORY TO STUDY WORKING HOLIDAY EXPERIENCES

Means-end theory provides an approach to investigate the important meanings that individuals associate with the services they experience. The theoretical perspective is grounded in the notion that individuals choose products or services with attributes that generate desired benefits or consequences. The importance of these consequences is that they serve as a function of the personal values they are associated with (Gutman, 1982). The three elements are fundamentally related to each other: attributes (the "means") are important for the benefits or consequences they provide, both of which are ultimately important for the personal values (the "ends") that lead people to reinforce through their preferences or choices. The values are viewed as having a central influence on the individual's attitudes and actions. These three elements represent a type of knowledge structure referred to as a means-end chain (Gutman, 1982; Olson & Reynolds, 1983).

Specifically, means-end theory focuses on the cognitive linkage between the relatively concrete aspects or attributes of working holiday programs, the more abstract consequences that these attributes provide for tourists, and the highly abstract personal values that these consequences help reinforce. A means-end chain summarizes the series of relationships among attributes, consequences and values. For example, a means-end chain might link the attribute of working holiday tourism initiative such as "to escape from daily routine," to the benefit "to experience the new and different culture", and then to the value "self-fulfillment."

Reynolds and Gutman (1988) offered a methodology for assessing means-end knowledge structures. The procedure, known as laddering, identified the basic concepts or distinctions that respondents used to describe their particular experiences. A series of open-ended questions were asked to elicit that a particular concept was important to the respondents. Specifically, they were asked "Why is it (that concept) important to you?" Their response was then used as the focus of the next question "Why is that important to you?" The questioning procedure lasted until the respondents could no longer provide an answer (e.g., the response was "I don't know," or "it just is…."). This procedure is called "laddering" because the respondents were forced to generate the "ladder of abstraction" connecting relatively concrete concepts at the attribute level to more abstract concepts at the consequence and personal-value levels. The laddering process usually elicited two or more means-end chains from each respondent. The items making up the ladders were then content-analyzed and aggregated to identify the major patterns of relationships among the elicited concepts. These relationships were then used as the basis for constructing a summary chart called a Hierarchical Value Map (HVM). The HVM characterized the key linkages associated with the particular experience domain of working holiday tourists. It should be noted that the objective in the content and structural analyses of the interviewing data is to develop an aggregate representation that is faithful to the means-end knowledge structures of most of the participants interviewed, instead of portraying each one's ladders.

METHODOLOGY

A study was conducted to assess the means-end structural relationships that working holiday tourists perceive a relevant in participating in the program. The data were collected from the sampling frame described as a purposive and snowball sample in that a deliberate effort was made to include a few tourists and then approach their acquaintances or companions. Most "seed" tourists were recruited from the Internet by sending an invitation message in their travel weblogs to ask them to participate in the study. A total of 60 subjects were selected to participate in one-on-one in-depth interviews using the ladder approach described above. It should be mentioned that the respondents in this study consisted of tourists who had ever completed their working holidays in Australia or New Zealand since these two countries issue the working visas for 18-30 year-old Taiwanese and their programs have been held for a few years.

The interviews were conducted individually lasting 20-30 minutes over a six-month period from August 2009 to January 2010. After collecting initial demographic and trip characteristic information, the respondents were asked to provide three reasons for their participation in a working holiday program. Their responses were used as the basis for the laddering procedure. The next question that was asked was "Why is that important…..?". The interviewer continued laddering off from the responses given until the respondent was unable to go on. The series of responses formed a means-end chain or ladder of meanings that linked a particular working holiday tourism attribute, with one or more benefits, and ultimately with one or more values deemed important to the individual.

DATA ANALYSIS

The sample of 60 respondents used in this study, had more females (70%) than males (30%). They ranged in age from 21-35 with 53% between the ages of 26-30, 34% between 31-35, and 13% between 21-25. In regard to the level of education, 68%

of the respondents had completed a 4-year college degree, an additional 19% had taken some college courses, a further 10% had completed graduate school degrees, and the others had obtained high school diplomas. The majority (88%) was married and the remainder was single. With regards to the timing of their working holiday tourism between the dates the respondents were surveyed, over a half (53%) had completed the program between 1and 2 years before, 33% within the past 12 months, and only 14% reported that they had done the traveling more than 2 years before. Most (70%) went to New Zealand for working and traveling, a small group (20%) had been to Australia, while a few (10%) had such experiences in both countries.

The laddering procedures resulted in an average of 2.98 ladders per subjects for a total of 179 ladders elicited across the 60 subjects. The elements making up respondents' ladders were reviewed to define appropriate categories of meanings as being an attribute, consequence, or value. The content categories were established to aggregate the responses from the subjects. Then a quantitative analysis was performed to develop a set of synonyms (codes). In order to ensure that these analytical tasks were executed appropriately, three analysts (including the third author) coded the data independently. A comparison of the coding results indicated an intercoder agreement of approximately 87%. All disagreements between the researchers and the analysts were resolved jointly. The content categories used in the study are presented in Table 2 with a final list of 9 attributes, 13 consequences (benefits) and 10 personal values.

The following analysis was used to identify the linkages or interrelationships among these (attribute-consequence-value) concepts. Firstly, an implication matrix was developed to demonstrate the number of times each pair of concepts were associated with each other in the laddering data. These associations were either direct or indirect. For example, a means-end chain A→B→C consists of 2 direct associations (A→B and B→C) and an indirect association (A→C). Considering that another means-end chain A→C may exist and avoid overweighting the importance of the associations, we focused solely on the number of direct associations between concepts. The implication matrix constructed from the 179 ladders regarding working holiday experiences is shown in Table 3.

Table 2 Coded Items and Responses from the Laddering Data

Attributes	Responses
A1 Share the local life style	71
A2 Long-term travel	23
A3 Escape from daily life	13
A4 Operating in a linguistically diverse environment	24
A5 Enjoy beautiful scenery	5
A6 Traveling in small groups	2
A7 A budget-conscious travel style	12
A8 Traveling & working	29
A9 A journey with a flexible itinerary	1
Consequences	
C1 Experiencing a different culture	57
C2 Making relationships	19
C3 Being open-minded	34
C4 A whole new life	19
C5 Seeking photographic topics	2
C6 Adaptability	2
C7 Self-challenge	20
C8 Escapism	15
C9 Developing a considerable range of skills	34
C10 Being independent in personal finances	19
C11 Realizing a dream of traveling oversea	21
C12 Being matured	3
C13 Self-change	20
Values	
V1 Satisfying curiosity	25
V2 Accomplishment	30
V3 Self-confidence	21
V4 Self-fulfillment	14
V5 Security	1
V6 Self-growth	14
V7 Unforgettable memories	31
V8 Perspective	4
V9 Fun and enjoyment in life	13
V10 Self-reliance	22

Table 3 Implications Matrix of Working Holiday Experiences

From													To											
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9	C10	C11	C12	C13	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5	V6	V7	V8	V9	V10	Total
A1	41	5	7	2			6	4	2		3		1											71
A2	7	4	1	3			1	2	1		3		1											23
A3	5			5			1	1			1													13
A4		2					1		21															24
A5			2		1						2													5
A6		1				1																		2
A7			3					8	1															12
A8	1		3	1			5	2	1	9	7													29
A9									1															1
C1		3	5	3			3		1			1		8	7	3	3	5		7		4	3	56
C2			4						2					1	2	1	1		2	4	1			18
C3				1					1		2			2	6	3	3	2	2	6	2			30
C4			3				1		1					2	2	1				1		3	1	15
C5																	1							1
C6																		1						1
C7									1		1	1			5				4	1		1	6	20
C8												3				2			2	1		1	1	10
C9	3	2	1											8	12	2		1	2					31
C10							1				3				3				1			2	7	17
C11		1	1	2			1					6	2						4				1	18
C12																	1			1				2
C13			1	1					1		1		1	2	2	1		1	4		1	2		18
V1																								0
V2																								0
V3																								0
V4																								0
V5																								0
V6																								0
V7																								0
V8																								0
V9																				1			1	2
V10															2					1			1	4

The entries in the implication matrix provided the information to construct the HVM. The items and relationships between items in the implication matrix were considered to be represented in the HVM. A cutoff value, which indicates the associations mentioned by the number of respondents, was the criterion used to decide which associations between items should be included or omitted and to capture the dominant relationships. Based on Olson and Reynolds (1983), a cutoff value was selected by at least 5% of the respondents. In the present study, a cutoff of 4 instead of the minimum value of 3, representing 21.8% of all associations in the matrix, resulted in an HVM that was the most informative and useful and so a cutoff value of 4 was adopted.

Figure 1 presented the HVM for the respondents who mentioned working holiday tourism was being important to their travel experiences. The values (numbers) along with the associations referred to the number of times that the outcomes were linked in the respondents' ladders, i.e., the number of respondents who mentioned a particular link in their ladders. The thickness of the lines reflects the number of respondents linking those outcomes.
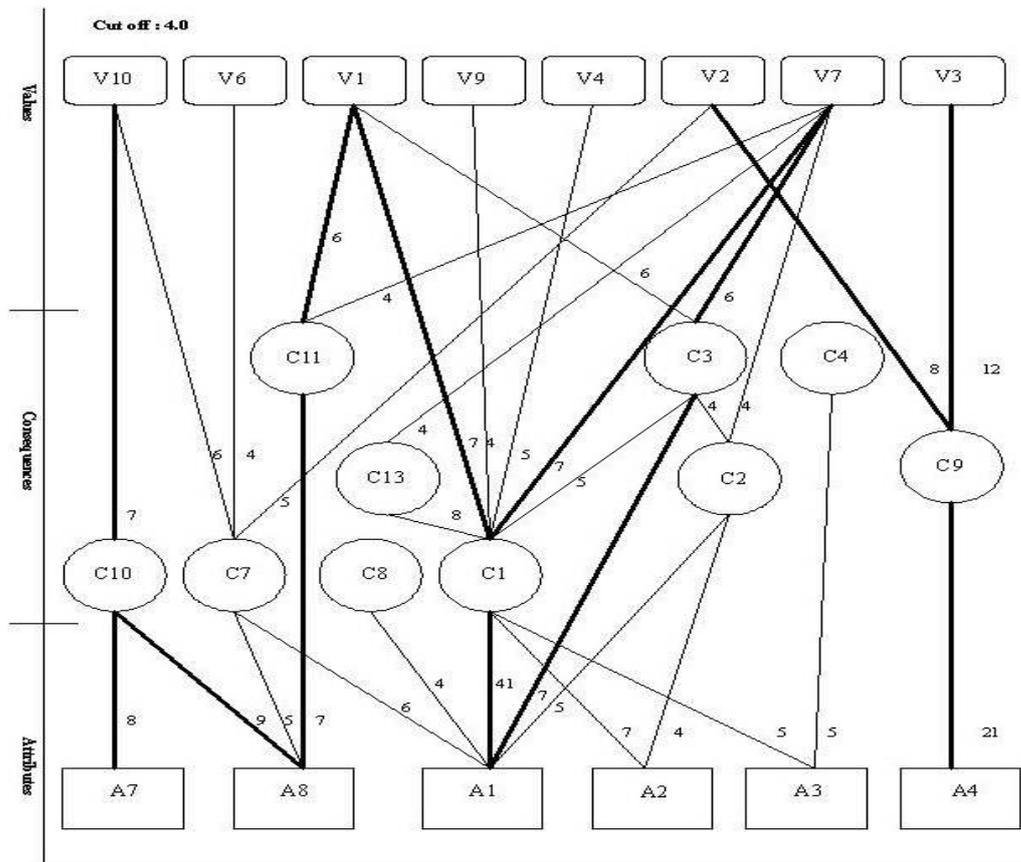
Fig. 1 HVM of working holiday experiences (N=60)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the implication matrix shown in Table 2, the attributes of "sharing the local life," "operating in a linguistically diverse environment," and "traveling & working" particularly characterized some of the key qualities that appeared to make working holiday tourism attractive to tourists. As the consequences (benefits) indicated, they generally referred to positive outcomes including "experiencing a different culture," "developing a considerable range of skills," "being open-minded," "realizing a dream of traveling oversea," "self-challenge," "being independent in personal finance," "making relationships," "self-change," "escapism," and "a whole new life." Several of these benefits which have been commonly discussed in previous backpacking tourism research have still received much attention in the present study, such as "experiencing a different culture," "escapism," "self-change," "making relationships," and "a whole new life." However, the consequence of "being independent in personal finance" might be rather be emphasized in working holiday tourists than general backpackers because the former partially worked for money and the monetary gains made them no longer have to depend on financial assistance from their families. It also highlighted several key personal values (in particular, "unforgettable memories," "accomplishment," "satisfying curiosity," "self-reliance" and "self-confidence") that appeared to serve as the higher level "ends" that tourists took away from their working holiday experiences.

Among the concepts in the HVM depicted in Figure 1, "sharing the local life" was the most frequently mentioned attribute and "experiencing a different culture" was the most frequently mentioned benefit. These two concepts were strongly linked

in HVM and were subsequently linked to several values including "unforgettable memories" and "satisfying curiosity" in particular. There were also links between "experiencing a different culture" and "self-fulfillment" as well as "fun and enjoyment in life". These sets of meanings appeared to be central in this HVM and suggest that working holiday programs, through local life sharing, help tourists experiencing a different culture, and gain utilitarian or hedonic aspects from the participations. The different culture also appeared to be important in helping tourists gain the higher-level meanings related to these intermediated-level benefits, including "self-change," and "being open-minded." The concepts appeared to derive their significance from these two consequences and for the value "unforgettable memories".

As to the other concepts, the attributes "a budget-conscious travel style" and "traveling & working" were also mentioned and were linked to the outcome of "being independent in personal finance", and were then subsequently linked to the value of "self-reliance". This suggests that the type of participants and their ability to be financially independent contribute to the attractiveness of working holiday programs. In addition, the link between the attribute "traveling and working" and the value "satisfying curiosity" suggests that working holiday tourism allows people to realize a dream of traveling oversea and finally leads them to fulfill their desires. Finally, as could be expected, the attribute "operating in a linguistically devise environment" was directly linked to the benefit "developing a considerable range of skills" and subsequent links to the values "self-confidence" and "accomplishment". According to the interviewing data, working holiday programs appeared to allow tourists to enhance not only the linguistic abilities but also a diversity of skills involving problem solving and thinking, social interaction, and management of sources. These abilities and skills served as the sources that were important for a sense of accomplishment and self-confidence.

The overall goal of this research was to contribute to our understanding of the benefits and high-level values associated with working holiday experiences. Unlike the narrative approach largely used in previous backpacker tourism research, the authors employed the means-end approach not only in an attempt to explore to what extent particular attributes, consequences and values are important, but also to examine how and why these factors are important. In addition, from the interesting perspectives of both the Eastern and the affluent destination areas, this study examined the subjects of a nation-specific pattern (Taiwan) among working holiday tourist backpackers in the well-developed countries (Australia and New Zealand), who were different from the subjects in previous studies who were mostly Western and who traveled to the developing countries or the Third World. Of course, the specific findings have limited generalizability due to the respondents involved, the sample size, and the specific destination countries. Nevertheless the research results hold useful implications for future research and practice.

The study's findings have important implications for practitioners interested in studying working holiday tourism. In fact, the motives of tourists are deeply rooted in their pattern of expectations, goals and values. The MEC technique has been used to investigate this pattern in this study. Such information provides a basis for positioning strategies in which the promised experiences of working holiday tourists have been realized by means of this concrete travel program so that their existing goals and values serve to motivate marketing employees to target those who would like to meet such tourists' expectations. Furthermore, more effective communication and

promotional materials could be developed. An entire chain or meaning would be expected instead of focusing on isolated facts or concepts.

REFERENCES

Elsrud, T. (2001). Risk Creation in traveling - Backpacker adventure narration. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 28(3), 597–617.

Goldenberg, M. A., Klenosky, D. B., O'Leary, J. T., & Templin, T. J. (2000). A means-end investigation of rope course experiences. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 32(2), 208-224.

Graburn, N. H. H. (1983). The anthropology of tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 10(1), 9-33.

Gutman, J. (1982). A means-end chain model based on consumer categorization processes. *Journal of Marketing*, 46(2), 60-71.

Klenosky, D. B., Gengler, C. E., & Mulvey, M. S. (1993). Understanding the factors influencing ski destination choice: A means-end analytic approach. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 25, 362-379.

Klenosky, D. B., Frauman, E., Norman, W. C., & Gengler, C. E. (1998). Nature-based tourists' use of interpretive services: A means-end investigation. *The Journal of Tourism Studies,* 9(2), 26-36.

Loker-Murphy, L. & Pearce, P. L. (1995). Young budget travelers: Backpackers in Australia. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 22(4), 819-843.

Loker-Murphy, L. (1996). Backpackers in Australia: A motivation-based segment study. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing,* 54(4), 23-45.

Maoz, D. (2007). Backpackers' motivations - The role of culture and nationality. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 34(1), 122–140.

Murphy, L. (2001). Exploring social interactions of backpackers. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 28, 50-67.

Muzaini, H. (2006). Backpacking Southeast Asia: Strategies of "looking local". *Annals of Tourism Research,* 33, 144-161.

Noy, C. (2004). This trip really changed me: Backpackers' narratives of self-change. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 31, 78-102.

Olson, J. C. & Reynolds, T. J. (1983). Understanding consumers' cognitive structures: Implications for advertising strategy. In L. Percy, & Woodside, A. (Eds.), *Advertising and consumer psychology* (pp.77-90). Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

O'Reilly, C. C. (2006). From drifter to gap year tourist – Mainstreaming backpacker travel. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 33(4), 998-1017.

Pearce, P. L. & Foster, F. (2007). A "University of travel": Backpacker learning. *Tourism Management,* 28, 1285-1298.

Reynolds, T. J. & Gutman, J. (1988). Laddering theory, method, analysis and interpretation. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 28(1), 11-31.

Riley, P. J. (1988). Road culture of international long-term budget travelers. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 15(2), 313-328.

Scheyvens, R. (2002). Backpacker tourism and third development. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 29, 144-164.

Sørensen, A. (2003). Backpacker ethnography. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 30, 847-867.

Teo, P. & Leong, S. (2006). A postcolonial analysis of backpacking. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 33, 109-131.

Uriely, N., Yonay, Y., & Simchai, D. (2002). Backpacking experiences: A type and form analysis. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 29, 520-538.

van Rekom, J. (1994). Adding psychological value to tourism products. *Journal of Travel and Marketing*, 3(3), 21-36.

White, N. R. & White, P. B. (2004). Travel as transition: Identity and place. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 31, 200-218.