

# Motivations of backpackers in the Cape Coast-Elmina Conurbation, Ghana

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## Abstract

Research has shown that the backpacker market is one of the tourism markets that economically benefit local communities than the conventional market or mass tourists. The purpose of the study was to examine the motivations of backpackers in the Cape Coast-Elmina conurbation, Ghana. Questionnaire was used to collect data from 184 backpackers in Cape Coast and Elmina. Factor Analysis and some descriptive statistical analysis were employed in presenting the report. The study revealed that backpackers, who visited the Cape Coast-Elmina conurbation, were mostly young international students, most of whom were of European origin. Using the push-pull theory by Dann (1981), 6 main orthogonal push-pull related factors, including historical/cultural attractions, service delivery, ecological attractions, heritage, escape, and adventure were found to have explained backpackers' motivations for travelling. It is recommended that local travel intermediaries focus attention on packaging tailored tours that will sell the country's historical, cultural and ecological attractions to backpackers. Secondly, the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) should formally recognize and incorporate hostel facilities into the accommodation sub-sector, and regularize monitoring activities in these facilities in order to maintain quality standards for patronage by backpackers.

**Keywords:** Motivations, Backpacker, Factor, Cape Coast-Elmina, Ghana

## Introduction

Backpackers or budget travellers or young international independent travellers, are becoming very much noticeable in the tourism trade and scholarly materials (Pearce, 1990; Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004; Richards & Wilson, 2005). Pearce (1990) argues that backpacker travel is on the rise and has the potential of providing additional benefits complementary to other forms of tourism to the host destination. Over the past decade, backpackers have shifted out from the policy shadows and the confines of the travel and tourism trade into global interest (Richards & Wilson, 2005). Rogerson (2005) argues that the contemporary backpacker is viewed as an imperative and growing element of international tourism and in some countries, such as Australia and Canada,

they are a key component of domestic tourism. According to Ateljevic and Doorne (2004), backpackers are tourism's biggest spending visitors. Research has also shown that on an individual basis, backpackers spend up to four (4) times more than mainstream Japanese tourists in Australia (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004). Cheaper flights and favourable exchange rates have encouraged the remarkable growth of this market with more than 400,000 backpackers expected to visit Australia in 2002 (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2004). According to the Ghana Museums and Monuments Board [GMMB] (2011), international student arrivals in only Cape Coast and Elmina, stood at 3,073 between the months of September and October, 2010, an indication that youth travellers are increasingly visiting the area.

Cohen (1973, p. 92) and Vogt (1976) are seminal writers on 'drifter' (antecedent of backpackers) behaviour, claiming that 'wanderers' travel to maintain contacts with friends and family, to gain personal social recognition and prestige, and to quest after learning and personal growth. Pearce (1990) first introduced the term *backpacker* into academic literature. For Pearce (ibid), backpackers are primarily defined by: a preference for budget accommodation; social interaction with other travellers; independence and flexibility of itinerary; preference for longer holidays; and emphasis on holidays that are informal and participatory.

Though backpacking is becoming a significant component of the tourism trade in the Cape Coast-Elmina area, Ghana, no detailed research has been conducted to determine the dynamics in backpacking. As a result, there is no evidence of empirical information on the background characteristics and their motivations for travelling to Ghana. Hence, the study specifically seeks to: describe the background characteristics of backpackers and also examine their main motivations for travelling to Ghana. At the end, the study is expected to contribute to the growing literature on backpackers' motivations for travelling, proffer some policy implications, and make suggestions for industry practitioners, especially those in the accommodation sub-sector.

### **Theoretical framework**

Motivations are forces (intrinsic or extrinsic) that drive tourists to move from their places of residence to places out their homes in order to satisfy a need. Travel motivations have received great attention in tourism research, due to the number of motivational theories that have been advanced to explain the reasons that put the tourist on the 'move'. Maslow's (1943) theory of needs, Gray's (1970) sunlusters and wanderlusters typology, Dann (1977, 1981) and Crompton (1979) push-pull framework, Iso-Ahola's (1982) Optimal Arousal Theory and Godfrey (2011) have all been used in many scholarly materials to explain travel

motivations. Many have, however, critiqued these motivational theories, arguing that some are a little simplistic in the explanation of tourists' motivations for travelling. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this research, the push-pull model by Dann (1981) was adapted to guide this study.

The push-pull framework or model by Dann (1977) provides a useful approach for examining tourists' motivations for travelling (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979). To Dann, tourists are pushed by internal forces (escape, prestige, relaxation) and pulled by external forces (such as the destination attributes). In short, push motives can be used to explain the desire to travel while pull motives help to explain the destination choice (Dann, 1977; Crompton, 1979; Goossens, 2000). Baloglu and Uysal (1996) found that backpackers may be pushed to leave home in order to get away from an unhappy relationship and be pulled because they wish to see the country's scenery or enjoy a climatic condition. In relation to push forces, Niggel and Benson (2007) reveal that backpackers are motivated by discoveries of novelty, gaining broad knowledge about the world, escape from everyday work, social interaction, as well as having good times with friends. They identified the pull factors to comprise native culture, adventure opportunities, climate, friendliness of the host, beautiful beaches, available facilities and services, as well as the history of the host country. In examining the motivations that drive backpackers to visit the Cape Coast-Elmina conurbation, Ghana, the push-pull model by Dann (1981) was found appropriate as a theoretical guide.

### **Study area**

Elmina, which is located in the Komenda Edina Eguafo Abrem (KEEA) district, is about 6 km west of Cape Coast. On the other hand, Cape Coast is located in the Cape Coast Metropolis. These two towns are both located along the coastline and are bordered by Twifo Heman Lower

Denkyira, Mpohor Wasa East and Shama districts in the Central Region of Ghana. Geographically, they can be described as a 'conurbation', given that the two towns have gradually joint in terms of settlement and development. 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 conurbation 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 conurbation attracts a greater number of tourists because of the three (3) main United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) world heritage sites, namely; Cape Coast castle, Elmina castle, and Fort St. Jago. Festivals and other events also account for tourist arrivals in the area. Most notably, the Pan African Historical Theatre Festival (PANAFEST) is held in Cape Coast and Elmina every two years. Moreover, an earlier reconnaissance survey by the researcher found that some service providers in the Cape Coast-Elmina conurbation, in addition to the mainstream lodging facilities, provide separate facilities for backpackers or budget travellers. These were but some of the reasons that underscored the selection of the two areas as the study setting (Figure 1).

### **Methodology**

The data was collected from inbound backpackers in the Cape Coast-Elmina conurbation through the use of questionnaire. The questions in the instrument were developed based on a review of related literature (Dann, 1977, 1981; Crompton, 1979; Pearce, 1990; Ryan & Moshin, 1999; Scheyvens, 2002; Niggel & Benson, 2007). However, since tourism studies are unique in terms of cultural and geopolitical landscapes,

necessary adjustments were made in order to make the instrument reflect the objectives of the study and also situate the research within the local context, which is Ghana. The instrument consisted of three (3) main modules. Module 1 examined some push items that motivated the respondents to travel to Ghana while Module 2 examined the pull variables the motivated the respondents to visit Ghana. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree" was used to measure their motivations for travelling to Ghana. Module 3 touched on the background characteristics of the respondents, such as sex, age, marital status, level of education, continent of origin, and profession. 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 using three field assistants and the researcher. In all, 200 questionnaires were administered through a convenience sampling technique, but 184 instruments were found useful after cleaning/editing.

The data analysis was carried out with the use of the SPSS version 17. An exploratory factor analysis, employing the varimax rotation was used to determine the main orthogonal dimensions that motivated backpackers to travel to the Cape Coast-Elmina conurbation, Ghana. Descriptive statistical analysis, such as frequency tables and bar charts were also used in presenting the results.

### **Results**

#### **Background characteristics of backpackers**

Table 1 shows the background characteristics of respondents, such as age, sex, marital status, level of education, occupation and religion. On a whole, 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. The average age was found to be 23 years. More unmarried (84.2%) than married (15.8%) respondents were established in the study. As regards the educational levels of respondents, those who had attained secondary/high school qualification (34.8%) were at par with degree holders (34.8%) representing the majority. Those who had basic qualification were the least (1.6%) followed by postgraduates (10.3%). It was noticed that a little more than half (57.6%) of the respondents were students followed by technicians (22.8%). Backpackers who claimed they were in their 'gap year' represented 13.6%. Educators (2.7%) and marketing personnel (3.3%) accounted for the least number of respondents in the study. The majority (60.3%) of backpackers who visited the Cape Coast-Elmina area were Christians while more than a quarter (26.6%) were Atheists. Hindus (1.6%) constituted the minority in terms of religious affiliation.

From Figure 2, most of the respondents (74.5%) originated from Europe with about one-third (33.7%) of them being Germans followed by the British and Danes representing 13.6% and 8.2% respectively. Australians were the next highest (12.5%) followed by North Americans (10.3%), Africans (1.6%) and Asians (1.1%).

#### **Push and Pull factors that accounted for backpackers' travel motivations**

The Factor analysis (FA) model, employing the varimax rotation, was used to determine the major underlying components/factors that motivated backpackers to visit Ghana. The FA was consequently performed on 38 variables and the output is presented in Table 2. As a prelude to employing FA in this study, the sampling adequacy and the factorability of the data were examined to ensure that all assumptions were met for the FA. In ensuring the factorability of the

data, the Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measures of sampling adequacy were examined. To Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), the Bartlett's test of sphericity should be significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) and the KMO index should be a minimum of 0.6 for FA to be considered appropriate. For this study, the Bartlett's test of sphericity was found to be significant ( $p = 0.00$ ) while the KMO index of 0.781 confirmed the suitability of the data for FA. Table 2 also contains the eigenvalues and factor loadings. A recommendation is made for the inspection of a correlation matrix of 0.3 or more while factors with eigenvalues of 1.0+ are retained for further investigation (Pallant, 2005). Moreover, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to test the reliability of the scale used, and the extent to which the items actually contribute in explaining a factor. Pallant (2005) recommends a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of more than 0.7 for appropriateness.

The Principal Component Analysis (PCA), employing the varimax rotation, reduced the 38 variables to 6 main underlying dimensions which accounted for backpackers' motivations to visit Ghana. The six (6) uncorrelated factor solutions together explained 55.9% of the total variance. The factors, however, contributed differently to the explanation of the total variance, which was as follows: A pull motivational factor, which was Factor 1, labelled as historical/cultural attractions, consisted of issues pertaining to old towns and forts, slave routes and history, art and craft, ethnic groups, music and dance, clothing, and museums. This factor explained 8.14 (22.6%) of the total variance with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.79. Factor 2 measured heritage motivation. Heritage motivations formed part of the push motivational factors that accounted for backpackers' visit to Ghana. It suggests that there was an internal desire to patronize the country's heritage resources, which were evident in tracing routes to Ghana, learning about individual heritage, and finding out historical backgrounds. Together, they explained

3.75 (10.4%) of the total variance, showing a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.87. Factor 3 (pull factor) measured service delivery, which includes well-trained restaurant staff, hygienic facilities, good and prompt service delivery, and environmental cleanliness. Factor loadings ranged from a low of 0.66 to a high of 0.71. Factor 3 accounted for 2.45 (6.8%) of the total variance explained, presenting a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.80. Factor 4 (pull factor) constituted ecological heritage which consisted of greenery, wildlife and birds, mountainous areas, beautiful parks and scenery, and conducive weather conditions. It explained 2.38 (6.6%) of the total variance, accounting for a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.83. Factor 5 more or less tapped into another push factor which is 'escape'. For this factor, getting away from home, break from routine job, doing something about boredom, and relieving stress and tension were the variables that loaded on it. This factor explained 1.79 (4.9%) of the total variance. Lastly, Factor 6 (push factor) explained 1.60 (4.5%) of the total variance, accounting for 0.72 Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The factor consisted in experiencing unfamiliar destination, discovering something new, doing something challenging, and getting close to nature.

## Discussion

According to Leslie and Wilson (2005), backpackers are gradually shifting from being a homogeneous segment comprising youngsters to a segment with diverse profiles. The study indicated that the majority of the respondents were within the age cohort of 20-29. This finding affirms the argument that backpackers are mostly young travellers who travel to less developed destinations (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Richards & Wilson, 2004). It is worth noting that, age is one of the background attributes that are widely used by scholars in the conceptualization of a backpacker. Furthermore, the result that most of the subjects had attained high school and degree qualifications supports the assertion by Richards and Wilson (2004, p. 28) and Hannam and Ateljevic

(2008) that backpackers mostly are people who have finished high school, and decide to embark on a holiday before continuing with the next level of education. Invariably, this has a connection with the 'gap-year' group. The 'gap year' refers to the period between school and work where young people who have just finished with school decide to travel for an extended period before taking up a job. It could also refer to a period of holiday between high school and another higher level of education (especially university education). Moreover, Christian domination in the study could be contingent on the fact that Ghana is largely dominated by Christians; therefore, other Christians might find it relatively comforting to stay in the country. Strangely, Muslims were non-existent in the study probably because backpacking is not a religious orientation of the Muslim sect.

The result affirms Richards and Wilson's (2004) conclusion that most backpackers are of European origin. To Bhatia (2006), globally, Europe and North America are widely recognized as leading tourist generating regions. The argument by Adler (1985) that backpacking has been a widespread phenomenon in the pre-modern West was still apparent in the study.

As to their motivations for travelling to Ghana, the factor on historical/cultural attractions, which is a pull factor, showed the highest explained variance, followed by Factor 2, heritage tourism. This result is very obvious because historical and cultural attractions capture a significant proportion of Ghana's attraction base, most of which are located along the coast of Ghana. The study, therefore, reinforces Welk's (2006) position that the interests of backpackers lie in historic monuments and cultures of other people. The finding also braces the assertion that pull motivational factors at a destination may include the cultures of the local people (Niggel & Benson, 2007).

The third dimension or factor that emerged from the analysis was the motivation for

service delivery in the area. Cape Coast and Elmina hold and provide a significant percentage of tourism facilities and services respectively in the country. For their part, Niggel and Benson (2007) consider services and facilities at the destination as pull motivational factors for various categories of visitors.

Further, the fourth motivational factor constituted interest in the ecological heritage of the country. This result was found to be consistent with an observation made by Morgan *et al* (2002) that one of New Zealand's pull factors for backpackers is its natural environmental beauty. Ghana is also endowed with natural resources ranging for unique water bodies, national parks, ramsar sites, wetlands to mountains. Activities, such as camping, hiking, hunting, swimming, biking, kayaking, and safari watching could be undertaken in the country, especially in the Cape Coast-Elmina area.

Factor five which tapped into escapism was one of the push factors that motivated backpackers to travel to Ghana. The issue of taking breaks from jobs back at home is quite common among the reasons why most backpackers choose to travel. According to Jarvis and Peel (2010), one motivation for backpackers is the desire to escape from life at home. These breaks give them the opportunity to refresh their minds, and also get to engage with non-routine forms of lifestyle.

The last but not least factor was concerned with the desire to travel for adventure. It comprises experiencing unfamiliar destination, discovering something new, doing something challenging, and getting close to nature. For Elsrud (2001), Cloke and Perkins (2002) and Cater (2002), thrill-seeking and risk taking certainly seem to have become a central part of backpacking, as growing numbers of backpackers develop interest for destinations or take up more dangerous activities in established destinations.

## Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to examine the main motivations that drove backpackers to the Cape coast-Elmina conurbation, Ghana. The study involved 184 backpackers in the survey and also adopted Dann's (1981) push-pull model as the theoretical basis for the study. First, it was found that backpackers who visited the Cape Coast-Elmina conurbation, Ghana were mostly young international students, who were largely unmarried. It was also noticed that backpackers belonged to different age categories; however, the majority were between 20-29 years, which goes to support the argument that they are predominantly young travellers (Richards & Wilson, 2004; Hannam & Ateljevic, 2008).

Secondly, the exploratory factor analysis on motivations using the varimax rotation, found that backpackers were motivated to travel by a mix of pull (Service delivery, ecological, and historical/cultural attractions) and push factors (heritage tourism, escapism, and adventure tourism). The examination of motivations among backpackers in the existing literature has seldom provided much empirical information on the push-pull dynamics in backpackers' motivations, as postulated by Dann (1981) and Crompton (1979). Hence, the result from this current study is a contribution to the growing literature on backpacking.

The fact that backpackers who travel to the Cape Coast-Elmina area are young students suggests that they travel on limited budgets. Therefore, GTA should formally recognize and incorporate hostel facilities into the accommodation sub-sector in the country, and also regularize monitoring activities in these facilities in order to maintain quality standards for patronage by backpackers. Since the study showed that backpackers visited Ghana because of the historical and ecological attractions, it is recommended that government pays special attention to the development of these sites in order to increase backpackers' visitation to the

country. Particularly, accessibility to these attractions which is a problem could be improved by government. It is also recommended that local travel intermediaries should focus attention on packaging tailored tours that will sell the country's historical, cultural and ecological attractions to backpackers.

For future research, it would be interesting to ascertain, the extent to which backpackers' motivations for travel may vary across their background characteristics, hence future researchers could explore their motivations in relation to background characteristics.

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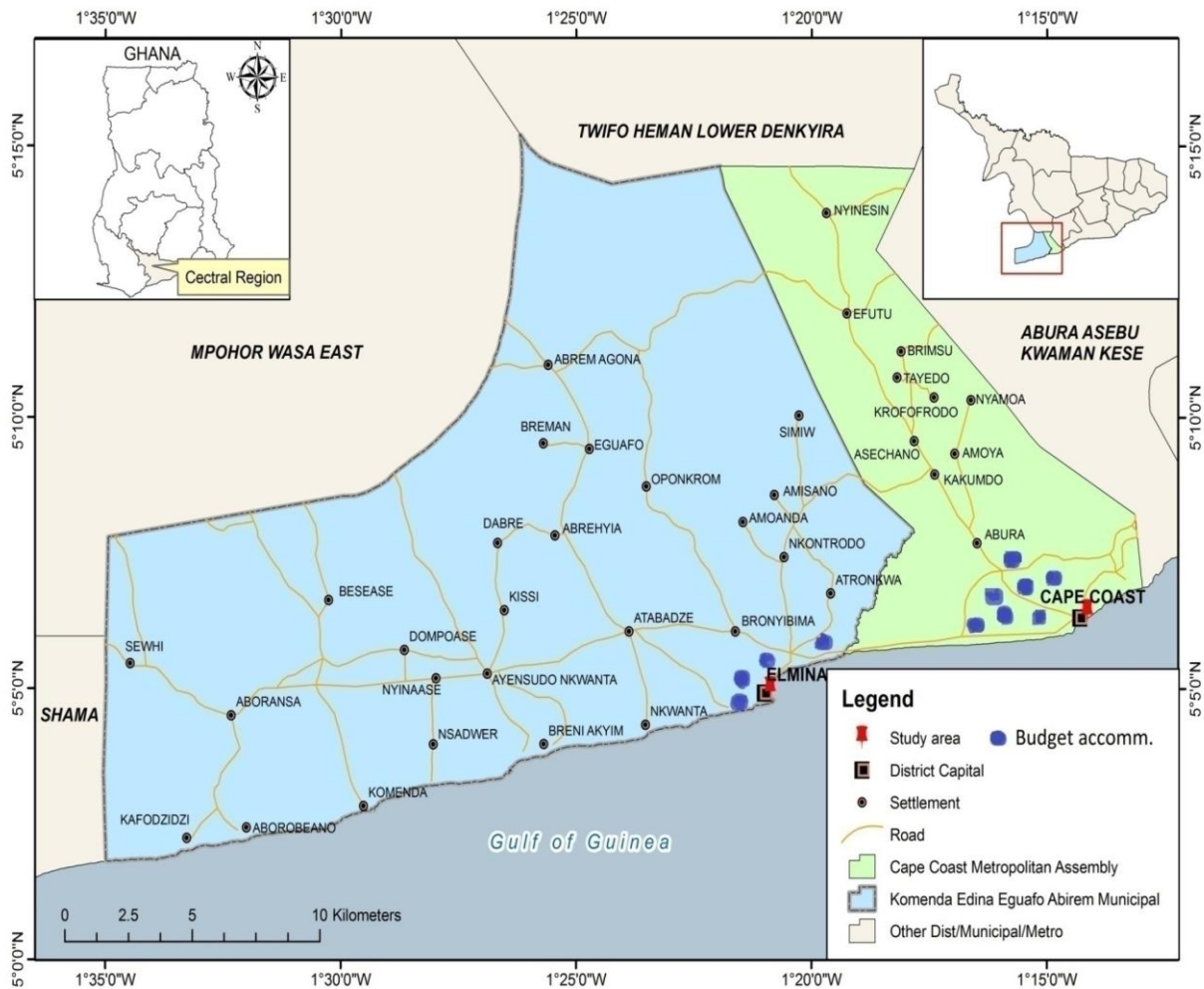


Figure 1: Map of Cape Coast-Elmina conurbation, Ghana

Source: Remote Sensing and Cartographic Unit, University Cape Coast, 2012.

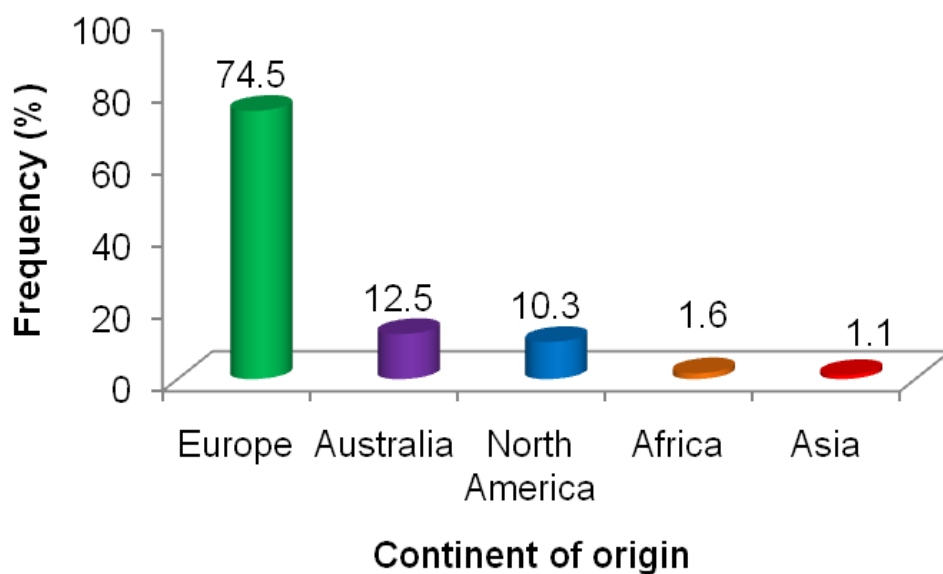
Table 1: Background characteristics of respondents

Background characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	51	27.7
Female	133	72.3
Total	184	100.0
<b>Age</b>		
<20	28	15.2
20-29	138	75.0
30-39	15	8.2

40 +	3	1.6
Total	184	100.0
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	29	15.8
Unmarried	155	84.2
Total	184	100.0
<b>Highest level of education</b>		
Basic/primary	3	1.6
Secondary/high school	64	34.8
Diploma	34	18.5
Degree	64	34.8
Postgraduate	19	10.3
Total	184	100.0
<b>Main profession/occupation</b>		
Student	106	57.6
Sales/marketing person	6	3.3
Educator	5	2.7
Post-student gap year	25	13.6
Technicians	42	22.8
Total	184	100.0
<b>Religious affiliation</b>		
Christianity	111	60.3
Traditional religion	4	2.3
Hinduism	3	1.6
Buddhism	7	3.8
Atheism	49	26.6
None	10	5.4
Total	184	100.0

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Source: Fieldwork, 2011



**Figure 2: Backpackers' continent of origin**

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

**Table 2: Push-pull factors that account for backpackers' motivations to travel**

Factors	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% of variance Explained	Cronbach's alpha
<b>I Historical/cultural attractions (<i>pull</i>)</b>				
Old towns and villages	0.71			
Slave route and history	0.68			
Arts and craft	0.66			
Different ethnic groups	0.64	8.14	22.61	0.79
Good music and dance	0.61			
Clothing (kente, fugu)	0.59			
Museums	0.58			
<b>II Heritage motivation (<i>push</i>)</b>				
Trace my route to Ghana	0.89			
Learn about my heritage	0.87	3.75	10.43	0.87

Find out my historical background	0.86			
<b>III Service delivery (pull)</b>				
Well trained restaurant & hotel staff	0.71			
Hygienic facilities	0.69			
Good service delivery	0.68	2.45	6.81	0.80
Prompt service delivery	0.67			
Clean environment	0.66			
<b>IV Ecological heritage (pull)</b>				
Greenery	0.79			
Wildlife and birds	0.76			
Mountainous areas	0.65	2.38	6.61	0.83
Beautiful parks and scenery	0.64			
<b>V Escape (push)</b>				
Get away from home	0.76			
Get a break from everyday job	0.69			
Do something about my boredom	0.69	1.79	4.98	0.74
Relieve stress and tension	0.64			
<b>VI Adventure (push)</b>				
Experience unfamiliar destination	0.76			
Discover something new	0.75			
Do something challenging	0.71	1.60	4.45	0.72
Get close to nature	0.52			
Total variance explained		55.89		

Bartlett's test of sphericity (Approx. Chi-square) = 3441.151, alpha value = 0.00, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sample Adequacy = 0.781

Source: Fieldwork, 2011

