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# Involvement with backpacking: A research on backpackers visiting Istanbul

## Abstract

*The concept of "involvement" has been used to explain individuals' emotional attachment to specific tourism destinations and different segment of consumers in tourism. However, involvement with backpacking among backpackers has not been examined. A survey was conducted in Istanbul, one of the world's largest tourist destinations. Data was collected through a questionnaire during April 2012 with 887 backpackers who stayed in hostels in Istanbul. Factor analysis showed that involvement with backpacking can be examined in four dimensions: attraction, centrality to life style, social bonding, and identity expression and affirmation. Significant differences were also found in involvement with backpacking according to age, self-definition, travel experience and number of information sources used. Our findings demonstrate that Turkey is more preferred by European backpackers at the beginning of their travel career, thus supporting the importance of the Pearce's (1993) Travel Career Ladder in tourism research.*

*Key words: backpackers; backpacking; involvement; Istanbul; Turkey*

## Introduction

Contemporary consumers attach different levels of importance or emotional attachment to the goods, services, and ideas available to them. Involvement is one of the major factors underlying in consumer's buying process and they see some of them as more related with themselves. In this point, involvement is useful for explaining why consumers attach varying degrees of importance to items than others and see some as more relevant to their personal needs. Involvement can be defined as the perceived personal importance and/or interest consumers attach to the acquisition, consumption, and disposition of goods, services, or ideas (Gross & Brown, 2006, p. 1141).

Involvement has been studied in different tourist segments. For example, Gürsoy and Gavcar (2003) studied involvement in a sample of international pleasure travellers; Kouthouris (2009) analyzed involvement among recreational winter skiers; McGhee Yoon and Cardenas (2003) examined involvement of recreational runners in the USA; and Josaim, Smeaton and Clements (1999) investigated involvement levels of students visiting Australia (Gross & Brown, 2006). However, involvement among backpackers, a significant segment of the global travel and tourism industry, has yet to be studied.

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Backpackers can be defined in different ways. For example, Loker-Murphy and Pearce (1995) define backpacker as travellers who want to meet different people during their trips, prefer budget accommodation and stay overnight for an extended period have independently organized flexible itineraries, and enjoy participating in voluntary activities. According to Murphy (2001) backpackers are mostly young travellers, having extended trips/vacations and sometimes working during their trips. Sorensen (2003) describes backpackers as travellers who take multi-destination trips, organize their trips on their own, have flexible trip schedule and stay overnight for long periods.

According to Richards and Wilson's (2004) study, students occupies nearly one third of the backpacker market and Youth Student & Educational Travel Confederation (WYSE, 2013) states that youth and student travellers constitute nearly 20% of the world travel and tourism market. Thus the purposes of this paper are to: (1) understand the understudied phenomenon of backpacker's travel choices; and (2) predict their travel behaviour in the Turkish context. The 2003 ATLAS Backpacker Research Programme's (ATLAS BRP) survey indicated that Turkey was one of the most popular destinations of participants of "Global Nomad" survey (Richards & Wilson, 2004).

Based on data collected from backpackers visiting Istanbul by a survey, the study focuses involvement with backpacking of backpackers. Involvement with backpacking examined in light of Kyle, Absher, David, Hammitt and Jodice's (2007) construction of involvement. Pearce's Travel Career Ladder was also supported by the data, as level of involvement (especially in social bonding dimension) varies according to previous travel experience. The paper starts with a discussion of involvement concept in leisure and tourism context, followed by examination of backpackers' involvement with backpacking within existing literature. Then method and hypotheses of study were explained and findings were presented. The paper ends with discussion of findings in light of Pearce's Travel Career Ladder and suggestions for further research.

## Involvement in leisure and tourism context

Roots of the involvement construct go back to Sherif's and his colleagues' studies (Sherif & Cantril, 1947; Sherif & Hovland, 1961; Sherif, Sherif & Nebergall, 1965; Kyle & Chick, 2004). In their pioneer work Sherif and Cantril (1947, p. 4) stated that ego is consisted of many attitudes, which from infancy on are related to the delimited, differentiated and accumulating "I", "me", and "mine" experiences and these attitudes define and qualify an individual's relative standing to other persons and institutions. In addition ego-attitudes that were considered to be representative of an individual's values, goals, standards or norms (Kyle & Chick, 2004, p. 244). If an individual perceives other persons and institutions in a self related manner, individual's attitudes become personally involved and their interest and importance for those persons and institutions increase.

During the early 1980s involvement was utilized in consumption practices to understand purchasing behaviour (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985, pp. 41-53; Zaichkowsky, 1985, pp. 341-352). In the leisure context involvement can be defined in different ways, for example, in one definition involvement was defined as "an unobservable state of motivation, arousal or interest toward a recreational activity or associated product. It is awaked by a particular stimulus or situation and has drive properties" (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997). But according to Selin and Howard's (1988, p. 237) conceptual paper, involvement

is the state of identification existing between an individual and a recreational activity, at one point in time, characterized by some level of enjoyment and self expression being achieved through the activity. In the tourism industry, involvement is described as "the interest or motivational intensity toward a vacation place with behavioural consequences" (Lehto, O'Leary & Morrison, 2004, p. 805; Kim, 2008, p. 299). In Lehto *et al's* definition involvement is perceived only as motivational intensity towards a destination, but involvement can also be toward a specific mood of travel style or tourism. Selin and Howard (1988) point out that involvement in a specific activity exists only if an individual identifies him/herself through the activity. So, the experience which an individual gains from an activity should be similar to the values and norms of individual with individuals assigning importance to the activity and seeing it related to them.

There have been several attempts to measure involvement in marketing and consumer behaviour literature. Laurent and Kapferer's (1985) Consumer Involvement Profile (CIP) is one of the most widely used instruments by leisure researchers to measure individuals' involvement toward a recreation activity due to the its multi-dimensional structure (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997, p. 246). Laurent and Kapferer's CIP included five dimensions: importance, importance of risk, probability of risk, sign and pleasure. By the end of 1980's, leisure researchers started to use involvement construct in order to explain individual emotional attachment and behavioural loyalty to specific leisure pursuits (Selin & Howard, 1988; McIntre, 1989; McIntre & Pigram, 1992).

McIntyre and Pigram (1992) argued that involvement was comprised of three dimensions: attraction, self-expression and centrality. Attraction refers to the attractiveness of activity with a combination of perceived importance and hedonistic value (Kyle *et al.*, 2004, p. 101). Self-expression refers to the capacity of an activity for self-affirmation (McIntre & Pigram, 1992, p. 7). Centrality refers to the position an activity occupies in an individual's overall life style (Kyle *et al.*, 2004, p. 101). Kyle *et al.* (2004, p. 101) noted that involvement is multi-dimensional and differs by activity product and individual characteristics.

Several studies of leisure have deployed involvement as a scale with three dimensions (Kyle & Chick, 2002; Kyle, Graefe & Manning, 2003; Kyle *et al.*, 2004; Kyle & Mowen, 2005). On the other hand, Funk, Ridinger and Moorman (2004, pp. 35-61) measured involvement in professional sport teams using four dimensions as; attraction, self-expression, centrality to life style and risk. In other studies involvement was measured with five dimensions: attraction, sign, centrality, risk probability and risk consequence (Iwasaki & Havitz, 2004, pp. 45-72). In 2007, Kyle *et al.* developed a "Modified Involvement Scale" in which involvement was comprised of five dimensions: attraction, centrality, social bonding, identity affirmation and identity expression. In this paper we use Kyle *et al.'s* (2007) modified involvement scale because of its currency and applicability to backpackers. Kyle *et al.'s* (2007) modified involvement scale differs from other involvement scales with social bonding, identity affirmation and identity expression dimensions so we now briefly explain these three dimensions.

*Social bonding* refers to involvement in an activity that builds social networks; for example social activity that provides opportunities for individuals to become immersed in a leisure interest with co-participants and also maintain the activity. Kyle *et al.* (2007, p. 403) also stated that social bonding presents social component of centrality.

*Identity affirmation* is the degree to which an activity affirms participants' identities (Kyle *et al.*, 2007, p. 405); for example, an individual who believes participation validates core aspects of his/her identity will become attached more intensely to the activity.

*Identity expression* is the extent to which involvement affirms oneself to the others (Kyle *et al.*, 2007, p. 405); for example, an individual who believes participation conveys key aspects of his/her identity will also become attached more intensely to the activity.

Involvement became a popular research topic among tourism scholars by 2000's, because of its effects on consumers' purchasing behaviour. For example, in tourism Smeaton and Clements (1999) used involvement to examine spring break vacation among college students; Park *et al.* (2002) segmented casino gamblers by involvement profile; McGehee, Yoon and Cardenas (2003) examined involvement of recreational runners; Gürsoy and Gavcar (2003) analyzed European leisure tourists' behaviour; Hwang, Lee and Chen (2005) studied relationships between involvement, place attachment and service satisfaction of tourists visiting Taiwan's national parks; and Gross and Brown (2006) examined the role of involvement in experiences on tourists visiting Australia. Other studies have focused on relationships among motivation, involvement, satisfaction and destination loyalty (Kim, 2008), involvement among recreational skiers (Kouthouris, 2009), and involvement among cycle tourists (Ritchie, Tkaczynski & Faulks, 2010). However, some of these studies only used involvement as a one-dimensional construct (i.e., Josiam, Smeaton & Clements, 1999; McGehee, Yoon & Cardenas, 2003; Kim, 2008). In the light of existing literature, it is clear that involvement is a very important concept in explaining behaviour and decision making process of tourists.

## Backpackers' involvement with backpacking

Academic interest in backpacker tourism has shown a significant growth in recent years (Hannam & Ateljević, 2008, p. 1). Ateljević and Doorne (2004, p. 61) state that backpacking tourism literature emerged in the early 1970's and number of core areas have been developed and explored including motivations, behaviors and decision making process of backpackers. Involvement is an important moderating variable on tourist's decision-making processes (Gürsoy & Gavcar, 2003, p. 907; Hwang *et al.*, 2005, p. 145). As mentioned, involvement has been used in different tourism contexts but there is a dearth of research on how it functions among backpackers. We contend that backpacking requires high level of involvement. For example, backpackers stay longer at destinations than the average tourist; backpacking provides abundant opportunities to socialize; and backpacking occasionally becomes a lifestyle for some travellers (Cohen, 2011). In this paper involvement in backpacking is analyzed via Kyle *et al.*'s (2007) "Modified Involvement Scale" of attraction, centrality, social bonding, identity affirmation and identity confirmation.

We define attraction as a combination of enjoyment gained from backpacking and the importance of backpacking to the backpackers with motivations obviously influencing attraction. If a backpacker is motivated by discovering other cultures and improving his/her knowledge of the world, then backpacking ventures that provide opportunities to do so will be enjoyable and make backpacking an attractive travelling style. Involvement occurs in different forms in backpacker markets. Backpacking provides opportunities to be free, independent, and open-minded (Richards & Wilson, 2004, pp.

35-36), especially for young people, but also for travellers who are seeking self-renewal. Ureily, Yonay and Simchai (2002, p. 535) state that along "backpacking biography" motivations for backpacking can change. Thus it is possible to say that involvement can change over time. For a backpacker in the beginning of his/her backpacking biography, involvement with backpacking can mostly be based on identity expression or self-development opportunities provided by backpacking. But in the following stages of backpacking biography, involvement with backpacking can be mostly based on its social bonding opportunities.

According to Welk (2004), socialization is a fundamental feature of backpacking ideology and backpacker identity. It is clear that social interactions occur both among backpackers and between backpackers and local residents. Dormitory accommodation and meeting other backpackers also facilitate social bonding in the backpacker scene. Especially, backpacker enclaves (the places where backpacking industry well developed and backpacker meet and spend most of their time together) strengthens social bonding among backpackers.

We see identity expression in backpacker markets mainly with a shared "Anti-tourist Backpacker Identity" (Welk, 2004, pp. 86-87); for example, backpackers express their collective identity by using local cafes and public transport. For most of backpackers, backpacking style travel can be a type of consumption through which identity can be expressed. For example in Cohen's (2011) study, high portion of participants (life style backpackers) see back backpacking as a way of life and see backpacking central to their lives and identities.

Elsrud (2001) and Noy (2004) noted identity affirmation in narratives about backpacking experience, namely, backpackers' accounts of their experiences in accordance with a desired self image. Elsrud (2001, p. 598) also stated that sometimes backpackers leave everything behind on a voyage of and they travel to find the self-discovery. Cohen (2011) also noted that backpacking gives a material form to a particular narrative of self-identity. Sorensen (2003, p. 853) showed how backpacking trips can be a rite of passage, a new stage of life. Since such trips are highly self-related this form of backpacking requires high involvement

It is possible to find some explanations why backpacking is so highly involved with the self in Welk's (2004, pp. 77-91) study of anti-tourist identity-building processes. Welk (2004) stated that backpacking becomes a symbolic identity and a lifestyle among backpackers and backpacking experiences lead some changes in self over time. Richard and Wilson's (2004) study showed that participants in the Global Nomad survey saw backpacking as way of finding new friends, becoming free, increasing self-esteem, and improving knowledge and awareness about oneself.

Existing literature shows that due to its characteristics (such as, duration of travel, contribution to self-development and self-identity and socialization opportunities) backpacking should contain high level of involvement than any other types of tourism (for example sea-sun and sun mass tourism). But concept of involvement has not been examined in backpacking context. That situation results in a gap in backpacking tourism literature and blocks a deep understanding of decision-making process of backpackers.

When backpacker market is a subject of discussion, it is impossible say that homogeneity exists in backpacker market. Ureily, Yonay and Simchai (2002), Sorensen (2003) and Cohen (2011), states that backpacker market show a heterogenic structure. Ateljević and Doorne (2004) notes that backpacker is an umbrella concept and contains very different sub-segment of backpackers. For example, there is sub-segment of backpackers who see backpacking as way of life Cohen (2011) calls them as "life style backpackers", while another sub-group of backpacker called as "short-term backpackers" by Sorensen (2003). Owing to backpacker market's heterogeneity, level of involvement with backpacking can differ. For example, in the life style backpacker sub-segment, involvement with backpacking could be high within a comparison with short-term backpacker sub-segment.

## Research hypothesis

Involvement plays a central role in consumers' decision-making process, so we should be able to use it to predict consumer behaviour. Moreover, both, Kyle, Kerstetter and Frank (2002) and Park *et al.* (2002) showed that involvement can be a very useful tool for segmenting consumers. Involvement has been used in several studies in order to explain individual's interest toward a recreational activity or a specific form of tourism. Backpackers constitute an important segment in world tourism market but there is no study examining backpackers' involvement. Therefore the purpose of this paper is to examine the involvement of backpackers visiting Turkey, one of the most popular backpacker destinations in the world (Richard & Wilson, 2004). This paper is the first time involvement has been studied among backpackers.

Havitz and Dimanche (1990) proposed that level of involvement differs according to individual demographics. Siegenthaler and Lam (1992) found that participants between the ages 18-27 have high involvement with sports than elder participants, and Richards and Wilson (2004) showed that when age increases, experience in backpacking rises as well. Richards and Wilson (2004) indicated that the average number of international trips taken by participants under age 30 was 5, while it was 8 among participants above 30 years old. Therefore the following hypotheses were developed.

*Hypothesis 1: Involvement with backpacking differs significantly according to backpacker's age.*

Defining self as a backpacker, a traveller or a tourist effects highly individuals' travel behaviour (Richards & Wilson, 2004, pp. 16-29). It was found in Richards and Wilson's (2004) study that participants defined themselves as backpacker take international trips more frequently than the ones defined selves as traveller nor tourist and they (the ones who defined themselves as backpackers) intend to see different cultures.

*Hypothesis 2: Involvement with backpacking differs significantly according to backpacker's self definition (e.g., backpacker, traveller or a tourist).*

Leisure and tourism literature shows that involvement moderately affects individual's participation frequency (McIntyre & Pigram, 1992; McCarville, Crompton & Sell, 1993) Kyle and Moven (2005) showed that individuals with high involvement profiles participate in recreational activities more frequently than their lowly involved counterparts. We argue the same pattern applies to backpackers.

*Hypothesis 3: Involvement with backpacking differs significantly according to number of international trips taken previously.*

According to Gürsoy and Gavcar (2003), there is a relationship between tourists' information-searching behaviour and tourist's involvement. Laurent and Kapferer (1985, p. 41) stated that "depending on their level of involvement, consumers differ in the extent of their decision process and their search for information". Also, Mittal (1989) found that high level involvement for a particular product leads to extensive pre-choice information search. So, backpackers with high involvement can collect information from both more and different sources about destinations than their counterparts with low involvement.

*Hypothesis 4: Involvement with backpacking differs significantly according to number of data collected information sources before the trip.*

## Methods

### Research questionnaire

A survey was designed to examine involvement of backpackers and data was collected through a questionnaire consistent with existing literature. The questionnaire was comprised of two parts; in the first part there were questions about demographic and travel characteristics of backpackers visiting Istanbul. The questions of the first section (such as; demographics of respondents, self-definition, information sources and travel experience) were derived from Richards and Wilson (2004) and Paris and Teye (2010). The second section contained 15 items in a 5-point Likert type scale (derived from Kyle *et al.*'s "Modified Involvement Scale", 2007) ranging from 1: Strongly disagree to 5: Strongly agree.

### Sample and data collection

Backpackers visited Istanbul during March and April 2012 comprised the population of research. There were a number of reasons Istanbul was selected for data collection; a high number of hostels operating in the city (62); then promotional impact of the city's selection as the culture capital of Europe for 2010; and easy access from European countries.

Sample size was calculated using the formula  $n: (p \cdot q) \cdot Z^2 / e^2$  where n: sample size, p: percentage picking a choice (if p is 0.5, then q is 0.5 and then the variance is maximum), Z: Z value (i.e. 1.96 for  $\alpha$ : 0.05 significance level) and e: error (confidence interval in sample). Sample size was calculated as 384, but we rounded it as 400, because we intended to do the survey with at least 800 backpackers since quota sampling preferred based on gender and age.

Due to the lack of empirical studies and unavailability of statistics about backpackers visiting Istanbul or Turkey, quota sampling -a non-probability sampling technique was preferred. Gender and age were set as quota variables. As mentioned, due to the lack of information about backpackers visiting Turkey, quotas of gender and age were determined with regard to the existing literature. As age variable; less than 30 years old was set 70 % quota (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Haigh, 1995; Loker, 1999; Richards & Wilson, 2004) as gender; 55 % female, 45 % male rate (Loker-Murphy & Pearce, 1995;

Richards & Wilson, 2004; Niggels & Benson, 2008) was set as quota. Table 1 shows the variables used in quota and frequencies we targeted to reach.

**Table 1**  
**Variables used in quota and frequencies targeted**

Gender	Age group 16-29 (70%)	Age group 30+ (30%)	Total
Female (55%)	308	132	440
Male (45%)	252	108	360
Total	560	240	800

The questionnaire was pre-tested with 44 backpackers, between 1 and 7 March 2012. Some revisions were done on the questionnaire according to the pre-test results. Main implementation of the survey was held in April 2012. By the end of April 2012, 887 useable questionnaires were obtained from backpackers visiting Istanbul. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics, factor analysis, independent sample t-test and ANOVA.

## Reliability analysis

Before implementing statistical analysis, 15 items of the involvement scale was subjected to reliability analysis. At first Cronbach's alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as 0.886. At the second phase, the scale was divided into two parts; the first part of the scale's reliability was determined as 0.838 and 0.808 for the second half. At the third stage the sample was divided into two approximately sub-sample; first sub-sample was comprised of 467 respondents and Cronbach's alpha was 0.883. The second sub-sample included 420 respondents and Alpha coefficient was 0.889. Additionally we conducted an item analysis. Item-total correlations varied from 0.441 to 0.639 and multiple R<sup>2</sup> varied from 0.290 to 0.616. All these provide evident for the reliability of the scale, which means it has a higher reliability. Lower limit of Cronbach's alpha is 0.600 or 0.700 (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010, p. 92).

## Results

Demographics of the respondents are presented in Table 2. Findings indicate that nearly 57% were female and 43% male. Backpackers under the age of 30 comprise 70% of respondents as coherent with quotas. 78% of respondents are single and 77% of respondents have at least bachelor degree. Also findings about income and employment status, 60% of respondents have monthly income 2000 US dollars, nearly one third of respondents are students and 10% of respondents are unemployed.



Table 2  
Demographics of respondents

Demographics	F	%	Demographics	F	%
<b>Age group (n: 881)</b>			<b>Gender (n: 857)</b>		
Between 16-24	321	36.4	Female	487	56.8
Between 25-29	311	35.3	Male	370	43.2
Between 30-34	145	16.5	<b>Education level (n: 860)</b>		
35 and above	104	11.8	Primary school	4	0.5
<b>Marital status (n: 846)</b>			Secondary school	131	15.2
Married	180	21.3	Vocational school	31	3.6
Single	666	78.7	High school	26	3.0
<b>Education level (n: 860)</b>			Bachelor	337	39.2
Primary school	4	0.5	Master	304	35.3
Secondary school	131	15.2	Doctorate	27	3.1
Vocational school	31	3.6	<b>Monthly income (n: 475)</b>		
High school	26	3.0	Under 1000 Dollars	156	32.8
Bachelor	337	39.2	Between 1001-2000 Dollars	129	27.2
Master	304	35.3	Between 2001-3000 Dollars	84	17.7
Doctorate	27	3.1	Between 3001-4000 Dollars	33	6.9
<b>Nationality (n: 812) [top 5]</b>			Between 4001- 5000 Dollars	28	5.9
German	157	19.31	5001 Dollars and above	45	9.5
Australian	105	12.91	<b>Employment condition (n: 853)</b>		
American	59	7.25	Student	279	32.7
French	77	9.48	Unemployed	80	9.4
New Zealander	38	4.67	Employed	494	57.9

Some of travel related characteristic of respondents are presented in Table 3. Nearly 60% of respondents defined themselves as backpackers or travelers. Fifty-six percent took 5 and above international trips in the last three years. 83% use less than four information sources before their trips. When we examine type of information sources used by respondents, internet (55%), travel guides (25%) and books (17%) are the three most frequently used information sources.

Table 3  
Some travel related characteristics of respondents

	F	%
<b>Defining self (N: 876)</b>		
Backpacker	187	21.3
Tourist	364	41.5
Traveller	325	37.1

**Table 3 Continued**

	F	%
<b>Number international trips taken in last 3 years (N: 849)</b>		
1-2 Trips	133	15.6
3-4 Trips	230	27.0
5-6 Trips	224	26.3
7 Trips and above	262	30.8
<b>Number of information sources used before trip (N: 859)</b>		
1 Information source	253	29.4
2 Information sources	247	28.7
3 Information sources	207	24.0
4 and above Information sources	152	17.6

Factor analysis was applied to 15 item-involvement scale. It has been decided to choose the factors with eigen-values greater than 1, to use varimax rotation, to consider factor loadings greater than 0.500 and to prefer variables with communalities greater than 0.500 (Hair *et al.*, 2010, p. 104). Communality of 15 items was acceptable (ranged from 0.509 to 0.787). Then 15 items were taken into factor analysis. Factor analysis explained 64.9% of variance that is higher than 60% which was accepted as satisfactory explained variance percentage (Hair *et al.*, 2010, p. 108) and the analysis yielded four factors. When loading of each items to the factors examined it was found that two items of scale had cross-loading problems. Namely, the item "When I backpack, I can really be myself" loaded to first and second together (it had both 0.444 loading score). The second item with cross loading problem was "I enjoy discussing backpacking experiences with my friends", it loaded to second factor with 0.544 and 0.425 to the fourth factor. So that it was decided to reject those two items and run factor analysis again with the second analysis applied to 13 items.

This also yielded four factors but explained 68.4% of variance. First factor explained 20% of variance and was consist of 5 items. Items such as "You can tell a lot about a person by seeing them backpacking" (with 0.757 loading score) and "Backpacking says a lot about who I am" (with 0.757 loading score) were highly loaded to the first factor. When other three item loaded to the factor were examined all items were related with the identity expression and identity affirmation dimensions of Kyle *et al.*'s (2007) involvement scale so this factor was named "Identity Expression and Affirmation".

The second factor explained 18% of variance and was consisted of 3 items those referring centrality to lifestyle of backpacking such "Backpacking occupies a central role in my life" (with 0.839 loading score) and "I find a lot of my life organized around backpacking" (with 0.799 loading score). Therefore second factor was named as "centrality to lifestyle".

The third factor was comprised of 3 items and explained 17.8% of variance. Items in this dimension were related to enjoyment gained from backpacking and importance given to backpacking such as; "Backpacking is one of the most enjoyable things to do" (with 0.880 loading score) and "Backpacking is very important to me" (with 0.818 loading score) that third factor named as "attraction". The fourth factor was named "social bonding". It is possible to say that 2 items in the fourth factor is capture socializing aspects of backpacking.

**Table 4**  
**Factor analysis of backpackers' involvement**

Factors	Communi- nality	Loadings	Eigen Values	Variance %	Mean	Cronbach's Alpha
<b>1. Identity expression and affirmation (5 Items)</b>						
You can tell a lot about a person by seeing them backpacking	0.600	0.757	2.605	20.04	3.158	0.795
Backpacking says a lot about who I am	0.706	0.743				
When I backpack, others see me the way I want them to see me	0.620	0.734				
When I am backpacking, I don't have to be concerned with the way I look	0.544	0.693				
I identify with the people and image associated with backpacking	0.520	0.494				
<b>2. Centrality to lifestyle (3 Items)</b>						
Backpacking occupies a central role in my life	0.794	0.839	2.352	18.09	2.983	0.788
I find a lot of my life organized around backpacking	0.735	0.799				
To change my preference from backpacking to another travel style would require a major rethink	0.525	0.646				
<b>3. Attraction (3 Items)</b>						
Backpacking is one of the most enjoyable things to do	0.810	0.880	2.326	17.89	3.566	0.853
Backpacking is very important to me	0.793	0.818				
Backpacking is one of the most satisfying things I do	0.753	0.770				
<b>4. Social bonding (2 Items)</b>						
Backpacking provides me with an opportunity to be with friends	0.762	0.845	1.609	12.37	3.267	0.685
Most of my friends are in some way connected with backpacking	0.704	0.799				

Varimax Rotated. Principal Component Analysis; Total Explained Variance: % 68.409  
 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sample adequacy: % 87.0; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity:  $X^2$ : 46248.220. s.d.: 78.  $p < 0.001$ ;  
 Grand Mean: 3.228; Cronbach's Alpha for whole scale: 0.850;  
 Response categories: 1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4. Agree; 5. Strongly Agree

Differences in the dimensions of involvement due to age, self-definition, number of international trips taken in the last three years and number of information sources used before trip were tested with ANOVA using Scheffe's post hoc test. The next four tables show only the dimensions in which significant differences occur among the groups in question.

Table 5 presents results of ANOVA applied in order to find out whether involvement differs according to age. The results indicate a significant difference only in social bonding dimension of involvement ( $F$ : 5.086;  $p < 0.05$ ). Scheffe's test showed that significant difference occurred between respondents in the 25-29, 35 years and above age groups. Mean score of respondents between 25-29 years old (3.37) demonstrates that social bonding was weighted higher in backpacking involvement than in respondents 35 and older (3.01). Thus younger backpackers see backpacking more related with themselves because of socialization opportunities. According to this finding, hypothesis 1 is partially supported.

**Table 5**  
**Comparison of involvement dimensions based on age groups**

Dimension of involvement	Groups	N	Mean	St. deviation	F value	Difference
Social bonding	A Ages between 16-24	321	3.25	0.83	5.086*	B>D
	B Ages between 25-29	311	3.37	0.81		
	C Ages between 30-34	145	3.24	0.79		
	D 35 years old and above	104	3.01	0.81		

1.  $\alpha=0.05$ ; \* $p<0.05$

2. Response categories: 1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4. Agree; 5. Strongly Agree

Significant differences in dimensions of involvement due to self-definition were also examined with ANOVA. Significant differences were recorded in all dimensions of involvement with backpacking. In identity dimension (F: 12.450;  $p<0.05$ ) post hoc test and mean score of groups indicated that participants defining themselves as backpackers (3.39) identify themselves with backpacking more than participants defined themselves as travellers (3.16) and tourists (3.03). In the social bonding dimension (F: 29.785;  $p<0.05$ ). We see similar results as participants defining themselves as backpacker (3.57), tied socially with backpacking more than participants defining themselves as travellers (3.21) and tourists (3.16). The findings also showed that in attraction dimension (F: 11.580;  $p<0.05$ ) with participants defining themselves as backpackers (3.95) see backpacking attractive more than participants seeing themselves as travellers (3.60) and tourists (3.33). A similar situation existed in the centrality dimension (F: 19.358;  $p<0.05$ ), with backpackers (3.32) believing that backpacking is closer to their lifestyle than their traveller (3.02) and tourist (2.77) counterparts. It is clear from these results hypothesis 2 was supported.

**Table 6**  
**Comparison of involvement dimensions based on defining self**

Dimension of involvement	Groups	N	Mean	St. deviation	F value	Difference
Identity expression and affirmation	A Backpacker	187	3.39	0.67	12.450*	A>B and C
	B Tourist	364	3.03	0.60		
	C Traveller	325	3.16	0.71		
Centrality to life style	A Backpacker	187	3.32	0.84	19.358*	A>B and C C>B
	B Tourist	364	2.77	0.75		
	C Traveller	325	3.02	0.83		
Attraction	A Backpacker	187	3.95	0.69	11.580*	A>B and C C>B
	B Tourist	364	3.33	0.71		
	C Traveller	325	3.60	0.77		
Social bonding	A Backpacker	187	3.57	0.83	29.785*	A>B and C
	B Tourist	364	3.16	0.80		
	C Traveller	325	3.21	0.79		

1.  $\alpha=0.05$ ; \* $p<0.05$

2. Response categories: 1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4. Agree; 5. Strongly Agree

In order to test third hypothesis of study we employed ANOVA again. Significant difference was detected only in social bonding dimension (F: 3.211;  $p<0.05$ ) of involvement with backpacking.

Scheffe's post hoc test indicated that significant difference existed between the participants took 1-2 international trips in last three years (3.09) and the ones took 7 and above international trips (3.35). These results refer that the participants took more international trips tied socially with backpacking more than their counterparts had low number of international trips. There for it is possible to say that third hypothesis of research was partially supported.

**Table 7**  
**Comparison of involvement dimensions based on international trips taken previously**

Dimension of involvement	Groups	N	Mean	St. deviation	F value	Difference
Social bonding	A 1-2 Trips	133	3.09	0.86	3.211*	D>A
	B 3-4 Trips	230	3.28	0.83		
	C 5-6 Trips	224	3.25	0.82		
	D 7 Trips and above	262	3.35	0.76		

1.  $\alpha=0.05$ ; \* $p<0.05$

2. Response categories: 1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4. Agree; 5. Strongly Agree

Significant difference in dimensions of involvement due to number of information sources were also tested by ANOVA. A significant difference was found only in the attraction dimension (F: 3.628;  $p<0.05$ ). A post hoc test indicated that significant difference existed between respondents who used 1 information source (3.46) before trip and those who used 4 and above (3.72). According to the mean score of these groups it is possible to say that backpackers who see backpacking more attractive used more information source before their trips. This partially support for fourth hypothesis.

**Table 8**  
**Comparison of involvement dimensions based on number of information sources used before trip**

Dimension of involvement	Groups	N	Mean	St. deviation	F value	Difference
Attraction	A 1 Information source	253	3.46	0.77	3.628*	D>A
	B 2 Information sources	247	3.55	0.76		
	C 3 Information sources	207	3.60	0.76		
	D 4 Information sources and above	152	3.72	0.77		

1.  $\alpha=0.05$ ; \* $p<0.05$

2. Response categories: 1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4. Agree; 5. Strongly Agree

## Discussion and conclusions

Involvement plays a very crucial role in consumers' decision-making process. It is possible to say that involvement refers individual's emotional attachment to people, institutions and activities. The concept of involvement has been employed in different traveller segments but not in the backpacker sector. In this paper, involvement was used to analyse backpackers' emotional attachment to backpacking. For this purpose a survey was designed and implemented on backpackers visiting Istanbul. By end of the data collection process, 887 usable questionnaires were reached.

Kyle *et al.*'s (2007) modified involvement scale was used to measure involvement with backpacking of backpackers visiting Istanbul. According to Kyle *et al.* (2007) involvement consists of 15 items and five dimensions: attraction, centrality to life style, social bonding, identity affirmation and identity expression dimensions. However, this scale yielded different results in our backpacker sample. The scale produced four dimensions; attraction, centrality to life style, social bonding and identity expression and affirmation. This indicates that involvement in backpacking can be examined in four headings. Gaining four dimensions from Kyle *et al.*'s (2007) involvement scale consists of five dimensions can be explained through backpacker identity settlement among participants of the survey. Nearly, 60 per cent of participants come from European countries. Richards and Wilson's (2004) "Global Nomad" survey indicated that trips taken in Europe by European backpackers can be seen as a precursor to gaining experience for a travel career with more remote and exotic destinations. Therefore, it is possible to say that backpacker identity has not fully settled down among participants so that two dimensions related with identity (identity affirmation and identity expression) of Kyle *et al.*'s (2007) involvement scale produced only one single factor.

Maoz and Bekerman (2010) stress the importance of listening how the tourists describe themselves, and also Richards and Wilson (2004) found significant difference in travel habits and motivations according to self-definition of participants (such as, traveller, tourist or backpacker). To examine if significant differences exists according how participants define themselves. Firstly, participants were asked how they define themselves. Findings showed that participants describing themselves as backpackers were more emotionally attached to backpacking than those defining themselves as tourists. It is an expected result that participants who define themselves as backpacker more emotionally attach themselves to backpacking. Because, it is possible to say that backpacker identity is settled down participants who define themselves as backpacker, so they attach themselves to backpacking more emotionally.

Significant differences were found according to participants' age, and travel experience. Younger and experienced participants also enjoyed backpacking because of social reasons. This can be explained by younger participants viewing backpacking as a way of making new friends and experienced ones seeing it as a way of maintaining social relationships. Social interaction is an important element of backpacking experience. Dormitory type accommodation in backpacker enclaves, sitting cafes and restaurants and using local transportation offer an atmosphere to backpacker to socialize.

Level of involvement can directly affect individual's information search behaviour (Mittal, 1989). A highly involved consumer tries to gain more information about the product or service that he/she wants to buy. So they can use different information sources and number information sources they use rises up. In this study it was found that participants who see backpacking as attractive mode of travel used more varied information sources.

Travel Career Approach is a dynamic concept arguing that tourists have identifiable stage in their holiday taking. The state of one's travel career, like a career at work, is influenced by previous travel experiences and life stages, or contingency factors (Pearce, 2005, p. 55). According to this approach traveller will exhibit changing behavioural patterns over their life stages and/or with travel experience. In the Backpacking tourism literature, Paris and Teye's study (2010) confirms that backpacking motivations can be explained by Pearce's Travel Career Approach.

Our findings show that Pearce's Travel Career Approach is applicable to involvement with backpacking. Grand mean score of involvement scale and the determined significant differences in dimensions of involvement according to travel experience gives empirical support Pearce's Travel Career Approach. It was found that grand mean score of involvement in the backpacking scale is 3,228 (out of 5), meaning that involvement with backpacking by participants was not high; in other words, they did not attach themselves intensely with backpacking. This can be explained in relation to the fact that Turkey is a close destination for young Europeans so it is likely to be the most preferred at the beginning of backpacking travel career. The more travel experience they gain, the more distant destination they travel. In this study one variable (number of international trips taken in last three years) was used to measure travel experience of participants. More experienced backpackers attached themselves more socially to backpacking. It is possible to say that when the frequency of their international trip rises, backpackers can start new friendships and meet new people so that they attach more importance to backpacking than their less experienced counterparts.

This study can provide some valuable information for tourism establishments' managers. The study presents a brief profile of backpackers visiting to Istanbul. Study also gives some clues for promotion messages of tourism establishments or destination; for example if promotion messages target backpackers between 25-29 age group, they should contain socialization opportunities provided by backpacking.

The findings of the study will hopefully lead to further research on involvement with backpacking. But this study has some limitations. The data was collected in Istanbul where is close to backpacker sending European countries. Further researches should be conducted in more distant destinations (such as: Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Vietnam, and India) to Europe in order to examine involvement construct on experienced travellers and backpackers sample. We collected data for only for a month in Istanbul so future research should be conducted over a longer period in order to compare differences across high and low seasons. The dimensions of involvement with backpacking presented in this study also need to be validated by studies based on different destinations.

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