

Drivers of Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction in Camping Tourism: A Case Study from Croatia

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Abstract : Camping tourism is recognized as a growing segment of the broader tourism industry, currently evolving from an inexpensive, temporary sojourn in a rural environment into a highly fragmented niche tourism sector. The trends among public-managed campgrounds seem to be moving away from rustic campgrounds that provide only a tent pad and a fire ring to more developed facilities that offer a range of different amenities, where campers still search for unique experiences that go above the opportunity to experience nature and social interaction. In addition, while camping styles and options changed significantly over the last years, coastal camping in particular became valorized as is it regarded with a heightened sense of nostalgia. Alongside this growing interest in the camping tourism, a demand for quality servicing infrastructure emerged in order to satisfy the wide variety of needs, wants, and expectations of an increasingly demanding traveling public. However, camping activity in general and quality of camping experience and campers' satisfaction in particular remain an under-researched area of the tourism and consumption behavior literature. In this line, very few studies addressed the issue of quality product/service provision in satisfying nature based tourists and in driving their future behavior with respect to potential re-visitation and recommendation intention. The present study thus aims to investigate the drivers of positive and negative campsite experience using the case of Croatia. Due to the well-preserved nature and indented coastline, camping tourism has a long tradition in Croatia and represents one of the most important and most developed tourism products. During the last decade the number of tourist overnights in Croatian camps has increased by 26% amounting to 16.5 million in 2014. Moreover, according to Eurostat the market share of campsites in the EU is around 14%, indicating that the market share of Croatian campsites is almost double large compared to the EU average. Currently, there are a total of 250 camps in Croatia with approximately 75.8 thousands accommodation units. It is further noteworthy that Croatian camps have higher average occupancy rates and a higher average length of stay as compared to the national average of all types of accommodation. In order to explore the main drivers of positive and negative campsite experiences, this study uses principal components analysis (PCA) and an impact-asymmetry analysis (IAA). Using the PCA, first the main dimensions of the campsite experience are extracted in an exploratory manner. Using the IAA, the extracted factors are investigated for their potentials to create customer delight and/or frustration. The results provide valuable insight to both researchers and practitioners regarding the understanding of campsite satisfaction.

Keywords : Camping tourism, campsite, impact-asymmetry analysis, satisfaction

Conference Title : ICHTMM 2015 : International Conference on Hospitality, Tourism Marketing and Management

Conference Location : Bangkok, Thailand

Conference Dates : December 17-18, 2015