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## CAMPING TOURISM EXPERIENCE, SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY FROM CROATIA

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### **Abstract**

*Purpose* – The purpose of this paper is to determine the impact of different dimensions of the camping tourism experience on satisfaction and loyalty. To achieve the purpose of this research, it was necessary to adjust and validate the measurement scale of the tourism experience in campsites. Furthermore, the goal was to investigate the relationship between camping tourists' satisfaction and their loyalty to the camp.

*Methodology* – An analysis of the recent literature on the topic of tourism experience and camping tourism was performed. Empirical research was conducted on a convenience sample of 143 visitors to campsites. Descriptive and multivariate statistics were used in the data analysis. Reliability analysis and exploratory factor analysis were applied. Hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis. Data analysis was performed using the software package IBM SPSS Statistic Version 26.

*Findings* – The results of empirical research show that of the four extracted dimensions of the camping tourism experience, three have a positive and significant impact on tourist satisfaction and loyalty. These are education, escapism and aesthetics, while entertainment has no significant impact.

*Contribution* – This research represents a starting point for further research about the camping tourism experience. The scale for measuring the camping tourism experience was validated and can be used in further research. Also, the results can help managers to develop marketing strategies and tactics, as the determinants of the tourism experience of camping tourists have been established.

**Keywords:** camping tourism, tourism experience, satisfaction, loyalty, Croatia

### **INTRODUCTION**

Camping tourism has been recognised as a developing segment of the tourism industry (O'Neill et al. 2010; Mikulić et al. 2017). It has been defined as a form of special interest nature-based tourism (Mikulić et al. 2017). Camping was a major research subject in leisure studies in the 1960s and 1970s (Garst et al. 2010). With new trends emerging, camping demand has since changed considerably, from conventional campsites with only a tent and a campfire to modern campsites providing a variety of sophisticated amenities for the convenience of campers. Today, campers want a unique experience which exceeds the experience of nature and social interaction (Garst et al. 2010; Mikulić et al. 2017). The question arises of how to improve the tourism experience and make camping tourists satisfied and loyal visitors.

In Europe, camping tourism began gaining popularity in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Given the mass nature of camping tourism, it became crucial for the development of tourism in Europe (Cvelić Bonifačić and Milohnić 2014). At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Mediterranean, as a camping destination for Europeans, is in its maturity phase and is gradually entering the saturation and decline phase of its life cycle (Cegur Radović 2021). “Silver tourism” has become a recent trend in camping, with a growing number of senior tourists over the age of 65 staying in campsites (Cegur Radović 2021). The differentiation strategy was a way out of the maturity phase of camping tourism, through various forms of innovations from mobile homes, bungalows, glamping tents to the modern caravans.

As in many other countries, camping tourism in Croatia is in its mature phase and a new experience has to be created to attract tourists to a given tourist destination. Croatia’s camping potential lies in satisfied and loyal tourists, natural attractions, and quality accommodation. The social and sociological significance of camping tourism, together with the beauty of the environment, is especially highlighted. A number of studies have been conducted, regarding, for example, booking in Croatian campsites, duration of stay, average number of tourists per plot, and the habits and attitudes of camping tourists during pre-season and post-season (Cvelić Bonifačić et al. 2017; Mikulić et al. 2017; Rantala and Varley 2019; Van Heerden 2020). Nevertheless, this still remains a fairly under-researched area. There is also growing interest in the development of camping tourism in continental Croatia and in the development of glamping. No research has been conducted in Croatia dealing with the tourism experience in campsites, however.

The tourism experience is a complex and very personal construct (Urry 1990, Neuhofer et al. 2013). It is regarded a personal phenomenon with an extremely emotional meaning gained through product and services use (Cohen, 1979; Holbrook and Hirshman 1982; Neuhofer et al. 2013). Larsen (2007) points to the tourism experience as kind of an accumulated psychological phenomenon which includes pre-travel expectations, perceptions during the travel and post-travel memories (Sheng and Chen 2013). A number of studies have been conducted on the tourism experience in various areas. To the best of the authors knowledge, however, there is still insufficient research on the tourism experience in campsites. In fact, despite its popularity, camping, as a specific type of tourism, has been overlooked in scientific research in tourism and hospitality (Brooker and Joppe 2013; Gračan and Birin 2013; Andrey et al. 2014; Milohnić and Cvelić Bonifačić 2015; Criddle 2016; Brochado et al. 2016; Cvelić Bonifačić et al. 2017; Mikulić et al. 2017; Lopes and Brandão 2018; Rantala and Varley 2019; Van Heerden 2020). In recent years, however, more attention is being paid to this type of tourism.

Previous studies have resulted in findings on the experiential dimensions of entertainment, aesthetics, education and escapism (Pine and Gilmore 1998). However, there is little research on the influence of experiential dimensions on the satisfaction and loyalty of camping tourists. To fill this gap, the purpose of this paper was to investigate the theoretical background and provide empirical evidence for the relationship between the dimensions of the tourism experience, and the satisfaction and loyalty of camping tourists. In accordance with the purpose of this research, specific goals have been set: (1) adapt and validate the measurement scale of the tourism experience in the context of camping tourism, (2) confirm the influence of certain dimensions of the tourism

experience construct on the satisfaction of camping tourists, and (3) confirm the relationship between tourists' satisfaction and their loyalty.

The paper consists of five chapters. The introductory part, explaining the purpose and objectives of the research, is followed by a description of the basic concepts used in the paper, a description of the methodology, and the results of the empirical research. Discussion and conclusions of the research are given at the end of the paper.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1. Characteristics of camping tourism**

Camping tourism is a form of nature-based special-interest tourism (Lee, 2020). It is one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism industry (O'Neill et al., 2010; Mikulić et al., 2017; Lee, 2020) and is changing significantly (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2020), but despite this it remains insufficiently researched by scientists. Camping tourists are ecologically responsible, they stay at a campsite and enjoy an active vacation that is characterized by the flexible, temporary and mobile nature of accommodation facilities, such as tents, campers and mobile houses, and by an inseparable connection with the natural surroundings (Blichfeldt and Mikkelsen 2015; Lee 2020). Brooker and Joppe (2014) define camping as a highly fragmented niche of the tourism sector. Camping tourism is seen as an activity which includes sleeping (one night minimum) in a recreational vehicle, camper, mobile house or some other type of temporary accommodation which substitutes the comfort of one's home (Brooker and Joppe 2014; Rogerson and Rogerson 2020). Camping has recently become more of a life-style, reflecting freedom, enjoyment in nature, socializing with friends, relatives and acquaintances, without sacrificing the comfort of the home. Mobile homes have started a revolution as a new type of camp accommodation, and they have brought about the transformation of camping into glamping (Milohnić et al. 2019). The results of a study conducted by Vrtođušić Hrgović et al. (2018) show that glamping accommodation is mainly considered to be a treehouse or some other unusual form of accommodation, and comfortable tents. Travelling for camping and the camping industry itself are a strong factor of the European economy. In Croatia, mobile homes of innovative design have become a new tourism product in campsites, a product closely linked to innovations and glamping accommodation.

### **2.1. Tourism Experience**

Experiences are subjective, quite personal and intangible phenomena (O'Dell and Billing 2005) which are difficult to define (Coelho et al. 2018). The word "experience" denotes all types of things a person has achieved, regardless of their mental, emotional or other importance (Aho 2001). Some twenty years ago, Pine and Gilmore (1998) were the first to write about the experience economy. The term "consumer experience" related to providing excellent customer service (Pine and Gilmore 2013). Additional value is created by designing an experience, and the experience has greater value for the customer compared with the product or the service.

In the tourism and hospitality sector, selling services no longer guarantees business success. It is necessary to gain a competitive advantage by creating and selling a fun unforgettable experience with added value (Pine and Gilmore 2002; Huang et al. 2016). The tourism experience plays a key role in tourism and leisure (Lončarić et al. 2018) and results from an interactive, intrapersonal communication between the experience provider and the tourist (da Costa Mendes et al. 2010, Lončarić et al. 2019). The tourism experience is defined as an interaction between the tourist and the destination; the tourists are actors, and the destination is the stage (Stamboulis and Skayannis 2003). It can be concluded that tourism experience is quite a personal phenomenon, consisting of different dimensions resulting from the interaction between the tourist and the destination.

In addition to the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore 1998) and experience marketing (Schmitt 1999), the possibility to conceptualize and apply the term “experience” in various areas has been the subject of many studies (Jensen et al. 2015). Over the past twenty years, research related to the tourism experience has focused on defining the tourism experience (Palmer 2005; Trauer and Ryan 2005; Larsen 2007), the dimensions of the tourism experience (Pine and Gilmore 1998; Uriely et al. 2002; White and White 2004, Ali et al. 2016) and the conceptual models of the tourism experience (Cohen, 2004; O'Dell, 2007; Cutler and Carmichael, 2010; Chang et al. 2014; Prebensen, 2014; Lee et al. 2015, 2015a,b, 2016, 2017, 2019; Tan 2017; Xu 2018; Lin and Lee 2019; Agapito 2020; Suhartanto et al. 2020; Zhang and Walsh 2020). The work of Pine and Gilmore was followed by other studies focused on the experience concept in the field of tourism (Oh et al. 2007; Hosany and Witham 2010; Mehmetoglu and Engen 2011; Lee et al. 2015, Lin and Lee 2019).

## **2.2. Satisfaction and loyalty**

Customer experience has been defined as a psychological state occurring after the consumption of a product or services (Huang et al., 2016). Satisfaction in tourism has been defined as a function of pre-travel expectation and post-travel experience (Chen and Chen 2010). It is the result of an emotional reaction to a provided service (Havlena and Holbrook 1986; Russel 1980; Brunner-Sperdin 2012). Three categories of tourism satisfaction have been defined: satisfaction with service and experience during the travel, satisfaction with the destination, and satisfaction with the tourism experience (Chan et al. 2015). Many studies have concluded that a tourism experience precedes satisfaction (Triantafillidou and Petala 2015). The satisfaction of tourists is positively related to the quality of the tourism experience (Tribe and Snaith 1998; Lee and Chang 2012) and has a crucial impact on loyalty (Chen and Chen 2010; Osman and Sentosa 2013; Kastenholz et al. 2018; Gohary et al. 2020; Suhartanto et al. 2020). Tourist satisfaction is a guarantee of the destination's long-term sustainability (Gidey and Sharma 2017; Gebreegziabher and Kumar 2019).

Satisfaction is closely linked to customer loyalty. Copeland (1923) was the first to define customer loyalty and since then more than 200 definitions of loyalty have been coined (Zhang and Walsh 2020). In the past three decades, the concept of customer loyalty has

started to be used in tourism also (Mazanec 2000; Jang and Feng 2007, Zhang and Walsh 2020). The loyalty of tourists to a destination is an important factor for the destination in gaining a competitive advantage (Suhartanto et al. 2020). The tourism literature clearly indicates that destination loyalty is an imperative factor in the development of the tourism industry (Zhang et al. 2014; Sirakaya-Turk et al. 2015; Suhartanto et al. 2015; 97). The fast expansion of social networks encourages tourists to increasingly share their experiences and look for tourism information online. The three variables used for measuring tourist loyalty are: revisit, positive word-of-mouth, and recommendations (Moise et al. 2018; Zhang and Walsh 2020). It can be concluded that tourists who are satisfied with a tourist destination will most likely recommend it to others and become loyal to the destination, visiting it for many years after. There is a strong link between a tourism experience and tourists' satisfaction with and loyalty to a certain destination. To provide a complete tourism experience in campsites, it is necessary to ensure a satisfactory stay for camping tourists, which will influence their loyalty to the camp. Hardy et al. (2005) proved that the tourists' level of satisfaction with a campsite affects their loyalty to the campsite.

### 2.3. Research hypotheses

Pine and Gilmore (1999) operationalized the tourism experience through four unique dimensions: aesthetics, education, entertainment and escapism. Schmitt (1999, 2011) divided the tourism experience into five experiential modules: sense, feel, think, act and relate. Cutler and Carmichael (2010) suggested that the tourism experience consists of the following dimensions: knowledge, perception, emotions, memories and self-achievement (Chiu and Cho 2020). Xu et al. (2018) used two dimensions of the tourism experience: the experience of nature and environment, and the experience of managing facilities in eco-tourism. Most authors have accepted Pine and Gilmore's dimensions of the tourism experience (Schmitt 1999; Oh, 2007; Mehmetoglu and Eugen 2011; Tan 2017; Ali et al. 2016; Lee et al. 2015, 2015a,b, 2016, 2019). The dimensions of the tourism experience differ from author to author also depending on the area of the study. Based on the above, a study hypothesis can be proposed: *H1: The tourism experience of camping tourists is a multi-dimensional construct.*

Tourism studies have proven that the experience of individuals affects their attitude, satisfaction, loyalty and behavioral intentions (Chang 2018; Hwang and Han 2018; Lin and Lee 2019). The most important experience is the one happening on-site, which has a positive effect on the tourists' satisfaction and loyalty (Hosany and Witham 2010, Lee and Chang 2012; Lee et al. 2015) as well as on their behavior in a destination (Cetin and Bilgihan 2016). The tourists' positive experience in utilizing destination services and other tourist resources could foster repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth to friends and relatives (Bramwell 1998; Oliver 1999; Kozak and Rimmington 2000; Yoon and Uysal 2005; Kim et al. 2010; Song et al. 2012; Agyeiwaah et al. 2016; Agyeiwaah et al. 2018). The four dimensions of tourism experience influence tourists' emotions which develop tourist satisfaction (Ali et al. 2016). Based on the above, the following research hypothesis can be proposed: *H2: There is a positive relationship between the dimensions of the tourism experience and the satisfaction of a camping tourist.*

One of the dimensions of a tourism experience is education, which appears when an individual learns new terminology during certain activities (Pine and Gilmore 1999). The experience of education in tourism is acquired when tourists gain additional know-how, for example, by taking educational workshops where a tourist participates more actively than passively (Tan 2017). The experience of education is seen as active tourist participation in a certain destination (Oh et al. 2007). The tourists' active participation in education increases their satisfaction and loyalty to a certain destination. Based on the results of correlation analysis, a study on the dimensions of tourism experience in rural tourism proves that aesthetics and education boost high levels of satisfaction and excitement in rural tourists (Kastenholz et al. 2017). Also, the results of a study involving rock concert visitors prove that education is an important dimension of the tourism experience for visitor satisfaction (Kübra and Kerem 2020). In view of the above, the following hypothesis can be proposed: *H2a: There is a positive relationship between education and the satisfaction of a camping tourist.*

Escapism, as a dimension of the tourism experience, implies active tourist participation in a given destination (Oh et al. 2007). It reflects to what extent tourists immerse themselves in the natural environment and disturb the psychological natural environment (Hosany and Witham 2010). Escapism is one of the dimensions of a tourism experience, which has a positive effect on the satisfaction of a festival visitor (Mehmetoglu and Engen 2011), and on satisfaction with an experience in nature (Sotiriadis 2017). Taking into account the above mentioned, the following hypothesis can be proposed *H2b: There is a positive relationship between escapism and the satisfaction of camping tourists.*

Aesthetics includes the way tourists immerse themselves in the natural environment and interpret the physical surrounding based on nature (Hosany and Witham, 2010). The aesthetic experience is achieved when tourists enjoy and passively appreciate that they are staying in a destination (Oh et al. 2007; Tan 2017). Aesthetics in rural tourism is highlighted as an area with the most features, and together with the education dimension, has the highest correlation level with tourist satisfaction (Kastenholz et al. 2017). The results of a study on the relationship between aesthetics and satisfaction with a rock concert show that the aesthetic experiences of a concert visitor are transformed into the visitor's satisfaction with the concert, thus proving that aesthetics is a very dominant dimension of a tourism experience (Kübra and Kerem 2020). Furthermore, a study conducted in an art museum in Italy also suggests the dominance of aesthetics (Vesci et al. 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis can be proposed *H2c: There is a positive relationship between aesthetics and the satisfaction of a camping tourist.*

The experience of entertainment is achieved when tourists passively observe the activities taking place in a destination. Their relationship to an event is more of absorption than active participation (Tan 2017). The tourist who passively participates in the activities of a destination does not influence the activities of the destination directly, whereas an active participant personally influences the event which becomes a part of his or her experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). The findings of a study on the visitors of a rock concert prove that entertainment is a tourism experience dimension that is important for the visitors' satisfaction (Kübra and Kerem 2020). A study by Ali et al. (2016) also indicates that entertainment is the main determinant of customer emotions which develop tourist satisfaction in Malaysian resort hotels. Therefore, the following

hypothesis can be proposed *H2d: There is a positive relationship between entertainment and the satisfaction of a camping tourist.*

Tourist satisfaction is considered to affect a tourist's behavioural intention (Costa Mendez et al. 2010, Lončarić et al. 2018). In fact, when customers remember their past positive experience of an event or a destination, it is probable they will spread positive word-of-mouth and continue revisiting that event or destination as a sign of loyalty (Thomsen and Hansen 2009; Manthiou 2016). Therefore, if tourists are satisfied, their intent will be to revisit the destination in the future (Kozak and Rimmington 2000; Hui et al. 2007; Lončarić et al. 2018; Hutchinson et al. 2009; Kim et al. 2015). A satisfactory tourism experience can affect post-visit behavioural intentions, such as the intention to return to a destination (Chen and Tsai 2007) and the willingness to recommend it (De Nisco et al. 2015). The above-stated presents arguments for proposing hypothesis *H3: There is a positive relationship between the satisfaction of a camping tourist and loyalty.*

The proposed hypotheses have been verified, with empirical research explained below.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Measurement scales**

To achieve the purpose and goals of the paper, an empirical study was conducted on a convenience sample of respondents (N=143). Scales from previous studies were used. They were translated into Croatian and adapted to camping tourism, which is why it was necessary to validate the measurement instrument. Before conducting empirical research, a structured questionnaire was designed and its content was validated by experts and then adapted in compliance with their reviews. The content validity of the survey instrument was then tested in June 2018 on a sample of 13 students with experience in camping tourism. The comments within the framework for evaluating the content validity of the questionnaire referred to the used terminology and its clarity. The respondents gave recommendations on how to improve the questionnaire, upon which another version of the questionnaire was developed and used in further research. The attitudes of the respondents were measured using a Likert scale for evaluating attitudes, ranging from 1 to 7 (1 – completely disagree, 7 – completely agree). The tourism experience was measured using the tourist recreation experience scale created by Hosany and Witham (2010) and comprising four dimensions and 14 variables. The tourism experience consisted of the following dimensions: aesthetics (4 variables), entertainment (3 variables), education (3 variables), and escapism (4 variables). The satisfaction of the camping tourist was measured using the tourist satisfaction scale by Han, Lee and Hwang (2016), which consists of three items. The loyalty of tourists was measured using three items taken from a paper by Pan (2018). The construct and the accompanying variables are shown in Table 1.



Table 1: **Constructs and variables**

Construct	Item number	Item
TOURISM EXPERIENCE	TE1	The setting of the campsite was attractive.
	TE2	The setting of the campsite plays close attention to design details.
	TE3	I felt comfortable staying in the campsite.
	TE4	I felt a real sense of harmony.
	TE5	The campsite activities were interesting.
	TE6	The campsite activities were amazing.
	TE7	The campsite activities were entertaining.
	TE8	The experience in the campsite made me more knowledgeable.
	TE9	It was a real learning experience.
	TE10	It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things.
	TE11	I felt I played a different character here.
	TE12	The experience let me imagine being somewhere else.
	TE13	I completely escaped from my daily routine.
	TE14	I felt I was in a different time or place.
SATISFACTION	S1	I am delighted with this campsite.
	S2	In overall I am satisfied with this campsite.
	S3	My satisfaction with this campsite exceeds my expectations.
LOYALTY	L1	I will positively evaluate this campsite to my friends and relatives as well as other people.
	L2	I will revisit this campsite in the future.
	L3	I will recommend this campsite to my friends and relatives as well as other people.

Source: Authors'

### 3.2. Data collection and sample

The data were collected from 143 respondents who had stayed in Croatian campsites sometime during the past two years. The questionnaires were handed out to the respondents and were completed using the paper and pencil method. A total of 140 valid questionnaires were collected. Table 2 shows the sample description based on gender, age, main reasons for coming to the campsite, and characteristics of staying at the campsite. The questions provided multiple answer options.

Table 2: **Sample structure (N=140)**

Characteristics	Total	
	N	%
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	64	51.2
Male	61	48.8
<i>Age</i>		
18 – 25	39	27.9
26 – 35	47	33.6
36 – 45	21	15.0
46 – 55	14	10.0
56 – 65	9	6.4
Over 66	10	7.1

Table 2 (continued)

Characteristics	Total	
	N	%
<i>The main motive for arrival</i>		
rest and relaxation	123	87.9
new experiences	40	28.6
fun	39	27.9
gastronomic offer	3	2.1
the beauty of nature and landscape	87	62.1
sports and recreation	41	29.3
health	9	6.4
something else	8	5.7
<i>Travel partners</i>		
go alone	8	5.7
partner	34	24.3
family (with children)	55	39.3
friends/colleagues	59	42.1
organised group of people	10	7.1
<i>Length of stay</i>		
1 day	7	5.0
2-3 days	32	22.9
4-7 days	62	44.3
more than 7 days	40	28.6
<i>Number of previous visit</i>		
This is my first time	46	32.9
Only once before	31	22.1
Two or more visits before	41	29.3
I have been visiting for a long time	22	15.7
<i>Activities in campsite</i>		
swimming	114	81.4
walking/day hiking	108	77.1
photography	66	47.1
cycling	56	40.0
mountain climbing	51	36.4
picnicking	45	32.1
boating	31	22.1

Source: Research results

An analysis of the sample structure shows that more women (51.2%) than men (48.8%) participated in the survey. Concerning the age structure, the respondents were mainly younger people, between 18 and 36 years of age (61.4%). The reason for this is that younger respondents tended to complete the survey, compared with the older population. All of the respondents were from Croatia. The main reason for coming to the campsites was vacation/relaxation (87.9%), followed by the beauty of nature and the environment (62.1%), sport and recreation (29.3%), new experiences and events (28.6%), entertainment (27.9%), health (6.4%), food (2.4%) and other reasons (5.7%). The respondents came to the campsite with friends and acquaintances (42.1%), with family members (39.3%), with a partner (24.3%), with an organised group of people (7.1%) and alone (5.7%). Most of the respondents (44.3%) stayed in the campsite 4-7 days, or 7 days and more (28.6%). One third of the respondents (32.9%) visited the campsite for the first time. Slightly fewer respondents (29.3%) visited the campsite two or more times, and 22.1% had been to the campsite once before. A total of 15.7 respondents have been visiting the campsites for many years. An analysis of the recreational activities of tourists

during their stay in the campsite confirms that the majority of the respondents mainly like to swim (81.4%), and walk/day hike (77.1%), depending on whether they are staying on the coast or inland. Other activities they engage in during their stay in the campsites include photography (47.1%), cycling (40%), hiking (36.4%), picnics in nature (32.1%), boating (22.1%) and other activities in smaller percentages.

#### 4. FINDINGS

The data analysis included a descriptive statistical analysis of the constructs – tourism experience, satisfaction of camping tourists, and loyalty – as well as a reliability analysis and dimensionality of the measurement scales. The descriptive analysis of all constructs was done first (tourism experience, satisfaction of camping tourists and loyalty). Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to determine the dimensionality of the measurement scales. The reliability of the measuring instrument was confirmed by applying the indicators of internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha).

##### 4.1. Descriptive analysis

To begin with, descriptive analysis was conducted of the variables of the constructs of tourism experience, camping tourist satisfaction, and camping tourist loyalty (Table 3).

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of variables

Item number	Arithmetic mean	Mode	Standard deviation	Asymmetry coefficient
TE1	5.56	5	1.21	-0.71
TE2	4.49	5	1.58	-0.19
TE3	5.78	6	1.12	-0.80
TE4	5.23	5	1.36	-0.63
TE5	4.79	5	1.51	-0.33
TE6	3.95	5	1.54	-0.07
TE7	4.47	5	1.66	-0.46
TE8	4.82	5	1.65	-0.47
TE9	4.40	4	1.60	-0.14
TE10	4.30	5	1.63	-0.26
TE11	3.54	4	1.82	-0.14
TE12	3.46	1	1.89	-0.16
TE13	5.69	7	1.57	-1.28
TE14	4.89	7	1.84	-0.67
S1	4.98	4	1.40	-0.30
S2	5.21	5	1.26	-0.56
S3	4.40	4	1.46	-0.29
L1	5.49	6	1.35	-0.89
L2	5.04	6	1.63	-0.21
L3	5.48	6	1.41	-1.06

Source: Research results

The arithmetic means of the variables of the tourism experience construct (TE) range from 3.46 to 5.78. Variable TE12, “The experience let me imagine being somewhere else”, has the lowest score, while the variable TE3, “I felt comfortable staying in the

campsite.” has the highest. The mode ranges between 1 and 7. The TE12 variable has the lowest arithmetic mean and mode 1. The values of the standard deviation exceed 1, pointing to data dispersion. The asymmetry coefficients for all variables are in the interval from -1 to +1, which points to a normal distribution, except for the variable TE13, “I completely escaped from my daily routine”, which shows moderate negative asymmetry. The values of the arithmetic mean with regard to the constructs the satisfaction of the camping tourists (S) range from 4.40 to 5.21. The variable S3, “My satisfaction with this campsite exceeds my expectations.” has the lowest value, and the variable S2, “Overall, I am satisfied with this campsite.” has the highest. The mode ranges from 4 to 5. The values of the standard deviation exceed 1, pointing to data dispersion. The asymmetry coefficients for all variables are in the interval from -1 to +1, pointing to normal distribution. The arithmetic means of the variables of the loyalty to the stay in the campsite construct (L) range from 5.04 to 5.49. The variable L2, “I will revisit this campsite in the future.” has the lowest value and the variable L1, “I will give a positive evaluation of this campsite to my friends and relatives as well as other people” has the highest. All the modes are 6. The values of the standard deviation exceed 1, pointing to data dispersion. The asymmetry coefficients for all variables are in the interval from -1 to +1, pointing to normal distribution, except for the variable L3, “I will recommend this campsite to my friends and relatives as well as other people”, which shows moderate negative asymmetry.

#### **4.2. Validation of the measurement scales**

To determine the validity of the research instrument, an analysis of the dimensionality and reliability of the measurement scales was performed. The reliability of the measurement scales was confirmed by applying the coefficient of internal consistency, Cronbach’s alpha. For the measurement scale of the tourism experience, dimensionality analysis was conducted using exploratory factor analysis. The first step includes assessing the adequacy of the sample by calculating the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient and Bartlett’s test of sphericity. Sampling adequacy measured by KMO was assessed for the purpose of evaluating whether the data fit well with the factors (Field 2005), and has values from 0 to 1. In order for the factor analysis to be suitable, the value of this index has to be over 0.5 (Rozga 2010). The values between 0.5 and 0.7 are acceptable; the values between 0.7 and 0.8 are good, and the values between 0.8 and 0.9 are excellent (Field, 2005). The results show that the adequacy measures of the tourist experience construct are appropriate (KMO is 0.783, and Bartlett’s test of sphericity ( $\chi^2 = 1.285,50$ ;  $p < 0,001$ ). It can be concluded that the correlation matrix is acceptable for conducting exploratory factor analysis based on the recommendations (Tabachnik and Fidell 2007; 614). Principal component analysis with varimax rotation of the factor axis was carried out. The varimax method of the rotation was used since the goal was to reduce the variables to a smaller number of factors (Hair et al. 2006; 126-127) while maximizing the percentage of explained variance. The criteria for the number of extracted factors and the preserved variables are based on eigenvalues, the percentage of the explained variance, and significance of the factor loadings. Factors with eigenvalues over 1, factors with a total of 60% of the explained variance, and factors with loading above 0.05, taking into consideration the number of the respondents, are acceptable (Hair 2014; 115).

Table 4 shows that four factors were extracted using exploratory factor analysis for the tourism experience construct. Total percentage of the explained variance shows that the extracted factors contain 75.972% of information of all variables. This is a high percentage and points to a good relationship among the variables. The eigenvalue of each extracted factor is over 1. Based on these results, it is clear that the criteria for determining the number of extracted factors have been met. The factor loadings for all factors are positive. All factor loadings exceed 0.50, which is considered high loading. Table 4 lists the factors in order of importance. The percentage of the explained variance shows how successfully each factor explains the contained variables. The values range from 7.948% to 38.489%. The number of variables in each factor is between 3 and 4. Factor 1 is called escapism; it contains four variables and explains 38.489% of variance. Factor 2 is called aesthetics. It contains four variables, which explains 18.162% of variance. Factor 3 is called entertainment; it contains three variables and explains 11.373% of variance. Factor 4 is called education; it contains three variables and explains 7.948% of variance.

Table 4: Exploratory factor analysis of the tourism experience construct

Item number	Variable	Factor loadings	Total variance explained (%)	Cronbach alpha
<b>FACTOR 1 – ESCAPISM</b>			<b>38.489</b>	<b>0.849</b>
TE11	I felt I played a different character here.	.877		
TE12	The experience let me imagine being somewhere else.	.836		
TE14	I felt I was in a different time or place.	.806		
TE13	I completely escaped from my daily routine.	.721		
<b>FACTOR 2 – AESTHETICS</b>			<b>18.162</b>	<b>0.804</b>
TE4	I felt a real sense of harmony.	.813		
TE3	I felt comfortable staying in the campsite.	.778		
TE1	The setting of the campsite was attractive.	.770		
TE2	The setting of the campsite plays close attention to design details.	.669		
<b>FACTOR 3 – ENTERTAINMENT</b>			<b>11.373</b>	<b>0.914</b>
TE7	The campsite activities were entertaining.	.891		
TE5	The campsite activities were interesting.	.864		
TE6	The campsite activities were amazing.	.852		
<b>FACTOR 4 – EDUCATION</b>			<b>7.948</b>	<b>0.887</b>
TE9	It was a real learning experience.	.885		
TE8	The experience in the campsite made me more knowledgeable.	.864		
TE10	It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things.	.798		

Source: Research results

Following exploratory factor analysis, reliability analysis of the measurement scale was also conducted using the Cronbach alpha coefficient, which should provide values between 0 and 1. The closer the coefficient is to the value 1, the more reliable is the measurement scale. The lowest suggested value of the coefficient is 0.6, whereas values of 0.7 and over are considered good (Peterson 1994). Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the tourist experience construct are in the range from 0.804 to 0.914.

Reliability analysis was conducted as the construct concerning the tourists' satisfaction with the stay in the campsite and their loyalty are measured with three items each. The Cronbach alpha coefficients obtained for the camping tourist satisfaction construct and the loyalty construct were 0.880 and 0.895, respectively. The coefficients point to high reliability of the measurement scales (Peterson 1994).

After the measurement scales were validated, the set hypotheses were tested. Multiple regression analysis was applied to determine the influence of the dimensions of the tourism experience construct on camping tourist satisfaction. The dimensions of the tourism experience were formed as linear composites of the variables in compliance with the results of the factor analysis, and they were treated as independent variables in the model, whereas camping tourist satisfaction was observed as a dependent variable. The results are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Multiple regression analysis for variables predicting satisfaction of camping tourists**

Independent variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-.896	1.073		-.835	.405
ESCAPISM	.126	.037	.200	3.443	.001
ESTHETIC	.471	.056	.531	8.329	.000
ENTERTAINMENT	.250	.057	.284	4.401	.000
EDUCATION	.006	.054	.007	.118	.906
R2	0.646				
Adjusted R2	0.635				
Standard error	2.26528				
F ratio	58.856				
Significance	0.000				

Source: Research results

The results of the regression analysis are statistically significant ( $F=58.856$ ,  $p=0.000$ ), the determination coefficient ( $R^2$ ) totals 0.646, and the variables in the model share 64.6% of the common factors, which means that 64.6% of the variances in the camping tourist satisfaction construct can be predicted with the dimensions of the tourism experience. The analysis confirms that the dimensions of the tourism experience “escapism” ( $\beta=0.200$ ,  $p=0.001$ ), “aesthetics” ( $\beta=0.531$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) and “entertainment” ( $\beta=0.284$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) have a considerable impact on the camping tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. The “education” dimension ( $\beta=0.007$ ,  $p=0.906$ ) does not have a significant influence on the camping tourist satisfaction. To confirm the relationship between camping tourist satisfaction and loyalty, a correlation analysis was conducted using the Pearson correlation coefficient. A statistically significant positive relation between camping tourist satisfaction and loyalty was established ( $r=0.763$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this research is to establish a relationship between the dimensions of tourists' camping experience, and their satisfaction and loyalty. To achieve this goal, three hypotheses were set. A measuring instrument was designed and empirical research was carried out, which has resulted in important findings.

The scale for measuring the tourism experience was adapted to measuring the experience of camping tourists, and its reliability and dimensionality were verified. The results confirmed the validity of the scale for its application in the context of camping tourism. It has been established that the tourism experience of a camping tourist is a multi-dimensional construct, consisting of four dimensions: escapism, aesthetics, entertainment, and education. This confirms the first hypothesis *H1*, and the results are in compliance with research by Pine and Gilmore (1999).

Furthermore, the influence of the tourism experience dimension on the satisfaction of the camping tourist was analysed. Multiple regression analysis confirmed the statistical significance and positive influence of the escapism, aesthetics and entertainment dimensions of the tourism experience, confirming the hypotheses *H2b*, *H2c*, *H2d*. It was also confirmed that the dimension of aesthetics has the biggest influence on the satisfaction of the camping tourist. The influence of the education dimension on the satisfaction of the camping tourist was not confirmed. Therefore, *H2a* hypothesis is discarded. This means that *H2* hypothesis can be considered confirmed. The results are in line with a study by Sotiriadis (2017) which proved, on the example of nature-based tourism, that the dimensions of escapism and aesthetics influence tourist satisfaction. Oh et al. (2007) proved that aesthetics affects satisfaction with the bed & breakfast accommodation, whereas escapism and entertainment do not affect satisfaction with the stay. The satisfaction of the festival visitors is mainly influenced by escapism and aesthetics, whereas education and entertainment do not have an influence (Mehmetoglu and Engen 2011).

The empirical research established a statistically significant positive relationship between the satisfaction of camping tourists and their loyalty to the camp, which is confirmed by the *H3* hypothesis. This finding is not surprising, since many studies (Wu and Liang 2011; Osman and Sentosa, 2013; Anton et al. 2014; Hultman et al. 2015; Suhartanto et al., 2015; Choi and Cai 2016; Kim and Thapa 2018; Zhang and Walsh 2020; Lončarić et al. 2021) have confirmed the relationship between tourist satisfaction and loyalty.

This study has a theoretical and applicative contribution. In the theoretical sense, the contribution lies in the adaptation and validation of the scale for measuring the camping tourist experience, and verification of the influence of certain experience dimensions on tourists' satisfaction with and loyalty to campsites in which they achieved a specific experience. In a practical sense, this study provides information to campsite managers, which they could use to significantly improve service quality, with the aim of enhancing the tourism experience, and tourist satisfaction and loyalty. This study can help managers in tourism to create offerings, tourism products and services for various target groups of tourists, which will enhance their experience in campsites and lead to satisfaction with the stay and loyalty to a certain camp. New and innovative forms of accommodation, such as mobile houses and glamping tents of different shapes and materials, reinforce the experience of escapism and aesthetics of the campsites.

This study has certain limitations which should be mentioned. The main limitation refers to the study sample. It is a relatively small but suitable sample used for the purpose of validating the measuring scale. However, future studies should be carried out on larger

samples of tourists staying in campsites during the time of the studies. Studies could also be conducted in various types of campsites, for example, campsites on the coast and campsites in continental Croatia. In addition to the mentioned constructs, future studies could investigate the influence of other constructs, such as place attachment, service quality, destination image, environmental attitudes and environmentally responsible behaviour. The studies should be conducted continuously to consistently monitor the satisfaction and loyalty of tourists during their stay in campsites.

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