EVALUATING CAMPSITE ATTRIBUTES AND INTENTION TO CAMP AMONG GENERATION Z IN CROATIA

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Abstract

Purpose – Despite its importance for Croatian tourism, the camping market is increasingly characterised by destination maturity and an ageing consumer base. Although previous studies have largely focused on the attitudes and preferences of existing campers, considerably less attention has been paid to latent demand, particularly to individuals without prior camping experience. Accordingly, this study examines the dimensions of campsite attribute evaluation among Generation Z in Croatia, as well as differences according to gender, formal camping-related education, and prior experience. In addition, it considers intention to camp as a complementary attitudinal dimension.
Methodology/Design/Approach – The study is based on a survey conducted among 270 Generation Z respondents. Exploratory factor analysis was employed to identify the underlying dimensions of campsite attribute evaluation, and independent samples t-tests were used to examine differences between subgroups.
Findings – Five dimensions were identified: infrastructure and hygiene, services, equipment and camping practice, camp management, and intention to camp. Infrastructure and hygiene accounted for the largest share of explained variance. The results further indicate that favourable evaluations of campsite attributes are accompanied by only moderate levels of intention to camp, particularly among respondents without prior experience. Statistically significant differences were found with respect to gender and prior experience, while differences related to formal camping-related education were limited.
Originality of the research – The study focuses on a younger population segment, Generation Z, which includes potential and inexperienced users as an under-researched segment of camping demand. In addition to the structure of campsite attribute evaluation, the study suggests differentiating dimensions across relevant subgroups. By identifying differences between attribute evaluation and intention to camp, the study contributes to a better understanding of early camping engagement. Finally, the need to ensure basic conditions of stay and to reduce the complexity of camping for younger users, as shown in this research, represents a valuable input for camp managers.

Keywords: camping tourism, Generation Z, campsite attribute evaluation, intention to camp, Croatia

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INTRODUCTION

In the tourism literature, camping tourism is defined as a specific form of recreational and tourist behaviour characterised by flexibility and mobility of accommodation (Mikulić et al., 2017) and a strong connection with the natural environment (Blichfeldt & Mikkelsen, 2015; Lee, 2020). Due to its growth and importance in generating tourist traffic, camping has recently gained increasing attention and has intrigued both the professional and scientific communities. In this regard, consumption patterns most often appear at the centre of scientific discussions. In this sense, escape from everyday routines, time spent in nature, interaction with other people, and physical relaxation are identified as dominant motives of existing campers (Chen & Zhou, 2025).

Despite its growing popularity and economic and social importance, research addressing this segment remains limited (Mikulić et al., 2017). Recent studies have addressed topics such as booking patterns, length of stay, and on-site attitudes (Cvelić Bonifačić et al., 2017; Mikulić et al., 2017; Rantala & Varley, 2019). However, the existing literature is limited by the lack of a methodological framework and the absence of comprehensive global statistics on camping tourism (Eremić, 2021).

According to Eurostat (2025), 408 858 000 overnight stays were recorded in campsites, camp parks, and similar facilities across the EU-27 in 2024, accounting for 13.53% of total tourist overnight stays. In this market, Croatia holds a significant share with 5.25% of all overnight stays in campsites in the EU, while campsites account for 22.9% of total tourist overnight stays in the country, with 21.4 million overnight stays (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2025). However, the demand structure in Croatian campsites is strongly dependent on foreign markets, which account for 96.5% of overnight stays in campsites. Consequently, the domestic demand segment is limited, but strategically important, and requires a more detailed understanding to support its future development. Despite this, there is still limited empirical evidence on how domestic users form evaluations and intentions related to camping (Eremić, 2021).

In addition, scientific evidence from recent studies is predominantly based on samples of current users and their repeated behaviour, while the latent or potential demand of this tourist segment is poorly researched (Brooker & Joppe, 2014). The issue of potential and future campers gains particular importance when considering the age structure of current campers. Namely, camping tourism in European destinations is characterized by the dominance of older and family-oriented segments. This scenario has not bypassed Croatia. It is precisely the long-standing demand patterns that raise the question of the future

development of the camping market, whereby understanding younger market segments becomes important for maintaining and expanding demand. Generational segmentation, therefore, represents a relevant and logical analytical approach. It is also important to emphasise the lack of scientific evidence on the methods and principles of evaluating camping attributes among the younger population (Generation Z), especially among individuals who do not belong to the segment of existing campers.

It is important to note that camp attribute evaluation involves a cognitive assessment of the importance and desirability of individual attributes, while camping intention is a behavioural preference that depends on the outcomes of the evaluation, as well as on individuals' perceived ability to participate, prior experience, and knowledge of camping practices. In this sense, a positive evaluation of camp attributes does not necessarily imply camping intention, especially among individuals with limited experience or knowledge. This distinction is consistent with previous studies suggesting that intention is influenced by additional factors in addition to attribute evaluation (Brooker & Joppe, 2014; Mikulić et al., 2017; Choo, 2015).

Accordingly, this study addresses this gap by focusing on the structure of campsite attribute evaluation and intention to camp among Generation Z as a segment of potential demand. Guided by this focus, the study addresses the following research question: How does Generation Z in Croatia evaluate campsite attributes, and to what extent do campsite attribute evaluations and intention to camp differ according to gender, camping-related education, and prior camping experience? In line with the identified research gap, the research framework of this study is based on four research objectives focused on members of Generation Z in Croatia, which aim to:

- Identify the basic dimensions of campsite attribute evaluation among Generation Z in Croatia,
- Examine whether these dimensions differ by gender,
- Examine whether these dimensions differ by camping education and previous camping experience,
- Examine intention to camp as a complementary attitude dimension within the studied population.

Empirical research (survey) was conducted on a sample of students at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, University of Rijeka. Although the sample is not intended to statistically represent the entire Generation Z population in Croatia, it encompasses a relevant subsegment of young adults in the formative phase of developing tourism preferences. Their educational background in tourism enables them to provide an informed assessment of campsite characteristics, while their life stage is associated with the formation of long-term tourism preferences.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Camping tourism has been present in scientific research since the 1960s (Garst et al., 2013; Cegur Radović et al., 2021), and its importance in both economic and scientific terms has gradually increased (Cvelić-Bonifačić et al., 2017). This is confirmed by the fact that the global value of the camping market is currently estimated at around USD 69.3 billion with an expected growth of up to USD 72 billion by 2028 (Cvelić-Bonifačić et al., 2025).

In the early stages, camping was primarily associated with cheap, modest and nature-oriented stay, while modern camping encompasses modern accommodation and a high level of service (Brooker & Joppe, 2013; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). This can be directly linked to wider changes in the tourism demand, which today focuses more on experience, sustainability and lifestyle (Mikulić et al., 2017; Lee, 2020). Due to the exceptional diversification of the offer of camping tourism, there are differences in the preferences of tourists. While some tourists associate camping with nature, escape, and loneliness, others attach greater importance to campsite complementary services, infrastructure and equipment (Gursoy & Chen, 2012). Accordingly, the decision-making process related to camping is linked to the relative importance of the different attributes of the campsite for users.

In previously conducted scientific research, infrastructure, service provision and environmental quality are central elements of the evaluation of campsites (Gursoy & Chen, 2012; Mikulić et al., 2017), although the relative importance of a particular element depends on the context. Choo (2015) stresses that the assessment of individual attributes is created by basic motives, while the final decision is made by comparison with other available alternatives. At the same time, not participating in camping may reflect the outcome of the evaluation where attributes do not meet the minimum perceived level of acceptability. Empirical findings by Mikulić et al. (2017) point to the fact that not all attributes contribute to the same extent to the perceived value, in particular as regards sanitation, natural environment, and quality of service.

Despite these findings, the majority of scientific literature is strongly focused on people who are already camping, and it is mostly explored by various behaviour patterns of campers, satisfaction and loyalty (Cvelić Bonifačić et al., 2017; Mikulić et al., 2017; Rantala & Varley, 2019), while considerably less attention has been paid to individuals without prior camping experience. Non-participation does not necessarily imply a lack of interest (Brooker & Joppe, 2014), which directly points to the fact that people without camping experience are a relevant but still insufficiently explored segment of potential demand. Empirical findings are particularly limited in terms of how the group evaluates different campsite attributes, especially in relation to younger generations. Differences in the evaluation of the attributes are often tested using segmentation variables, such as psychographic and demographic characteristics, to explain differences in behaviour and preferences (Dryglas & Salamaga, 2017; Menor-Campos et al., 2020; Nella & Christou, 2014; Lončarić et al., 2023). This is particularly true of mature Mediterranean camping destinations, as pointed out by Cegur Radović et al. (2021), where the dominance of the older segment of guests was recorded.

As Cegur Radović (2025) points out in the Republic of Croatia, the demand for camping is clearly linked to Generation X (42%) and Generation Y (43%), which raises the question of the role of younger generations representing potential demand in the future development of camping tourism. In this context, Generation Z emerges as a relevant segment for further analysis (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019). Generation Z is developing in a completely different technological and socio-economic environment from previous generations (Milohnić et al., 2021; Haddouche & Salomone, 2018). Despite the fact that there is no clear consensus regarding the age limits of a single generation cohort, generally generation Z is associated with individuals born from 1996/1997 to 2012/2013, i.e., individuals born around 2000 (Mikulić, 2017; Singh, 2014). The conducted research indicates the focus of "zoomers" on experiential, natural-based and local forms of tourism (Lončarić et al., 2023; Nemati et al., 2025). Despite this, their role remains insufficiently explored within certain tourism segments, including camping tourism (Dimitriou & AbouElgheit, 2019).

Another important segmentation variable is gender (Stebbins, 2001; Burger, 1999). Previous empirical studies indicate that women tend to prefer campsites with higher levels of infrastructure and comfort (Chen, 1997; Cai, 2005; Garst, 2005; Van Heerden, 2020), which may reflect differences in perceptions of safety, organisation, and service-related attributes.

Along with gender, knowledge and experience are identified as two additional important variables shaping the evaluation process. Theoretical perspectives distinguish different forms of knowledge, suggesting that individuals with higher levels of knowledge, who are familiar with a particular activity, process information differently and approach evaluation in distinct ways (Gursoy, 2001; Gursoy & Chen, 2012). Kristensen et al. (2021) and Xu et al. (2022) confirm that experience influences the assessment of campsite characteristics, perceived risk, and motives. Individuals with limited experience tend to prefer content-rich environments, while those with more experience rely less on additional content (Williams et al., 1990; Holdnak & Rodgers, 2004; Chen, 2002). These differences indicate that knowledge and experience shape expectations and define the threshold of acceptability when evaluating camps.

Considering all of the above, recent scientific research conceptualises campsite evaluation as a multidimensional process based on the perceived importance of various attributes. However, empirical evidence on how this process is structured, especially among younger and less experienced populations, remains fragmented. In this regard, there is a particularly pronounced lack of research focused on the organisation of evaluation dimensions, as well as on potential differences between them in the context of relevant subgroups, which provides the basis for this study.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on members of Generation Z in Croatia as a segment of latent demand for camping tourism, aiming to determine the dimensions of campsite attribute evaluation, examine whether these dimensions differ by gender, camping-related education, and previous camping experience, and analyse intention to camp as a complementary attitudinal dimension.

For this purpose, primary data were collected using a survey method. The questionnaire was developed based on the study by Gursoy and Chen (2012). In addition to the items from the aforementioned study, which measured the perceived importance of campsite attributes, additional items were introduced in accordance with modern camping conditions and the profile of the studied, younger population. Accordingly, two items related to the digital structure were added (availability of Wi-Fi and charging stations for electronic devices), while an item related to environmental standards was added based on the study by Mikulić et al. (2017). At the same time, and based on the study by Han et al. (2011), an item measuring the intention to camp was added. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale.

The survey was conducted on a convenient sample of undergraduate and graduate students at the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, University of Rijeka. Data were collected during January and February 2026 with the approval of the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management. The questionnaire was distributed via the generated QR code during regular lectures. The defined sample consists of undergraduate and graduate students and is treated as predominantly aligned with the Generation Z population, while respondents' age-group distribution is reported in Table 1. The sample includes respondents both with and without previous camping experience, allowing the exploration of campsite attribute evaluations among individuals whose tourism preferences and behavioural intentions may still be developing. A total of 270 valid responses were collected and included in the further analysis.

IBM SPSS statistical tool (version 29) was used to perform data analysis. In order to investigate the overall assessment of individual camp attributes, descriptive statistics were used, while Cronbach's alpha was used to evaluate internal consistency.

The suitability of the data for factor analysis was evaluated using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The dimensional structure of campsite attribute evaluation was examined using exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Considering the exploratory nature of the study and the objective of identifying the latent structure of the variables, an exploratory factor approach was applied. In this context, principal component analysis (PCA) was employed as the extraction method, as a data reduction technique suitable for identifying the underlying structure of a relatively large set of variables in an exploratory setting, with the application of orthogonal Varimax rotation and Kaiser normalisation.

Factors were retained based on eigenvalues greater than 1 (additionally supported by inspection of the scree plot), while factor loadings above 0.40 were used as the threshold for interpretation, in accordance with recommendations in multivariate analysis (Hair et al., 2014). Factor loadings below 0.40 were suppressed in the presentation of the rotated factor matrix. Items with cross-loadings above 0.40 were assigned to the factor on which they had the highest loading, provided that the assignment was theoretically interpretable. Factor scores were calculated and used in further analysis. To examine differences between subgroups, independent samples t-tests were conducted for gender, camping-related education, and previous camping experience.

In accordance with the provisions of the legislation of the Republic of Croatia (Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Croatia, 2019), and for this empirical research, camping is defined as staying in officially registered campsites (including accommodation in tents, campers, caravans, mobile homes, and similar forms of on-site accommodation). In contrast, wilderness camping, defined as staying outside officially registered campsites, is not covered by this study.

3. RESULTS

Within the scope of the present study, the key characteristics of the respondents were analysed and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: **Characteristics of the sample structure (N = 270)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Relative share (%)
Age group	18-20 years	144	53.30
	21-23 years	73	27.00
	24-26 years	32	11.90
	27 years and above	21	7.80
Gender	Female	208	77.04
	Male	62	22.96
Formal Camping Tourism Education	No	239	88.52
	Yes	31	11.48
Camping Experience	Never	155	57.41
	1 - 2 times	72	26.67
	3 – 5 times	20	7.40
	6 or more times	23	8.52

Source: Authors' calculation

The age-group distribution, together with the student status of respondents, indicates that the sample is predominantly aligned with the Generation Z population. The research sample was dominated by female respondents (77.04%), compared to male respondents (22.96%). Furthermore, only a smaller proportion of respondents (11.48%) had formal education related to camping, while more than half of the respondents (57.41%) stated that they had no previous camping experience. This sample structure proved relevant for the continuation of the research process and further comparative analysis.

Descriptive statistics for the analysed campsite attributes are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: **Descriptive statistics of campsite attributes**

Attribute	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mode	Attribute	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mode
Availability of clean sanitary facilities	4.63	0.768	5	Clearly posted campsite signage	4.03	0.958	4
Overall campsite cleanliness	4.64	0.700	5	Accessibility of the campsite	4.11	1.007	5
Availability of showers	4.62	0.705	5	Campsite cleanliness as a selection criterion	4.63	0.704	5
Availability of drinking water	4.76	0.651	5	Quietness during the night	4.28	0.897	5
Availability of complete camping equipment	3.60	1.061	4	Availability of well-informed and trained campsite staff	4.25	0.898	5
Availability of electricity	4.24	1.008	5	Availability of parking	4.27	0.926	5
Privacy within the campsite	4.36	0.892	5	Availability of Wi-Fi	3.76	1.280	5
Amount of equipment required for camping	4.02	0.892	4	Availability of charging stations for electronic devices	4.19	1.095	5
Comfort of staying overnight in a tent	4.09	0.942	4	Availability of laundry facilities	3.71	1.184	5
Perceived popularity of camping	3.48	1.113	3	Availability of restaurant or cafeteria facilities	3.96	1.109	5
Knowledge of how to set up a tent	4.02	1.038	5	Availability of recreational facilities	3.99	1.079	5
Availability of sanitary facilities	4.69	0.740	5	Availability of tents for rent	3.93	1.085	5
Availability of shower facilities	4.66	0.739	5	Availability of BBQ grills and related equipment	3.99	1.002	5
Campsite safety	4.71	0.700	5	Campsite location	4.43	0.814	5
Open spaces within the campsite	4.21	0.870	5	Planning to camp in the future	3.46	1.230	3
Availability of recycling bins	3.99	1.101	5	Willingness to camp in the future	3.64	1.217	4
Environmental standards of the campsite	4.18	0.995	5	Intention to camp in the future	3.47	1.215	3
Availability of security service	3.88	1.077	4				

Source: Authors' calculation

Higher mean values were primarily associated with campsite attributes related to basic infrastructure and safety, including Availability of drinking water (M = 4.76), Campsite safety (M = 4.71), Availability of sanitary facilities (M = 4.69), and Availability of clean sanitary facilities (M = 4.63). Lower mean values were observed for Perceived popularity of camping (M = 3.48), as well as for items related to intention to camp (M ranging from 3.46 to 3.64). Mode values ranged from 3 to 5, indicating that the most frequently selected responses were generally neutral to highly positive across the analysed campsite attributes.

Before conducting factor analysis, the suitability of the data for factor extraction was assessed using Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. Bartlett's test confirmed that the correlation matrix differed significantly from the identity matrix ($\chi^2 = 7519.703$; df = 595; $p < 0.001$), indicating sufficient intercorrelations among the analysed items for factor analysis (Beavers et al., 2013). In addition, the KMO value of 0.939 exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.80, confirming the adequacy of the data for factor analysis (Field, 2009). In total, the five extracted factors explained 66.827% of the variance of the observed items.

Table 3: **Total Variance Explained by the Extracted Factor Structure**

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
Infrastructure and hygiene	7.775	22.213	22.213
Services	5.432	15.520	37.733
Equipment and camping practice	4.012	11.464	49.197
Camp management	3.346	9.560	58.757
Intention to camp	2.825	8.070	66.827

Source: Authors' calculation

The five factors presented in Table 3 correspond to the rotated factor solution shown in Table 4 and to the factor interpretation provided below Table 4. Specifically, Infrastructure and hygiene accounts for 22.213% of the total variance, followed by Services (15.520%), Equipment and camping practice (11.464%), Camp management (9.560%), and Intention to camp (8.070%). This suggests that the extracted factors each contribute meaningfully to explaining the variance of the observed items.

The rotated factor matrix is presented in Table 4 and includes all 35 items retained in the final exploratory factor analysis. No variables were excluded from the final factor solution. Factor loadings below 0.40 were suppressed for presentation clarity. In cases where an item loaded above 0.40 on more than one factor, the item was assigned to the factor on which it had the highest loading, while also considering theoretical interpretability.

Table 4: **Rotated factor loadings of campsite attributes**

Attribute/item	**Infrastructure & hygiene**	**Services**	**Equipment & camping practice**	**Camp management**	**Intention to camp**
Availability of clean sanitary facilities	0.837				
Overall campsite cleanliness	0.792				
Availability of sanitary facilities	0.790				
Availability of shower facilities	0.770				
Campsite safety	0.763				
Availability of showers	0.762				
Availability of drinking water	0.739				
Campsite cleanliness as a selection criterion	0.713				
Privacy within the campsite	0.563				
Comfort of overnight stay in a tent	0.538	0.422			
Campsite location	0.502				
Open spaces within the campsite	0.476				
Availability of Wi-Fi		0.806			
Availability of charging stations for electronic devices		0.739			
Availability of restaurant or cafeteria facilities		0.737			
Availability of recreational facilities		0.637			
Availability of laundry facilities		0.633			
Availability of parking	0.489	0.566			
Availability of electricity	0.514	0.564			
Quietness during the night	0.431	0.517			
Accessibility of the campsite		0.456		0.424	
Availability of complete camping equipment			0.709		
Knowledge of how to set up a tent			0.670		
Availability of tents for rent			0.646		
Perceived popularity of camping			0.621		
Amount of equipment required for camping			0.590		
Availability of BBQ grills and related equipment			0.583		
Environmental standards of the campsite				0.723	
Clearly posted campsite signage				0.683	
Availability of recycling bins			0.428	0.650	
Availability of security service		0.476		0.498	
Availability of well-informed and trained campsite staff	0.450	0.406		0.497	
Planning to camp in the future					0.960
Intention to camp in the future					0.947
Willingness to camp in the future					0.938

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
Factor loadings below 0.40 were suppressed. Cross-loadings above 0.40 are reported where present. Items were assigned to factors based on the highest loading and theoretical interpretability. No variables were excluded from the final factor solution.

Source: Authors' calculation

The factors were calculated as linear combinations of the items they were composed of. In accordance with their common characteristics, they were assigned appropriate names. Although several items showed cross-loadings above 0.40, they were retained because their highest loadings and substantive meaning supported their assignment to the respective factors.

The first factor, called *Infrastructure and Hygiene*, is determined by items related to cleanliness, availability of sanitary facilities, safety and basic conditions of stay in the camp. This dimension is characterized by the basic functional and safety aspects of the stay, which are the basis for the acceptability of the camping offer, particularly from the perspective of less experienced users.

The second factor, labeled *Services*, includes items related to the provision of services and accompanying facilities, including internet access, recreational facilities and additional services within the camp. This dimension is characterized by the level of equipment and the breadth of the service offer that complements the basic conditions of stay, reflecting the extended value of the campsite offer.

Equipment and camping practice is the name of the third factor, which is defined by items related to the availability and use of camping equipment, as well as knowledge and practice of camping activities. This dimension refers to the practical aspect of camping and the level of involvement and competence of users in camping activities and may be particularly relevant for differentiating between experienced and inexperienced individuals.

The C*amp management*, i.e., the fourth factor, concerns the organisational and environmental aspects of the operation of the campsite and includes staff characteristics, signalling and recycling infrastructure. This dimension reflects the operational aspect of the camp management and is characterised by the quality of organisational and management processes.

The *Intention to camp* or the fifth factor consists of items that measure the individual's willingness and preference for camping. This factor represents a behavioural dimension that is conceptually different from the evaluation of different campsite attributes.

Factor loadings range from 0.406 to 0.960, indicating a satisfactory level of correlation between individual items and related factors.

In order to check the reliability of the scales used, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of internal consistency was calculated for each scale. Reliability coefficients of the scales are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: **Reliability Analysis of the measurement scale**

Construct	**Number of items**	**Cronbach's alpha (α)**
Infrastructure and hygiene	12	0.940
Services	9	0.919
Equipment and camping practice	6	0.827
Camp management	5	0.867
Intention to camp	3	0.952

Source: Authors' calculation

The internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach's α) exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 for all constructs, indicating satisfactory to excellent internal consistency of the measurement scales (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The highest alpha values were obtained for Infrastructure and hygiene (α = 0.940) and Intention to camp (α = 0.952). These values indicate very high internal consistency; however, they may also indicate a degree of conceptual overlap among the items within these constructs. Therefore, item-deletion diagnostics were additionally examined. The results showed that removing individual items would not improve the reliability coefficients, as Cronbach's alpha if item deleted remained below the overall alpha values for the respective constructs. Accordingly, all items were retained in the reliability analysis.

The group comparisons presented in Tables 6, 7, and 8 are based on standardized factor scores obtained from the exploratory factor analysis rather than on raw Likert-scale item means. Positive factor scores values indicate that respondents scored above the overall sample average on a given latent dimension, whereas negative values indicate scores below the sample average.

Differences in factor scores according to gender were examined using independent samples t-tests.The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: **Gender differences in campsite perception factors**

Factor	Male Mean factor score	Female Mean factor score	t	p
Infrastructure and Hygiene	-0.509	0.152	-3.422	0.001
Services	-0.224	0.067	-2.019	0.045
Equipment and Camping Practice	-0.219	0.065	-1.972	0.050
Camp Management	-0.355	0.106	-2.904	0.005
Intention to camp	-0.065	0.019	-0.585	0.559

Source: Authors' calculation
Note: Mean values refer to standardized factor scores, not raw Likert-scale means. Positive values indicate scores above the overall sample mean, while negative values indicate scores below the overall sample mean.

Statistically significant differences are observed across several dimensions. Female respondents report higher mean factor scores for infrastructure and hygiene ($p = 0.001$), services ($p = 0.045$), and camp management ($p = 0.005$). A marginal difference is observed for equipment and camping practice ($p = 0.050$). In contrast, no statistically significant differences are found for Intention to camp, indicating that gender differences are more pronounced in the evaluation of campsite attributes than in intention to camp.

Differences according to camping-related education were examined using independent samples t-tests. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: **Differences in campsite perception factors according to camping-related education**

Factor	No education Mean factor score	Education Mean factor score	t	p
Infrastructure and Hygiene	-0.015	0.119	-0.701	0.484
Services	-0.003	0.022	-0.130	0.897
Equipment and Camping Practice	0.062	-0.474	2.151	0.039
Camp Management	-0.024	0.184	-1.092	0.276
Intention to camp	-0.031	0.243	-1.438	0.152

Source: Authors' calculation
Note: Mean values refer to standardized factor scores, not raw Likert-scale means. Positive values indicate scores above the overall sample mean, while negative values indicate scores below the overall sample mean.

A statistically significant difference is observed only for the dimension equipment and camping practice ($p = 0.039$). Respondents with formal camping-related education report lower mean factor scores for this dimension compared to those without such education. At the same time, no statistically significant differences are observed for the remaining factors, suggesting a limited overall effect of formal education on campsite evaluation.

Differences according to prior camping experience were examined using independent samples t-tests. The results are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: **Differences in campsite perception factors according to previous camping experience**

Factor	Never camped Mean factor score	Camped before Mean factor score	t	p
Infrastructure and Hygiene	0.200	-0.270	3.701	<0.001
Services	0.074	-0.100	1.418	0.157
Equipment and Camping Practice	0.131	-0.177	2.528	0.012
Camp Management	-0.050	0.068	-0.960	0.338
Intention to camp	-0.194	0.261	-3.783	<0.001

Source: Authors' calculation
Note: Mean values refer to standardized factor scores, not raw Likert-scale means. Positive values indicate scores above the overall sample mean, while negative values indicate scores below the overall sample mean.

Statistically significant differences are observed for infrastructure and hygiene ($p < 0.001$), equipment and camping practice ($p = 0.012$), and intention to camp ($p < 0.001$). Respondents without prior camping experience report higher mean factor scores for infrastructure and hygiene and equipment and camping practice, while respondents with prior experience report higher mean factor scores for intention to camp, indicating that experience influences both evaluation patterns and intention to camp. No statistically significant differences are observed for services and camp management.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The continuous development of camping tourism indicates the necessity of a more committed and constructive approach to this segment of the tourist offer, focusing on latent demand and market differentiation. In this context, the inclusion of younger generations, especially Generation Z, in the tourist traffic generated in the camps is of particular importance.

The results of the conducted research indicate that members of Generation Z in Croatia approach camping as a potential tourist option, even in the absence of previous camping experience. In this sense, the results indicate a pattern of campsite attribute evaluation in which functional, service, experiential, and organizational elements appear as separate, yet interconnected dimensions. Nevertheless, intention to camp appears as a separate attitudinal component. Although several items showed cross-loadings, the revised factor solution supports the interpretation of these dimensions as conceptually distinguishable constructs. The above suggests that the evaluation of campsite attributes does not necessarily lead to willingness to behave, which has been confirmed by previous research (Brooker & Joppe, 2014; Mikulić et al., 2017).

The results of the conducted research established the dominant role of infrastructure and hygiene. In this sense, basic functional and safety conditions are of crucial importance to the respondents, with attributes such as sanitation, safety, and access to basic amenities acting as minimum requirements. This indicates the conclusion that camping is initially perceived as an accommodation option whose acceptability depends on meeting basic conditions. This is in line with previous research that highlights the importance of infrastructure attributes in evaluating campsites (Gursoy and Chen, 2012; Mikulić et al., 2017), but at the same time suggests that their importance may be more pronounced among younger and less experienced individuals. In addition, the study identified a discrepancy between campsite attribute evaluation and intention to camp. Namely, although respondents attach relatively high importance to most attributes, they express moderate camping intentions. In this sense, it is evident that intention to camp is conditioned by other factors, such as knowledge of camping practices and perceived participation abilities, which is confirmed by the study by Choo (2015). This is supported by the differences found between respondents with and without prior camping experience. Namely, individuals without experience place greater emphasis on infrastructural and practical attributes, with defined conditions and provided resources likely compensating for limited camping knowledge. In contrast, respondents with prior experience express a higher level of intention to camp and attach relatively less importance to these attributes. This is consistent with previous studies, according to which experience reduces perceived risk and changes assessment criteria (Kristensen et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2022). At the same time, research indicates that more experienced campers rely less on additional content, while less experienced individuals prefer additional structural conditions (Williams et al., 1990; Holdnak & Rodgers, 2005; Chen, 2002). At the same time, no statistically significant differences were found between the groups for the dimensions of services and camp management, which may indicate their relative stability regardless of previous experience. Also, the results indicate that formal education related to camping has a limited impact on the evaluation of campsite attributes, with a statistically significant difference being found only for the dimension of equipment and camping practices, confirming its relatively limited role in shaping overall campsite evaluation.

Analysing the sample by gender variable, it was found that female respondents attach greater importance to attributes related to infrastructure, services and management, indicating a stronger orientation towards safety, reliability and organizational quality, which is confirmed by previous studies (Chen, 1997; Cai, 2005; Garst, 2005; Van Heerden, 2020).

This study contributes to the existing literature on camping tourism by including individuals with limited or no previous experience and by focusing on potential demand that has been addressed in a fragmented manner in previous research (Brooker & Joppe, 2014). The research results point to the multidimensional structure of camp attributes and emphasize the importance of distinguishing between evaluation and attitudinal components, especially in younger and less experienced individuals in early decision-making stages.

Furthermore, the results suggest that attracting Generation Z to camping requires more than just improving campsite attributes. While maintaining high standards of hygiene, safety, and infrastructure remains essential, equal attention should be paid to reducing the perceived complexity of camping. This may include developing more accessible camping formats, as well as communication strategies aimed at increasing users' confidence and knowledge of camping practices. This represents particularly valuable knowledge for camp management.

In considering the results of this study, several limitations should be noted. The study has a sample limitation, as it included students from a single higher education institution. Since age was measured in grouped categories, the open-ended category of 27 years and above represents a limitation in precisely verifying the upper age boundary of the Generation Z population. In addition, the study evaluated the attitudes of respondents, whose self-assessment implies a certain level of subjectivity when completing the questionnaire. For the reasons stated, the results of this study cannot be generalized, but can be considered indicative. Finally, a complete picture can only be obtained through further longitudinal research. Future research should examine Generation Z campsite attribute evaluation using a broader and more heterogeneous sample beyond a single higher education institution. In addition, longitudinal studies could investigate whether favourable campsite attribute evaluations translate into actual camping behaviour over time. Further research could also compare inexperienced and experienced young campers across different camping destinations and accommodation formats, including traditional campsites, glamping units, mobile homes, and other forms of outdoor accommodation.

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