

HOW ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE ARE TOURIST IN CAMPSITES? CAMPING TOURISM EXPERIENCE, LOYALTY AND SITE-SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR IN CROATIA AND PORTUGAL

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Abstract

Purpose -The impact of camping tourism experience (TE) on tourist loyalty (LOY) and the relationship between loyalty and site-specific environmentally responsible behaviour (SERB) on two models in Croatia and Portugal.

Methodology – A review of recent literature related to TE, LOY and SERB was conducted. Empirical research was conducted on a convenience sample of 400 tourists in Croatian and Portuguese campsites. Multivariate statistics were used in data analysis with the software package IBM SPSS Statistics Version 29 and PLS-SEM via Smart PLS (version 4) for testing hypotheses.

Findings – The research findings indicate that all sample characteristics of camping tourists between Croatia and Portugal differ. The results indicate a positive and significant relationship between TE dimensions (aesthetics and escapism) on LOY in the Croatian model and a positive relationship between aesthetic and education on LOY in the Portuguese model. There was a significant relationship between LOY and SERB dimensions responsible behaviour towards flora and fauna, sustainable behaviour in a campsite, encouraging others to behave responsibly, except SERB dimensions, responsible use of products, and responsible behaviour of campsites in the Croatian model, and loyalty did not significantly relate to responsible behaviour of campsites in the Portuguese model.

Contribution –The results contribute to science and practice. In science, they represent a starting point for further research on ERB. The results can help campsite managers identify which dimensions of the TE significantly contribute to the LOY, as well as which dimensions should be emphasised when creating TE. The findings can help managers understand the influence of LOY on SERB dimensions and strategies to foster LOY towards campsites.

Keywords camping tourism, tourism experience, loyalty, environmentally responsible behaviour, Croatia, Portugal

INTRODUCTION

Camping tourism represents a significant segment of nature-based recreational activities and the broader tourism industry (Adamovich et al., 2021). Unlike conventional accommodation, campsites attract tourists with heightened ecological awareness, offering a unique context to examine how TE translate into environmentally responsible behaviour (ERB). However, despite growing interest in sustainable tourism, empirical

research investigating the relationships between TE, loyalty (LOY), and SERB remains limited. With camping tourism expanding globally (Jaković et al., 2024), understanding how experiential dimensions foster SERB is essential to mitigate environmental degradation in natural destinations.

Campsite operators lack evidence-based strategies to design experiences that enhance loyalty and environmental stewardship. If prior studies focus on generic tourism contexts, this research advances the field by validating SERB dimensions (Cegur Radović et al., 2022) in camping-specific settings in two southern European countries. The SERB scale encompasses five distinct behavioural domains: the responsible behaviour toward flora and fauna (RBTF), the responsible use of products (RUP), the sustainable behaviour on a campsite (SB), the responsible behaviour on a campsite (RB), and encouraging others to behave responsibly (EOBR).

To address these gaps, this study examines the four TE dimensions (aesthetics, entertainment, education, escapism) proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1998), their influence on LOY, and subsequent impacts on SERB. Specifically, it answers the following research questions:

RQ1: Do the sample characteristics of camping tourists between Croatia and Portugal differ?

RQ2: How do the aesthetic, entertainment, education, and escapism dimensions of TE influence loyalty in the Croatian and Portuguese models?

RQ3: To what extent does loyalty predict SERB, particularly RBTF, RUP, SB, RB, and EOBR in the Croatian and Portuguese models?

The findings will equip tourism managers with actionable insights to prioritise TE dimensions (e.g., aesthetics, education and escapism) that maximise loyalty, to design interventions that convert loyalty into tangible SERB (e.g., waste reduction, flora/fauna protection), and to develop marketing strategies aligning recreational offerings with environmental sustainability goals.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Camping Tourism

In 2022, EU camping tourism recorded 398 million overnight stays across 24,296 campsites (Jaković et al., 2024), reflecting its growth as a dynamic segment of outdoor hospitality (Adamovich et al., 2021). The sector has shifted from traditional camping to modern alternatives like mobile homes and various styles of glamping accommodation (Cegur Radović, 2021).

In Croatia, the camping sector is a key contributor to tourism, with 825 campsites generating 21.6 million overnight stays (22% of the national total) and 3.46 million arrivals (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Key international markets include Germany (38%), Slovenia (14%), Austria (10%) and the Netherlands (7%) (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Campsites operate at 84.9% capacity (Rudančić & Kulić,

2021) and attract predominantly Generation Y (43%), aged 30–49 (60.9%), with high education levels (Marušić et al., 2023). Their stays average 12.9 days, with 66.1% being repeat visitors. Motivations focus on coastal (92.3%) and nature-based (79.6%) experiences. A relatively low environmental footprint characterises Croatian campsites in comparison with other forms of accommodation (Rudančić & Kulić, 2021). Many campsites use recycled materials, sustainable building practices, and eco-friendly products (Jaković et al., 2024). Environmental awareness among camping tourists is growing, with many seeking meaningful experiences in nature, social interactions, and opportunities to explore, suggesting that higher TE at the destination correlates with stronger place attachment (CPA), which may, in turn, promote more environmentally responsible behaviour (SERB) during their stay.

In Portugal, 258 campsites (28.6% of national capacity) hosted 2.1 million visitors in 2023, with domestic tourists comprising 52.2% (Pordata, 2025b). Overnight stays reached 7.2 million (8.5% of national totals), averaging 3.4 nights per guest. Key international markets include Germany (10.4%), Spain (8.6%), and France (8.4%) (Pordata, 2025b). The sector has grown due to demand for nature-based and sustainable tourism (Stata, 2025b), supported by diverse landscapes from the Algarve coast to northern forests.

Therefore, given these differences, such as longer stays and repeat visits in Croatia, and shorter domestic-driven stays in Portugal, alongside distinct demographic and motivational profiles, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: The sample characteristics of camping tourists differ between Croatia and Portugal.

1.2. Tourism Experience (TE)

TE is a multidimensional construct involving emotional, cognitive, and sensory responses to destination experiences. Based on Pine and Gilmore's (1998) framework, TE includes four dimensions: aesthetics (passive appreciation), entertainment (observational), education (active learning), and escapism (immersion), classified as passive (aesthetics, entertainment) or active (education, escapism) depending on visitor involvement (Cegur Radović et al., 2021). Aesthetics, such as landscape appreciation, enhance inspiration and loyalty (Tan, 2017; Vesce et al., 2020). Entertainment offers emotional satisfaction (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011), while education promotes deeper engagement through learning (Kastenholz et al., 2017; Lai et al., 2020).

TE has been widely linked to LOY, increasing revisit intentions, recommendations, and word-of-mouth (Hosany & Witham, 2010; Chang et al., 2014; Lončarić et al., 2019;), often mediated by satisfaction, perceived value, and emotional attachment (Chen & Chen, 2010; Gursoy et al., 2014; Kim & Thapa, 2017). Effects are seen throughout all travel phases (Loureiro, 2014; Ali et al., 2016; Malik et al., 2020;). Although all TE dimensions influence LOY, their impact varies by context - e.g., ecotourism, aesthetics, entertainment, and education have greater influence than escapism (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). While some satisfied tourists seek novelty and may not return (Dolnicar et al., 2015), TE still strongly predicts LOY, especially when linked to well-being.

Based on this, we propose:

H2: The relationship between TE and LOY is significant.

H2a: The relationship between aesthetics and LOY is significant.

H2b: The relationship between entertainment and LOY is significant.

H2c: The relationship between education and LOY is significant.

H2d: The relationship between escapism and LOY is significant.

1.3. Loyalty (LOY)

Emotionally attached visitors are more likely to adopt sustainable practices that support local communities (Aytekin et al., 2023). Loyalty fosters pro-environmental attitudes, leading to repeat visits, recommendations, and conservation actions (Pan & Liu, 2018; Cheng et al., 2022). This dynamic is often described as “green loyalty,” where commitment to eco-destinations encourages responsible conduct.

In nature-based tourism, loyalty is strengthened by satisfaction and attachment to natural features like biodiversity and landscapes, which, in turn, promote ERB (Polnyotee & Thadaniti, 2014; Sangpikul, 2017). Loyalty also predicts behaviours such as rational resource use and sustainable practices in natural settings (Chen et al., 2020). Recent research highlights the influence of perceived value, satisfaction, eco-destination image, biospheric values, and visible sustainability efforts by providers (Luo et al., 2024; Zhao & Weng, 2024).

In campsites, where daily actions directly affect the environment, tourists with strong emotional bonds to nature tend to behave more responsibly. Loyalty among campers has been consistently linked to higher levels of environmentally responsible behaviour (ERB). This relationship can be interpreted through behavioural, environmental, and social psychology theories. Loyal campers act more responsibly because they are emotionally attached to the natural site and wish to preserve it (Ramkissoon et al., 2013). According to Schwartz’s (1977) Norm Activation Theory, individuals behave pro-environmentally when personal norms are triggered. For loyal tourists, familiarity with the campsite heightens awareness of consequences and personal responsibility, activating moral norms that encourage responsible behaviour. Similarly, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) explains that loyal campers often perceive themselves as part of a nature-respecting, low-impact community. They seek to act consistently with their self-image as loyal and responsible individuals, as proposed in Cialdini’s (2001) Commitment and Consistency Theory, and are further motivated by intrinsic care for nature described in Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Thus, loyalty and positive experiences form a reinforcing feedback loop, strengthening both sustainable behaviour and long-term destination commitment.

Based on this, we propose:

H3: The relationship between LOY and SERB is significant.

H3a: The relationship between LOY and RBTF is significant.

H3b: The relationship between LOY and RUP is significant.

H3c: The relationship between LOY and SB on a campsite is significant.
H3d: The relationship between LOY and RB on a campsite is significant.
H3e: The relationship between LOY and EOBR is significant.

1.4. Site-specific environmentally responsible behaviour (SERB)

SERB refers to tourists' conscious efforts to minimise their ecological footprint and support sustainable practices while travelling. This multidimensional construct includes pro-environmental behaviour (active preservation of nature), sustainable behaviour (long-term commitment to ecosystems and communities), and environmentally friendly behaviour (individual harm reduction, such as waste minimisation and wildlife protection) (Halpenny, 2010; Lee et al., 2013; Cheng et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2023;). In camping tourism, Cegur Radović et al. (2022) developed a framework with five behavioural domains: responsible behaviour towards flora and fauna (RBTF), responsible use of products (RUP), sustainable behaviour on a campsite (SB), responsible behaviour on a campsite (RB), and encouraging others to behave responsibly (EOBR). This model offers a robust basis for examining SERB in outdoor accommodation settings. Growing academic interest in SERB highlights the role of individual behaviour in destination sustainability. Psychological drivers such as tourist satisfaction, place attachment, and loyalty have proven influential (Han et al., 2019; Aytekin et al., 2023), though outcomes are context-dependent. Education-based interventions (e.g., environmental interpretation programmes) show varied effectiveness across cultures and demographics (Cheng et al., 2022; Cegur Radović, 2025). Physical and social factors, such as visible sustainability infrastructure and normative cues, also enhance SERB by encouraging social modelling and reinforcing pro-environmental norms (Kiatkawsin & Han, 2017). As nature-based tourism expands, especially post-pandemic, understanding these behavioural drivers in camping contexts is increasingly important for both research and destination management.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Measurement scale, data collection and sample

Tourists' attitudes were measured using a 7-point Likert scale. TE was assessed with the 14-item, 4-dimension scale by Hosany and Witham (2010); LOY with 3 items from Lee et al. (2014); and ERB with 22 items across 5 dimensions from Cegur Radović et al. (2022). Appendix 1 shows a list of all constructs and variables. Data were collected on-site between May and October 2024 in 6 Continental Croatian and 30 Portuguese campsites, using a convenience sample (N=200 per country) of 400 valid questionnaires. Questionnaires were available in six languages (English, Croatian, Portuguese, Slovenian, German, and Italian). The questionnaire was translated from English to Croatian. The modified questionnaire from the Croatian language was translated to English and the Portuguese, Slovenian, German, and Italian languages. In Croatia, 308 questionnaires were collected, but only 200 were valid (65,6%). In Portugal, 225 questionnaires were collected, but only 200 were valid (88.8%).

3. FINDINGS

The sample analysis reveals notable differences between tourists in campsites in Croatia and Portugal. In Croatia, campers tend to be older, while in Portugal, they are generally younger. Although rest and recreation are the main travel motives in both countries (Portugal 86.9%, Croatia 73%), Croatian tourists are more driven by natural beauty (64.5%), whereas fun is a stronger motive for Portuguese tourists (44% vs. 18%). Travel companions also differ: Croatian tourists mostly travel with a partner (56.5%), while Portuguese tourists tend to come with family (64.5%). First-time visits are more frequent in Croatia (75%) than in Portugal (57%). Overall, the two groups differ in age, travel motives, and companions.

Table 1: **Sample structure of tourists in campsites in Croatia and Portugal (N=400)**

Characteristics	Croatia (%)	Portugal (%)	Pearson chi-square
Gender			
Female	48.5 %	63%	5.4
Male	51.5 %	37%	
Age			
18-25	11.0 %	18.5 %	40.12**
26-35	14.0 %	16.5 %	
36-45	16.5 %	33.0 %	
46-55	20.0 %	18.5 %	
56-65	23.0 %	9.0 %	
>65	15.5 %	4.0 %	
The main motive for arrival			
Rest and relaxation	73.0 %	86.9 %	10.8**
The beauty of nature and landscape	64.5 %	53.6 %	4.53*
New experiences	32.5 %	40.5 %	2.52
Fun	18.0 %	44.0 %	29.6**
Sports and recreation	12.5 %	12.5 %	0.00
Gastronomic offer	13.0 %	8.3 %	2.05
Health	5.0 %	8.3 %	1.66
Something else	4.5 %	8.9 %	2.94
Travel partners			
Go alone	0.5 %	3.0 %	88.2**
Partner	56.5 %	18.5 %	
Family (with children)	21.5 %	64.5 %	
Friends/colleagues	19.5 %	13.0 %	
Organised group of people	2.0 %	1.0 %	
Number of previous visits			
This is my first time	75.0%	57.0%	19.01**
I have been visiting for a long time	11.0%	11.0%	
Two or more visits before	8.5%	19.0%	
Only once before	5.5%	13.0%	

*Significant at the 0.05 level; **significant at the 0.01 level.

Source: Research results

3.1. Measurement Model

The study uses PLS-SEM to evaluate measurement and structural models, following guidelines by Hair et al. (2014). Validity and reliability are assessed through factor loadings, AVE, Cronbach's alpha, and Composite Reliability (Table 2). Four SERB items (SERB1, SERB5, SERB9, SERB13) were removed due to low loadings. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.582 to 0.947, and CR from 0.627 to 0.979, confirming internal consistency. After removing the "responsible behaviour in a campsite" dimension, all factor loadings surpassed 0.7 and AVEs exceeded 0.5, indicating strong reliability (Hair et al., 2017) in Croatian model.

Table 2: Factor loadings, CR and AVE (N=400) - Croatian and Portuguese models

CONSTRUCT	DIMENSIONS	ITEMS	Croatian model				Portuguese model			
			FL	α	CR	AVE	FL	α	CR	AVE
TOURISM EXPERIENCE	AESTHETICS	TE1	0.858	0.885	0.886	0.743	0.891	0.908	0.913	0.785
		TE2	0.862				0.839			
		TE3	0.853				0.897			
		TE4	0.873				0.914			
	ENTERTAINMENT	TE5	0.964	0.863	0.959	0.922	0.979	0.973	0.973	0.948
		TE6	0.961				0.973			
		TE7	0.955				0.969			
	EDUCATION	TE8	0.940	0.885	0.940	0.884	0.928	0.938	0.941	0.889
		TE9	0.941				0.952			
		TE10	0.940				0.948			
	ESCAPISM	TE11	0.729	0.875	0.906	0.636	0.686	0.754	0.758	0.669
		TE12	0.723				0.790			
		TE13	0.833				0.818			
		TE14	0.893				0.846			
LOYALTY		LOY1	0.941	0.896	0.858	0.830	0.973	0.958	0.965	0.923
		LOY2	0.836				0.927			
		LOY3	0.951				0.980			
SITE-SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR	RBTf	SERB1	0.400	0.806	0.848	0.723	0.685	0.912	0.921	0.792
		SERB2	0.905				0.881			
		SERB3	0.918				0.931			
		SERB4	0.713				0.878			
		SERB5	0.699				0.867			
	RUP	SERB6	0.810	0.816	0.927	0.716	0.830	0.718	0.718	0.641
		SERB7	0.841				0.826			
		SERB8	0.886				0.744			
	SB IN A CAMPSITE	SERB9	0.652	0.751	0.763	0.673	0.657	0.808	0.837	0.714
		SERB10	0.873				0.861			
		SERB11	0.866				0.851			
		SERB12	0.708				0.823			
	RB IN A CAMPSITE	SERB13	0.630	0.582	0.627	0.700	0.787	0.546	0.483	0.498
		SERB14	0.775				0.696			
		SERB15	0.894				0.625			
	EORB	SERB16	0.914	0.974	0.979	0.866	0.888	0.953	0.964	0.779
		SERB17	0.945				0.896			
		SERB18	0.929				0.874			
		SERB19	0.910				0.919			
		SERB20	0.930				0.825			
		SERB21	0.942				0.889			
		SERB22	0.945				0.886			

Source: Research results

In the Portuguese model, one variable (T11) from construct TE and four variables from construct SERB (SERB1, SERB9, SERB14, SERB15) were removed due to low factor loadings. Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.546 to 0.947, and the Composite Reliability was between 0.483 and 0.973, confirming the internal consistency and discriminant validity. After excluding the dimension "responsible behaviour in a campsite" from the SERB construct, all factor loadings exceeded 0.7, and AVE-s exceeded 0.5, indicating high reliability (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 3: **Discriminant validity - Croatian model**

	AESTETICHS	ENTERTAINMENT	EDUCATION	ESCAPISM	LOYALTY	RBTF	RUP	SB ON A CAMPSITE	EOBR
AESTETICHS									
ENTERTAINMENT	0.628								
EDUCATION	0.604	0.718							
ESCAPISM	0.731	0.621	0.757						
LOYALTY	0.929	0.521	0.497	0.699					
RBTF	0.407	0.098	0.051	0.195	0.419				
RUP	0.295	0.309	0.262	0.195	0.157	0.476			
SB ON A CAMPSITE	0.405	0.295	0.211	0.251	0.328	0.515	0.549		
EOBR	0.293	0.329	0.507	0.452	0.242	0.098	0.309	0.295	

Source: Research result

Table 4: **Discriminant validity - Portuguese model**

	AESTETICHS	ENTERTAINMENT	EDUCATION	ESCAPISM	LOYALTY	RBTF	RUP	SB ON A CAMPSITE	RB ON A CAMPSITE	EOBR
AESTETICHS										
ENTERTAINMENT	0.761									
EDUCATION	0.761	0.721								
ESCAPISM	0.624	0.488	0.724							
LOYALTY	0.910	0.634	0.634	0.578						
RBTF	0.429	0.334	0.210	0.198	0.375					
RUP	0.470	0.338	0.338	0.423	0.487	0.716				
SB ON A CAMPSITE	0.420	0.584	0.223	0.410	0.406	0.590	0.799			
RB ON A CAMPSITE	0.514	0.397	0.397	0.418	0.544	0.847	0.849	0.769		
EOBR	0.175	0.055	0.213	0.414	0.220	0.210	0.404	0.584	0.654	

Source: Research results

The squared correlations between constructs were lower than the corresponding AVE values, confirming discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) except for the aesthetics/loyalty in both models. These values ranged from 0.051 to 0.929 in the Croatian model (Table 3) and from 0.175 to 0.910 in the Portuguese model (Table 4). According to Hair et al. (2024), R^2 values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 indicate small, medium, and large explanatory power, respectively. In the Croatian model, R^2 values ranged from 0.052 to 0.710 (LOY $R^2 = 0.710$; RBTF $R^2 = 0.131$; SB $R^2 = 0.074$; EOBR $R^2 = 0.052$). In the Portuguese model, R^2 values ranged from 0.044 to 0.741 (LOY $R^2 = 0.741$; RBTF $R^2 = 0.100$; RUP $R^2 = 0.177$; SB $R^2 = 0.142$; EOBR $R^2 = 0.044$). Regarding effect size, general guidelines (Cohen, 1988; Hair et al., 2024) suggest that f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. In the Croatian model, f^2 values ranged from 0.001 to 0.998, whereas in the Portuguese model they ranged from 0.046 to 1.099. Both models were estimated using 5,000 bootstrap samples and tested with a two-tailed procedure. In Appendix 2, the Fornell-Larcker criterion of the Croatian and Portuguese models are shown. In Appendix 3, Confidence intervals are shown.

Table 5: f^2 effect size

DIMENSIONS	f^2 Croatian model	f^2 Portuguese model
AESTHETICS -> LOYALTY	0.998	1.099
EDUCATION -> LOYALTY	0.008	0.043
ENTERTAINMENT -> LOYALTY	0.001	0.004
ESCAPISM -> LOYALTY	0.071	0.001
LOYALTY -> ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY	0.054	0.046
LOYALTY -> RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS FLORA AND FOUNA	0.151	0.111
LOYALTY -> RESPONSIBLE USE OF PRODUCTS	0.022	0.215
LOYALTY -> SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR IN A CAMPSITE	0.079	0.165

Source: Research results

4.2. Structural model

Results of the hypothesis testing (Table 6) revealed significant relationships between TE and LOY. In the Croatian model, aesthetics exhibited a moderate ($\beta = 0.752$, $p < 0.01$) and escapism a weak ($\beta = 0.207$, $p < 0.01$) effect on LOY. In the Portuguese model, aesthetics also had a moderate effect ($\beta = 0.762$, $p < 0.01$), while education showed a weak effect ($\beta = 0.155$, $p < 0.01$). LOY significantly predicted several SERB dimensions. In Croatia, RBTF showed a moderate effect ($\beta = 0.362$), while EOBR and SB demonstrated weak effects ($\beta = 0.227-0.271$). In Portugal, LOY had significant effects on RBTF ($\beta = 0.316$), on RUP ($\beta = 0.421$), on SB ($\beta = 0.377$), and EOBR ($\beta = 0.211$), all indicating moderate relationships. In the Croatian model, hypotheses H2b, H2c, H3b, and H3d were not supported, whereas in the Portuguese model, hypotheses H2b, H2d,

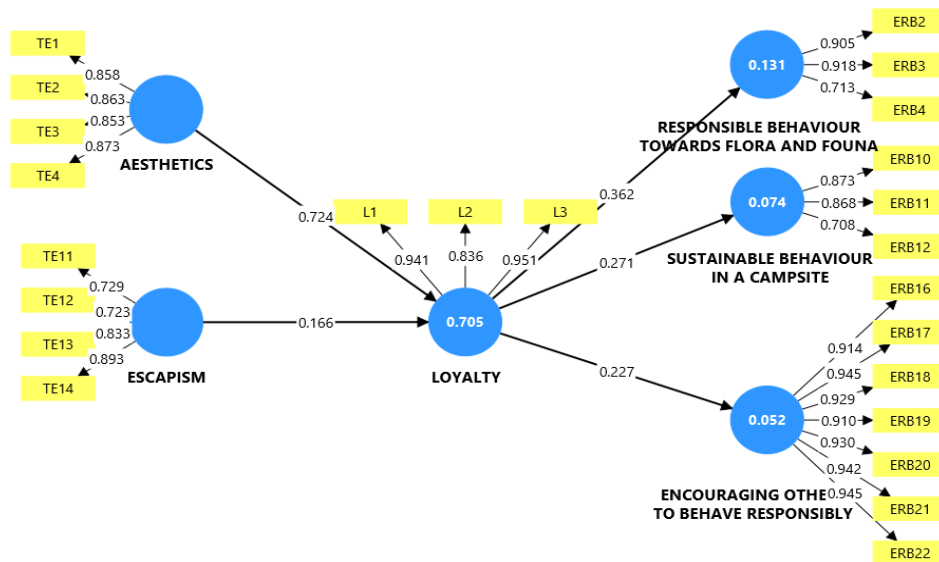
and H3d were not supported. All other hypotheses were confirmed in both models (see Scheme 1 and Scheme 2).

Table 6: Hypothesis testing – Croatian and Portuguese models

Hypothesis	Croatian model						Portuguese model					
	Path coefficient	Sample mean (M)	STDEV	T statistics	P values		Path coefficient	Sample mean (M)	STDEV	T statistics	P values	
H2a	0.752	0.752	0.056	13,520	0.000	supported	0.762	0.762	0.069	10,967	0.000	supported
H2b	-0.024	-0.026	0.053	0.457	0.648	not supported	-0.047	-0.048	0.073	0.650	0.516	not supported
H2c	-0.073	-0.071	0.056	1,298	0.194	not supported	0.155	0.155	0.073	2,138	0.033	supported
H2d	0.207	0.208	0.070	2,939	0.003	supported	0.030	0.031	0.050	0.603	0.546	not supported
H3a	0.362	0.366	0.070	5,144	0.000	supported	0.316	0.318	0.065	4,872	0.000	supported
H3b	0.147	0.161	0.076	1,944	0.052	not supported	0.421	0.428	0.064	6,562	0.000	supported
H3c	0.271	0.278	0.078	3,488	0.000	supported	0.377	0.385	0.060	6,294	0.000	supported
H3e	0.227	0.231	0.067	3,401	0.001	supported	0.211	0.221	0.070	3,012	0.003	supported

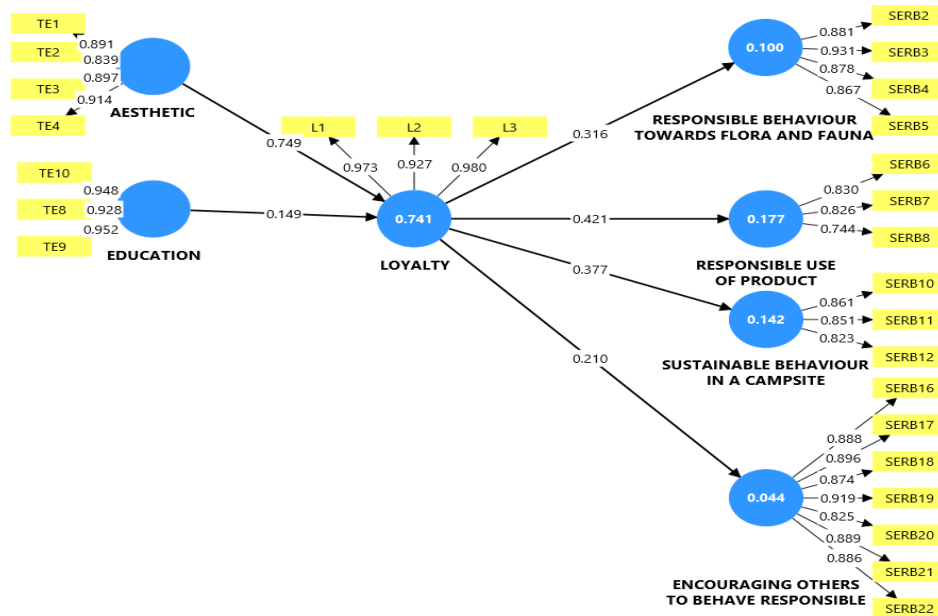
Source: Research results

Scheme 1: Final Measurement and Structural Model Croatia



Source: Research results

Scheme 2: Final Measurement and Structural Model Portugal



Source: Research results

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships between Tourism Experience (TE), Loyalty (LOY), and Site-Specific Environmentally Responsible Behaviour (SERB) among campers in Croatia and Portugal, addressing three research questions. The findings supported H1, confirming significant differences in tourist demographics and motivations between the two countries. Croatian campers were predominantly older and motivated by nature and relaxation, whereas Portuguese campers tended to be younger and driven by social experiences such as fun, aligning with prior studies on cultural and demographic influences in nature-based tourism (Marušić et al., 2023). Regarding H2, the results partially validated Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experience economy theory. In Croatia, aesthetics ($\beta = 0.752$) and escapism ($\beta = 0.207$) significantly enhanced loyalty, while in Portugal, aesthetics ($\beta = 0.762$) and education ($\beta = 0.155$) were key drivers. The non-significant effect of entertainment contrasts with Kastenholz et al. (2017), suggesting that passive experiences may be less influential in camping contexts compared to active or learning-oriented experiences. Overall, aesthetics emerged as the strongest determinant of loyalty, while entertainment had no significant impact in either model.

H3 demonstrated that loyalty positively influenced several SERB dimensions, particularly RBTF ($\beta = 0.362$ in Croatia; $\beta = 0.316$ in Portugal) and SB ($\beta = 0.271$ in

Croatia; $\beta = 0.377$ in Portugal). However, loyalty did not significantly predict RUP in Croatia or RB in either country, suggesting that these behaviours may depend more on contextual or infrastructural factors (e.g., facilities, regulations, or pricing) (Chi, 2021). Notably, encouraging others to behave responsibly (EOBR) was consistently significant ($\beta = 0.227-0.211$), underscoring the social and normative dimensions of environmentally responsible behaviour. The results provide several managerial implications. Campsite managers should prioritise aesthetic and educational experiences (e.g., nature interpretation programmes, participatory workshops) to strengthen visitor loyalty, particularly in Portugal. Campaigns promoting RBTF (e.g., wildlife protection) and SB (e.g., waste separation) can capitalise on loyal tourists' pro-environmental tendencies. Croatian campsites could focus on enhancing aesthetic and escapist elements to attract older, nature-oriented visitors, while Portuguese sites might emphasise social and family-oriented experiences to foster loyalty and responsible behaviour. This study contributes to the understanding of how tourism experiences translate into loyalty and environmentally responsible behaviour in camping contexts.

The main limitations concern the convenience sampling and the unequal number of campsites surveyed (six in inland Croatia and thirty in inland Portugal), which may introduce bias related to campsite characteristics rather than national differences. Future research could adopt probability sampling, include additional European destinations, or employ longitudinal designs to explore how loyalty and SERB evolve over time. Moreover, examining mediators such as place attachment or tourist satisfaction could further elucidate the mechanisms linking TE, LOY, and SERB.

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Appendix 1: Constructs and variables

Construct	Item number	Item	Source
TOURISM EXPERIENCE	TE1	The setting of the campsite was attractive.	Hosany and Witham (2010)
	TE2	The setting of the campsite pays 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.	
LOYALTY	L1	I will positively evaluate this campsite to my friends and relatives as well as other people.	Lee et al., (2014)
	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.	
SITE-SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTALLY RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR	SERB1	When I do outdoor activities (e.g., hiking, jogging, horseback riding, skiing, cycling), I stay within the allowed area.	Cegur Radović et al. (2022)
	SERB2	I do not disturb animals and vegetation in the campsite.	
	SERB3	I do not harm plants and animals in the campsite.	
	SERB4	I do not collect flora and fauna specimens without permission.	
	SERB5	I do not turn rocks and dry wood.	
	SERB6	During my stay in the campsite, I use environmentally friendly products to maintain hygiene.	
	SERB7	During my stay in the campsite, I use products with ecological labels.	
	SERB8	During my stay in the campsite, I buy products or services from locals.	
	SERB9	During my stay in the campsite, I am careful not to make noise and disturb other guests.	
	SERB10	During my stay at the campsite, I conserve water.	
	SERB11	During my stay in the campsite, I conserve energy.	
	SERB12	During my stay in the campsite, I separate waste.	
	SERB13	After leaving the campsite, I leave the place as clean as it was.	
	SERB14	During my stay in the campsite, I use the car as least as possible a means of transport.	

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 T. Cegur Radović, M. Ribeiro Martins, I. Štedul: HOW ENVIRONMENTALLY ...

Construct	Item number	Item	Source
	SERB15	During my stay in the campsite, I throw cigarette butts and chewing gum in a designated place.	
	SERB16	I encourage other to save water in the campsite.	
	SERB17	I encourage others to save energy in the campsite.	
	SERB18	I encourage others not to disturb animals and damage the plants in the campsite.	
	SERB19	I encourage others to separate the waste in the campsite.	
	SERB20	I encourage others to pick up litter left by other people while in the campsite.	
	SERB21	I encourage others to leave the campsite as clean as it was originally.	
	SERB22	I encourage others to throw cigarette butts and chewing gum in a designated place.	

Source: Research results

Appendix 2: Fornell-Larcker criterion

Fornell-Larcker criterion – Croatian model

	AESTETICHS	ENTERTAINMENT	EDUCATION	ESCAPISM	LOYALTY	RBTF	RUP	SB ON A CAMPSITE	RB ON A CAMPSITE	EOBR
AESTETICHS	0.862									
ENTERTAINMENT	0.579	0.960								
EDUCATION	0.549	0.679	0.940							
ESCAPISM	0.636	0.530	0.628	0.798						
LOYALTY	0.830	0.472	0.454	0.627	0.911					
RBTF	0.352	0.079	0.066	0.164	0.352	0.742				
RUP	0.251	0.193	0.210	0.176	0.147	0.437	0.846			
SB ON A CAMPSITE	0.329	0.131	0.148	0.183	0.274	0.473	0.462	0.763		
RB ON A CAMPSITE	0.266	0.153	0.174	0.180	0.305	0.441	0.246	0.742	0.742	
EOBR	0.273	0.317	0.485	0.371	0.227	0.110	0.264	0.244	0.150	0.931

Fornell-Larcker criterion – Portuguese model

	AESTETICHS	ENTERTAINMENT	EDUCATION	ESCAPISM	LOYALTY	RBTF	RUP	SB ON A CAMPSITE	RB ON A CAMPSITE	EOBR
AESTETICHS	0.886									
ENTERTAINMENT	0.713	0.974								
EDUCATION	0.702	0.688	0.943							
ESCAPISM	0.548	0.432	0.619	0.776						
LOYALTY	0.854	0.615	0.675	0.518	0.960					
RBTF	0.393	0.315	0.230	0.176	0.358	0.830				
RUP	0.386	0.293	0.356	0.318	0.417	0.517	0.739			
SB ON A CAMPSITE	0.370	0.214	0.312	0.324	0.377	0.549	0.610	0.845		
RB ON A CAMPSITE	0.408	0.327	0.320	0.320	0.460	0.580	0.530	0.549	0.706	
EOBR	0.166	0.046	0.202	0.353	0.211	0.166	0.331	0.518	0.486	0.883

Source: Research results

Appendix 3: Confidence intervals

DIMENSIONS	Croatian model	Portuguese model
	97.5%	97.5%
AESTHETICS -> LOYALTY	0.861	0.854
EDUCATION -> LOYALTY	0.041	0.273
ENTERTAINMENT -> LOYALTY	0.076	0.099
ESCAPISM -> LOYALTY	0.344	0.120
LOYALTY -> ENCOURAGING OTHERS_TO BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY	0.360	0.360
LOYALTY -> RESPONSIBLE BEHAVIOUR_TOWARDS FLORA AND FOUNA	0.498	0.447
LOYALTY -> RESPONSIBLE USE OF PRODUCTS	0.294	0.547
LOYALTY -> SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIOUR_IN A CAMPSITE	0.430	0.498

Source: Research results

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