An Exploratory Study on RV Travel in Taiwan: College Students’ Perceptions

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The purpose of this study was to assess a sample of what the next generation of Taiwanese recreation and tourism-related majors expected from a potential recreational vehicle (RV) experience. University students in 2 locations were surveyed to identify which one of the advantages of RV use might inspire them to make the investment in this type of recreational resource. The image of RV purposes and benefits were measured, and a series of t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were used to analyze the responses. The results demonstrated that respondents were very interested in RV activities, and this group of advocates for recreation and tourism preferred facilitated campgrounds and looked toward being able to afford more luxurious RVs as they age. In other results, participants ranked sanitary conditions the most desirable and microwaves as least desirable in terms of the services and amenities of the RV. Results of the study may be useful to RV marketers.

KEYWORDS RV recreation, outdoor recreation, motor-home features, tourism, leisure activity
INTRODUCTION

What allure does the possibility of owning or renting a “recreational vehicle” (RV) seem to have for university students who have selected a recreational and tourism related major? What do they think an RV is? Does the advent of a four-wheel-drive sport utility vehicle mean freedom for young people to roam, or does a self-propelled motor home with many social amenities (microwave, bathroom, and queen-sized bed) offer the next generation of consumers other benefits worthy of a large financial investment? This study focused on surveying 244 recreation and tourism-related majors about these questions.

Since the Taiwanese government introduced an initiative to shorten the work day in 2001, citizens have enjoyed more leisure time for relaxation. Consequently, conceptions of recreation and relaxation have evolved, and the market for traveling in Taiwan has increased (Zhuang, 2006). Chick (1998) reported that the ideas of recreation and relaxation translated easily in his university anthropology class into a variety of Western and non-Western languages and cultures. He maintained that the idea of recreation for pleasure is a universal concept.

However, the RV or “motor home” conjures up for Americans a very specific image of a giant house on wheels, but the RV may mean something very different in other cultures. In a 2006 survey of Taiwanese college students majoring in recreation or tourism, 44% identified the vehicle Americans call a “sport utility vehicle,” or SUV, as an RV—a distinction that might surprise American vehicle advertisers. While Americans may use SUVs to get to far-away, backcountry camping spots, middle-aged and older Americans would not consider using SUVs as “homes-on-wheels.” However, in the highly populated country of Taiwan, where space is scarce, the SUV is considered the primary recreational vehicle for camping travelers, and an SUV may find itself being used as a little motor home.

Sutter (2002) wrote that automobile use has been on the rise in the United States, and Daquino (2005) found that an increase in outdoor recreational pursuits was correlated with an increased use of vehicles for recreation. While exact numbers of campers, vehicles, sites, campgrounds, and dollars spent is nearly impossible to find, there has been some agreement among experts of an upward trend. “According to the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA), an estimated 25 million Americans from every walk of life enjoy the benefits of RV travel, and the number is growing rapidly” (Smith, 2004b, p. 30). In the Randall Travel Marketing report of Top Ten Travel and Tourism Trends for 2007-2008, it was also shown that “nearly eight million American households owned at least one RV—a 15% increase over the past five years” (p. 9). Garst (2005) found, “In fact, the automobile made a significant impact on Americans’ relationship to nature and how
they chose to experience nature. The automobile became the mechanism of escape—a technology that changed American culture” (p. 12).

Smith (2004b) stated that there were 12,000 privately-owned campgrounds in the United States, with facilities ranging from basic water and sewage facilities to luxury resorts. Manske stated in 1995 that there were more than 16,000 publicly and privately owned campgrounds in the United States, a growth of 4,000 campground facilities or 25%, in nine years. In 2004 there were 8,000 public campgrounds in the nation, located mostly in national and state parks and wildlife areas. These tend to be more primitive, but most offer some basic sanitation facilities and access to recreation areas. Thus, the range of campgrounds—both public and private—appears to vary from about 16,000 to 20,000.

As Zhuang (2006) pointed out, RVs are not manufactured in Taiwan. Additionally, retailers and self-importers face heavy import fees, running from 35% of the retail cost in shipping taxes, 25% shipping fees, and 5% title transfer fee (You, 2006). These constitute a 40-45% increase in retail prices, making an RV that costs $50,000 in the United States cost $90,000 by the time it reaches Taiwan.

Secondly, parking is a critical issue in Taiwan, and few cities offer enough public space to park a large RV, and the costs for private spaces are exorbitant. Chen (2002) stated that campers or conversion vans are currently the two most popular RVs in Taiwan. These two have met the needs of RVers in Taiwan. A great example would be larger vans (usually a Volkswagen T4) retrofitted with beds, ovens, refrigerators, and extra storage. Because these modified vehicles remain the same size as normal vans, they can be parked more easily than larger RVs, do not need special hookups, and face no bans on highway travel. Moreover, the retrofitted vehicles can also continue to be used for basic transportation, as well. They have been the standard of Taiwanese RVing.

The RV growth in Taiwan has been slow as a result of the lack of RV facilities across the country (Tu & Tong, 2000), and recently, the cost of vehicle fuel has become a deterrent for RV owners and has affected the RV industry adversely (Dodson, 2007). The Formosa Camping and Caravanning Club (2006) reported only 168 campgrounds registered in Taiwan, with very few offering RV specific facilities or electrical hookups. The newest campgrounds usually offer RV hookups and camping facilities, but a few are designated as RV camps by name only and older camps boast no facilities (Chen, 2002). Moreover, it is difficult to learn to drive a large vehicle on crowded and narrow Taiwanese roads. People who want to drive RVs must have a regular automobile license and a clean driving record for several years before testing for an RV license (Cai, 2005). Zhao (2005) agreed with these assessments as reasons for RVs’ slow growth patterns. Additionally, major highways are only now opening to RVs in Taiwan. Since the two-day
weekend has been in place for several years, the government has begun to allow trailers and RVs on Taiwan’s roads (Cai, 2005). Xiang-Jian You, Vice President of Taiwan’s largest RVing and camping club, defined an RV as a refitted car, SUV, or van with hygiene, cooking, sleeping, and living facilities, or a Western-style RV (You, 2006). He made the point that an RV is not just an SUV or a car. The American distinction of what constitutes an RV is much clearer.

Golowenski (2005) defined the different types of U.S. RVs in increasing order of expense and luxury: (a) pop-up camper—a trailer that pops into a sleeping tent with no amenities or facilities; (b) truck camper—removable, hard-shell unit that fits on the bed of a pick-up truck and can hold facilities; (c) travel and/or fifth-wheel trailer—the most popular American RV, which includes a full kitchen and bathroom facilities, large beds, entertainment systems, and storage; (d) van/motorhome/bus—the largest, hardest to drive, most amenity-filled, and most expensive of the RVs, with prices ranging new from $2,500 for a pop-up to over $1 million for a luxury van, motor home, or bus. One result of this study may be to gain a perspective from young adults in Taiwan about the features that might make an RV worth their consideration.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess what a sample of current Taiwanese recreation and tourism-related majors expected from a potential RV experience as they have been exposed to courses with knowledge about the RV as part of recreation. University students in two locations were surveyed to identify the characteristics of RV use that might inspire them to make the investment in this type of recreational resource. The image of RV purposes and benefits were measured.

Significance of the Study

In spite of the abundance of RVs and motor homes in the United States, and the increasing popularity of weekend, in-the-country vacations for both Americans and Taiwanese, the vehicles have been making a slow penetration into the Taiwanese market. As regulations relax and Taiwanese camp owners recognize the benefits of adding RV facilities to their sites, RVs and related industries may grow at a greater rate than in the past (You, 2006). Because both researchers and marketers in RV-related fields might benefit from being informed about the demand and the market orientation for RVs, this study was aimed to offer researchers and marketers further insights into the demands and perceptions of future RV users.
Culture plays a role in influencing different ethnicities in their travel preferences; however, Kim and Jogaratnam (2003) found that Asian and American students’ preferences of travel activity differ only slightly. Although the study indicated that American students preferred participating in outdoor recreational activities, and Asian students preferred touring cities and sightseeing, Michael, Armstrong, and King (2003) also found that Asian students often visit well-known national and state parks when they study abroad. Thus, preferences appear to differ from some established behavior patterns.

Patterns in activities undertaken during outdoor recreation pursuits by Americans and Asians also differs, if only slightly. Walker, Deng, and Dieser (2001) found that for Chinese-heritage visitors to a Canadian national park, their favorite activity compared to Euro-North Americans was viewing wildlife (23% compared to 15% of Euro-North Americans), and the second favorite was viewing scenery (17% vs. 3%). However, camping (18% compared to 10% of Asian) and walking/hiking (21% vs. 10%) were the Euro-North Americans’ first and second favorite activities, respectively.

Consideration of cultural traditions, economic differences across nations, and ethnic social customs are considered useful tools in identifying patterns of social behavior that may influence planning for travel and recreation markets, particularly since different ethnicities have different travel preferences, patterns, and motivations (Kim and Jogaratnam, 2003). Ethnicity has been correlated with variables of identities, a microcultural set with regions of religion, culture, language and social class (Hassan, Craft, & Kortram, 2003).

Studying these population segments may help researchers to understand the recreation and travel market on a decision-relevant basis more effectively and thoroughly. Kim and Jogaratnam (2003) stated in their study of Asian and American college students that the two groups are “surprisingly” similar in their travel preferences and patterns. It could be speculated that some of these preferences and patterns may also be at work to influence interest in what is considered necessary, useful, or “cool” in terms of what equipment is essential to support a quality leisure and recreational experience. These attitudes may vary across cultures that are group-oriented, such as in Taiwan, verses individual-oriented, such as in the United States (Sims, 2006).

In addition, using ethnicity, culture, and social traditions as tools can also point out the inconsistencies that must be studied in depth, such as differences between Taiwanese and American leisure pursuits. Taiwanese cultures have taught students to study diligently because outstanding achievement in study and completion of education could assure them high paying jobs and respectable social status (Lin, Lin, & Lee, 2005).

Another cultural impact was the introduction of the five-day work week in 2001. Due to the Taiwanese student focus on study and lack of leisure
time, they are less interested in leisure and outdoor recreational pursuits. However, in the United States, an employment system was introduced in the 1930s, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, that shortened the length of the work week to an average of five days per week (Hamermesh, 1998). Nevertheless, prior to the 1800s, Americans believed that experiencing wilderness was Americans’ unique identity to show strength, moral purity, and value for important things (Nash, 1967).

Cultural identities can correlate to different perceptions on social interaction during outdoor recreation (Garst, 2005). The focus on family and social connections at RV parks may link to results found in studies of Asian recreation motivations. In comparing genders, Born (1976) and Jobes (1984) found that men participate in maintaining recreational vehicles while women are responsible for preparing foods and organizing social events.

Walker et al. (2001) found in their comparative study of Asian-heritage and Euro-North American visitors to a Canadian national park, that Asians were more motivated by socially interdependent reasons (to fit in, to act modestly within the group) when participating in outdoor recreation, while Euro-North Americans were more motivated by socially independent reasons (introspection, tranquility, autonomy), meaning the Asian visitors were more likely to visit the park and interact as a group, rather than experience the park as individuals.

Despite the potential connection to nature that RVing offers, the activity in general has taken a turn toward luxury. Finley (2005) pointed out that the U.S. National Park Service found in a study conducted from 1995–2004 that backcountry camping of all types decreased by 22%, with backcountry RV camping decreasing by 26%. In addition, RV camping with modern conveniences are increasing. Commercial campgrounds and parks that accommodate RVs numbered more than 8,000, and the combined total of one million sites had an average summer occupancy rate of 77% (Daquino, 2005).

While one study regarding RVing revealed that the Japanese were adopting the caravanning lifestyle, the Taiwanese had not embraced RV vehicles (Zhuang, 2006). Zhuang (2006) reported that Japan had more than 550 RV-equipped campgrounds constructed, with more being built everyday. According to the Formosa Camping and Caravanning Club’s (2006) report, if Taiwan followed Japan’s example of eliminating duties on RVs and constructing more RV-friendly campgrounds, RVing would become a more popular vacation activity. A practical factor to consider in Taiwan, however, is the sheer limitation of the number of roads, parks, and recreational sites to which people may motor. With the total distance of Taiwan from north to south being approximately 245 miles, and with the distance east to west at the widest center of the nation being just over 89 miles, the opportunities for driving an RV to distant points is limited.
In the 1900s, when automobiles were becoming the main source of transportation used by Americans for traveling, the terminology “auto camp” referred to the campers who drove together to a recreational camp (Belasco, 1979). Belasco (1979) also noted that the remaking of leisure-auto camp had caught the government’s attention. Leaders started to construct and maintain automobile infrastructures, which included road construction and recreational facilities. More importantly, well modernized road construction and developed recreational facilities provided campers with safe campgrounds, which enhanced campers’ motivation to experience nature as well as to return in the future. Garst (2005) highlighted, “Indeed, the main reason that the automobile contributed to the remaking of leisure—the remaking of America in fact—was because it provided a means for escape” (p. 19).

Automobile travel allowed people to escape city-life bringing a new change to American’s society and culture. Americans’ preferences in RV campgrounds lean toward more facilities, comforts, conveniences and activities. In addition, they also have shown a definite preference for relaxation and family-oriented sites and facilities. Holdnak and Rodgers (2004) investigated the importance of amenities, purposes for purchasing, and motivations for choosing a campsite at a large Midwestern ownership campground. Ownership campgrounds operate like condominium associations, with residents owning individual campsites meant for RVs with a shared interest in common areas.

Holdnak and Rogers (2004) found that most owners, described by the camp manager, were blue-collar workers with families. They were older than 36, had some college education, earned $35,000 to $74,999, lived in urban areas, and owned their campsites for longer than 10 years. The researchers discovered that campers ranked having “family/friends near” as the most important motivation to purchase and use RVs and RV campgrounds, followed by “price/value;” however, “amenities” was ranked the lowest of the motivations. Nevertheless, the researchers found that camper age and length of ownership affects the importance of campground amenities.

Older owners ranked amenities as less important than younger, newer members. Also, the researchers ascribed differences in motivations for purchasing a campsite. The owners’ purposes also varied by age, with “relaxation” as the most important and “experiencing nature” as the least important. The amenities, ranked in order as being most important to least important to owners, were: (a) camping, (b) pools/beach, (c) natural areas, (d) comfort stations, (e) recreation centers, and (f) fishing/boating.

Literature Summary

Even though the newest generation of RV owners places more importance on amenities as a whole, they spend less time in their RVs. Younger RVers travel with their families during weekend getaways, while older campers
have the time and resources to spend months or years traveling by RV (Smith, 2004b, and Mattingly, 2005). Smith (2004b) described several different motivations for RVers: those who seek the “romance and high adventure on the open road,” snowbirds, fulltime RVers, summer and winter vacationers who use the RV as a cottage or cabin, hunters and anglers, sports fans, and families who need a large second vehicle. “The freedom RVers have to move—to be where they want, when they want, for as long as they want—is the basis of their ability to . . . control their own lives” (Counts & Counts, 1997, in Mattingly, 2005, p. 8). Similarly, Yinger’s (1960) study of values of lifestyle and Mattingly’s (2005) study of the population of two American RV campgrounds found “a diverse population of individualists who value self-contained travel, freedom, relaxation, and sociality. . . . full-time and long-term RVers practice boundary work and form sub-cultural identities based, primarily, on levels of commitment and divergent RVing practices (p. i).”

Finally, Smith (2004a) observed that the increasing popularity in amenity-filled campgrounds may be due to their cost-effectiveness. In order to reduce costs, Smith (2004a) recommended several techniques, mostly aimed at keeping the towing weight low by taking advantage of campground facilities: using full hookups at campgrounds overnight, keeping only enough food and water on board to make it to the next campground, and disposing of trash and sewage every day. Matassa, McEntyre, and Watson (2003) also observed that in the United States, there is an effective method to keep campgrounds clean. It is an incentive-based voluntary program called the Clean Marina Initiative that encourages campers to minimize wastewater pollution. Thus, amenity-filled campgrounds increasingly seek to protect the quality of water in the recreational reservoirs and streams near campgrounds as well.

Since RV campgrounds in Taiwan lean toward more facilities, comfort, conveniences, and activities (Cai, 2005), Chen (2002) pointed out that the newest, largest campgrounds boast, often with special advertising and signs, about providing electricity, water, swimming pools, barbeque pits, and restaurants. Smaller campgrounds are following suit, but at a slower pace. Chen (2002) also cited the lack of facilitated RV parks as a major reason for the lack of participation. Additionally, he observed that traditional ideas of what camping involves (building campfires from kindling, catching and eating fish, etc.) keeps many people from investigating the pastime. With all these things in mind, there are several camping and RVing clubs and organizations attempting to bring the comparative luxuries of RV camping to the Taiwanese public.

The desire for increased luxury and convenience can also been seen in the buying and upgrading patterns of RV ownership. Golowenski (2005) found that a number of long-time RV owners go through an upgrade process, many starting at tent or truck-camping, upgrading to a towable trailer, then to a small RV, and ending with a fairly expensive and large RV. Convenience
and comfort played a large role in decisions to upgrade, as did increased time in the RV and costs associated with towing vehicles. Additionally, those towed RVs tended to upgrade their towing vehicles to gain more power in addition to upgrading the size and luxury of the trailers themselves.

Recently, campers’ preferences moved toward more facilities, comforts, conveniences, and activities. In turn, the modern convenience campground facilities influence the campers’ motivation to experience nature as well as their probability to return in the future. Nevertheless, for those camping and RVing clubs and organizations who attempt to bring the comparative luxuries of RV camping to the Taiwanese public, they must first construct amenity-filled campgrounds for campers and make preparation plans for keeping campgrounds clean as well.

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study used a survey to gather perceptions of selected Taiwanese college and university recreation and tourism-related majors regarding features seen as desirable in an RV. A sampling from two institutions—one located in central Taiwan and the other located in southern Taiwan—was used to assess perceptions.

Participants

The study’s population consisted of on-campus students majoring in recreation and tourism-related studies at Taiwanese universities in central and southern Taiwan. The researchers obtained approval from two institutions to survey students. Recreation and tourism-related majors were chosen as the targeted sample due to their knowledge of the most current trends in the leisure, tourism, and traveling fields. This group was also selected as potentially an emerging market for RV and camping products.

The population was composed of 312 students, including every member of the recreation and tourism-related studies programs at the two selected universities. The survey of 36 items was administered to eight classes of students. With 265 of these returning surveys, a response rate of 84.9% was generated. Of the returned instruments, 244 were returned complete and deemed usable for the study. There was no follow-up survey administered to the nonrespondents.

Data collection took place between March 15 and March 20, 2006. The researchers contacted the chairs of the recreation and tourism-related studies programs at the cooperating universities, requesting their participation in the study. The chairs then distributed the survey instruments to the programs’ professors, who, in turn, administered the surveys during class time. The professors then returned the completed surveys to the researchers.
Instrumentation

The researchers adopted You’s survey questionnaire (2006). The primary written language of the sample was Mandarin; therefore, after the survey was administered, the researchers were then asked to translate the Mandarin questionnaire back into English. To ensure clarity and consistency, two graduate students who were fluent in English and Mandarin, were asked to provide suggestions to improve wording and structure in the survey’s questions and organization.

The survey instrument included five sections—demographic information, RV features, camping experiences, perceptions of an RV, and five “yes/no” questions pertaining to RV issues. The RV features consisted of 14 survey items, which were categorized into four components that respondents envisioned an RV to contain, including living rooms, kitchens, restrooms, and bedrooms. The first component had six survey items: tables, televisions, CD players, sofas, DVD players, and air conditioners. The second component had four items: sinks and tables, ovens, refrigerators, and microwaves. The third component had three items: toilet, shower, and sinks; and the last component has one item: beds. Each item asked about two separate but related questions: the amount of students’ knowledge about equipment or features, as well as perceived importance of each piece of equipment in an RV.

The demographic item regarding age divided participants into two groups—20 and under and over 20. Because Taiwan’s college students are normally been admitted into college at the age of 18, by the time they reach their 20s, they have being studying at college for two years. The younger group of students would have had less coursework regarding features and purposes of the RV, while the older group would have had relevant course work on the subject. This dichotomy of age groupings allowed for the comparison of differences in the knowledge bases about the RV.

Table 1 shows the demographic data of the participants, while the attitudes and camping experiences of the participants are shown in Table 2. The majority of respondents reported that they had been in a class on the topic of camping (64.3%), liked camping (88.5%), and had experience in camping (80.7%). However, only a small number (8.2%) had actually been camping more than two times.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Under or equal to 20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 2 Attitudes and Camping Experience of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes and Experience</th>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Camping classes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>64.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>35.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like to camping</td>
<td>Like</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>88.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Like</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of camping experiences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1–2</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>80.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3–4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 or more</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Analysis

A series of t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were used to generate a response to the question of elements and characteristics of RVs that Taiwanese recreation and tourism related majors perceived. For the t-tests, the independent variables were gender, age, camping-related classes taken, and whether or not participants enjoy camping, and the dependent variable was the perception of the extent of the presence of a selected aspect of RV equipment (for example, for Item 1, the extent of the presence of a table). For the ANOVAs, the independent variables were the frequency of camping experiences, with three levels of experience given for respondents to choose from. The dependent variable was the same as in the t-tests. For the research question of elements and characteristics of RVs and RV campgrounds that Taiwanese college students majoring in recreation and tourism related desire, a series of t-tests and one-way ANOVAs were used. The independent variables were the same as used for the research question of elements and characteristics of RVs in Taiwan possess. However, the dependent variables measured the importance of each piece of equipment (for example, for Item 1, the importance of the table).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey was considered to have a strong reliability with the Cronbach’s alpha value of .89 for the entire survey, and .89 and .88 respectively for the first part of questions and second part of the questions of each item compared to a minimum required value of .70 considered evidence of reliability.

The descriptive statistics revealed that the perceived existence of RV equipments, restroom: toilet ($M = 4.09$) was ranked the most existing element, followed by CD player ($M = 4.06$), and bed ($M = 3.98$) while microwave was ranked the least apparent item ($M = 3.34$). As for
the perceived importance of RV equipments, restroom: toilet the most important item \((M = 4.17)\), followed by CD player \((M = 4.08)\), and air conditioner/heater \((M = 4.06)\), and with the microwave being the least important item \((M = 3.41)\).

The results of the \(t\)-tests performed for the research question regarding elements and characteristics of RVs in Taiwan that students would desire found several elements with results reaching a level of significance. Among the five independent variables (gender, age, camping classes, preference for camping, and experience), age and taken camping classes were found to have significant effect on the presence of RV equipment elements. In summary of independent \(t\)-tests for the effect of age on each item’s presence in an RV, the kitchen sink, refrigerator, toilet, bathroom shower, and bed were found to have significant different levels for age, with the respondents over twenty years old rating them of greater importance in an RV (See Table 3). For the independent variable—whether or not respondents had taken a camping-related class—respondents who had taken a class rated having television as more necessary in an RV. The other survey items on elements in an RV failed to reach a level of significant difference.

A one-way ANOVA was performed to determine the effect of the number of times camping on each item’s preference for camping in an RV. The \(F\) value showed a level of significant difference for bed only. A follow-up least significant difference post hoc test was used to determine which two groups differed. The respondents who had reported the first level of camping experience (one to two times), and the second level of experience (three to four times), differed significantly in their perceptions of the presence of a bed from the respondents who reported having five or more camping experiences, as shown in Table 4.

For the research question of elements and characteristics expected in RV campgrounds—what Taiwanese college students majoring in recreation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>(N)</th>
<th>(M)</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>(p)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen sink</td>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.004</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>.898</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refrigerator</td>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>.859</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>.833</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.964</td>
<td>.002*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>.881</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shower</td>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>.980</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>.899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed</td>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>.993</td>
<td>.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.848</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(*p < .05.\)
and tourism preferred—results of $t$-tests showed a significant difference by gender for bathroom sink only. Females scored higher than males on rating the importance of this item. Aside from the gender variable which reached a significant difference, the age variable also reached significant difference on kitchen sink and table, oven, toilet, bathroom shower, bathroom sink, and bed. Subjects over 20 years old scored these items as being more important than did subjects under 20, with the difference being significant. Summary of independent $t$-tests for the effect of age on each item’s importance in an RV is displayed in Table 5.

A one-way ANOVA and post hoc tests for elements and characteristics of RV campgrounds showed that television, oven, and bed all had significant differences among respondents with different levels of camping experience. A one-way ANOVA to measure camping experience effect of item importance in an RV discovered that respondents who had camped one to two times or three to four times rated television as less important than did those who had camped five or more times. The results for oven and bed produced similar results, with those respondents with the most experience rating amenities as more important (See Table 6 and Table 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen sink and table</td>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>.959</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>.912</td>
<td>.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oven</td>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>.964</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>.955</td>
<td>.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet</td>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>1.012</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>.904</td>
<td>.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shower</td>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.069</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>.929</td>
<td>.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom sink</td>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>.953</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>.921</td>
<td>.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedroom: Bed</td>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.047</td>
<td>.001*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 20</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>.945</td>
<td>.959</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p $< .05$.
TABLE 6 Summary of One-Way ANOVA for Camping Experience Effect on Each Item of Importance in an RV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>8.300</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.767</td>
<td>2.781</td>
<td>.045*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oven</td>
<td>8.246</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.749</td>
<td>3.017</td>
<td>.031*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed</td>
<td>21.841</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.280</td>
<td>8.015</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.

TABLE 7 Intercorrelations of Number of Camping Experiences' Effect on each Item of Importance in an RV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Camping Experiences</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1–2 times</th>
<th>3–4 times</th>
<th>5 times or more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>1–2 times</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.041*</td>
<td>.572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3–4 times</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 times or more</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oven</td>
<td>1–2 times</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.211</td>
<td>.010*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3–4 times</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.004*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 times or more</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed</td>
<td>1–2 times</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3–4 times</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>.000*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 times or more</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.

In response to the perceptions of Taiwanese college students majoring in recreation and tourism regarding recreational vehicles and their uses, the respondents were asked the types of vehicles that qualify as an RV. Only a little more than half the sample selected an American-style RV, or motor home (137 responses, 56.1%). The remaining respondents chose recreational vehicles such as Jeeps, 4×4s, or SUVs (a combined 107 responses, 43.9%).

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The results of the survey questionnaire correspond to the review of literature in several aspects. Regarding the research question involving Taiwanese college students’ (majoring in recreation and tourism-related fields) perceptions of recreational vehicles and their uses, nearly half the sample misinterpreted an RV as defined by American standards. Additionally, You (2006) made an extra effort to point out to his audience that vehicles such as Jeeps and SUVs are often misconstrued by the Taiwanese sample as RVs. According to Chen (2002), Taiwanese tourists use smaller vehicles because of their lack
of exposure to American-style RVs and because of the vehicles’ lower cost and smaller size.

What the emerging markets of young people see as benefits of owning an RV is unclear and worthy of study by someone interested in how changing social conditions, products, and traditional values intersect. As technological change has impacted the world, bringing access to many options for travel to young people, the extent of the current RV availability in industrialized nations continues to be viewed as a “key to escape” or a symbol of gaining independent freedom and may be worthy of further study. Further study is also needed to determine if young adults in Taiwan and the world see the RV as a symbol of social status, good taste, freedom, or some other value that may be self-enhancing or family-enhancing.

Older campers (those traditional students who are over 20 years old) rated amenities both as being more present in a vehicle described as an RV and as being more important in an RV. This matches the results of Finley (2005), who stated that backcountry RVing is decreasing and campground RVing increasing; Cai (2005) noted that Taiwanese RVers expect more luxury from their RVs than they have in the past. The reason for this finding could be that older RVers generally can afford and expect more luxurious vehicles and accommodations. More so than younger campers, older campers appreciate better sleep and clean hygiene facilities, to feel comfortable and to participate in camping activities. One of the items that showed a significant difference was an electrical or generator hook-up, which also logically suggests that these RVers preferred facilitated campgrounds to backcountry RVing. Interestingly, the results of Holdnak and Rodgers (2004) also supported this finding. They found that older and more experienced RVers expected less of an RV campground in terms of amenities. The more facilities that are contained within the RV, the less dependent the RVer becomes on the campground’s facilities. Also, Mattingly (2005) and Smith (2004b) reported that older campers spent longer periods of time in their RVs, making self-contained equipment more convenient and cost-effective.

In this study, the researchers found that respondents who had camped five or more times expected more RV amenities. This result also corresponds to a previous study by Golowenski (2005), who noted that as RVers become more experienced, they tend to upgrade their type of RV and the luxuries within the RV. It is likely that the more experienced campers are older and more financially secure. Campers who are more capable of making a financial investment in a camping facility prefer more luxurious amenities (Golowenski, 2005). This finding does conflict with Smith (2004a), who believed that more experienced campers relied more on campground facilities to reduce costs. Nevertheless, as Chen (2002) cited, Taiwan has not had very many facilitated campgrounds, forcing RVers to rely on self-contained equipment. In addition, as Chen (2002) pointed out, as RVing grows in popularity in Taiwan and new campgrounds are constructed, Taiwanese RVers
may demand that more campsites provide additional amenities. This may, in
turn, shed light on both the age and experience of Taiwanese RVers; younger
and less experienced RVers expect more amenities at campgrounds.

Travel and recreation marketers need to accommodate cultural aware-
ness by understanding changing attitudes across cultures regarding travel
preferences, patterns, and motivations. As global economics, mass media,
and travel have continued to “mix markets,” there is a continuing need to
assess how young adults, as emerging consumers of products and services,
perceive the value of recreational resources, such as parks, RV’s, and related
recreation and leisure equipment. While cultural differences between East
and West may be observed as continuing in spite of globalism, there may be
more similarities in young adult attitudes toward what an escape to the coun-
try might mean and whether or not an RV vacation provides the optimum
freedom to find variety in a busy life.

Finally, it is interesting that respondents who had taken a camping-
related class found television to be a more necessary amenity. First, because
the respondents were recreation-and tourism-related majors, one might be
expected to have had more exposure than the general population to both
RVing and camping, as well as to recreational tools, equipment and to the
associated facilities. Those who had an even greater exposure to camping in
all its forms expected more amenities of campground facilities which may
be antithetical to a major point of camping which is to gain independence
and a commune with nature. Walker et al. (2001) found that Asian-heritage
wilderness visitors interacted more than Euro-North Americans while in the
wilderness. However, these same writers also stated that the Asian-heritage
visitors participated more in passive activities (such as wildlife watching)
than American visitors. It is possible that this may indicate a difference in
choice of pastimes for more experienced and knowledgeable campers across
cultures, rather than solely among experience levels.

This study found that Taiwanese recreation-and tourism-related studies
majors are very interested in RVing and its associated activities, with the
results suggesting they may prefer facilitated campgrounds earlier in their
RV experience and more luxurious RVs later. Previous studies reported sim-
ilar findings for American RVers and that Taiwanese and American college
students share similar preferences for outdoor recreation.

Offering more information in college recreation and camping courses
may help students (as future travel agents, park rangers, and teachers) dis-
cover and enjoy RVing. If Taiwan produces its own RVs at lower retail costs,
new consumers will need to be educated about the benefits of the RV.

Future Recommendations

For the further study of RVing, researchers should extend investigation
to populations of students in Taiwan’s four regions—northern, central,
southern, and eastern. Since the survey of this study was conducted in two regions of universities, the study results may not be generalized to the whole population of recreation and tourism related studies majors in Taiwan. Furthermore, qualitative research design could be used to explore how campground amenities impacted campers’ motivation to experience RVing and how campers respond to amenity-filled campgrounds. Replication of this study would allow travel and recreation marketers to become aware of different groups’ preferences, which could be useful in the design and development of integrated marketing communication to increase knowledge and awareness of the joys of the RV for prospective campers.

REFERENCES


RV Travel in Taiwan


