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Campers' Characteristic, Recreation Activities and Related Forest Camping Attributes in Shah Alam Agriculture Park, Selangor

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Abstract: A study was conducted to identify the campers' backgrounds and their recreation participation pattern in camping site at Shah Alam Agriculture Park, Selangor. The study has found that the campers were comprised of well-educated youths with tertiary education background. They usually came during festive holiday break with their friends and most of them are the first time visitors. The results also indicated that most of them valued the natural beauty, cleanliness and maintenance in campsite, safety and friendly staff of the park. The main purpose of camping is to enjoy and experiencing nature, escape from daily stress and learning of new experience. In overall, it shows that the campers' dynamics where their emphasis on the naturalness, cleanliness as well as provision of more activities (especially activities involving family recreation or group leadership camping programs) and facilities (using actually tent instead of chalet) would be the criteria to attract campers to this park.

Key words: Camping characteristics, recreation, activities preferences and participation, campground conditions, age, socio-psychological outcomes

INTRODUCTION

Camping as an outdoor recreation activity in forest setting is not a recent phenomenon in Malaysia. It is one of the major forms of outdoor recreation pursued by the recreationists. This leisure activity probably began during the time of Sultanate of Malacca where camping was part of the royal outings and hunting activities. In modern times, however, proper campgrounds are developed with the establishment of forest recreation areas and national, nature or state parks. Although camping does not constitute day-use or day trip activity, recreational activities such as forest hiking, swimming and picnicking did participated by campers. Camping does provide an image of forest recreation where it conjures up visions of tents standing among large trees in the forest beside cool mountain stream or calm lake.

Camping in the forest enables people to stay overnight amidst the outdoor environment while having a dissimilar experience from indoor setting. Dynamic campers usually expect a novel socio-psychological outcome at campgrounds where they stayed. The primary purpose for providing campsite or any other facility by forest custodians is to produce user satisfaction through the provisions of good sanitary facilities, safe fire areas and safety from natural and man made hazards. These objectives could be used as the main criteria for a good campground. However, other advantage such as

availability of attractive sites surrounding the area including scenic beauty, waterfall, fishing spot or white sandy beach may act as complimentary points to the particular campground.

There are many types of camps such as central camps, forest camp, backcountry camp, peak load camp, long-term camps and traveler's camps^[1]. However, this study is more interested in the central camps as this is the type provided by Shah Alam Agriculture Park (SAAP). In SAAP, a large forest area is set aside for camping by visiting public. At the same time, camping approaches by public are changing where they seek more conveniences. Thus, the campground should be flexible enough to accommodate new camping methods as they become more popular. One of the reasons an individual involves in any recreation activities including camping since it is dynamic and challenging^[2]. If the image of campground remains unchanged for many years, it may loose its attractiveness. Understanding the campsite itself is important for camp manager. Therefore, the management needs to know why people choose certain campsite and not to the other. Question like "Is this the type of campground user prefer?", "Did the campsite meet the basic requirement?" and "What facilities we have?" are constantly being asked^[3].

With this in regards, this research draw the attention to a study conducted in Shah Alam Agriculture Park (SAAP) about the use pattern and preferences of user

towards camping. In this study, the visitors' socio-economic characteristics and their camping attributes including purpose of visits, activities and camping facilities preferred will be examined and described. In addition, several management issues and constraints in relation to the campers and their camping attributes will be discussed, as well as several possible solutions to overcome these management problems.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Shah Alam Agriculture Park is located in the midst of Klang Valley, the most developed area in Peninsular Malaysia. The park is surrounded by a heavily developed residential area, industrial estates and bordering the New Klang Valley Expressway that connected the capital city of Kuala Lumpur and the main port of the nation. This park was first introduced to the public in 1986 as an agro-forestry park to serve as a permanent exhibition center for the development and progress of agriculture activities of the country. This 1,258 ha site includes permanent displays, life demonstrations, cultural exhibits, recreational facilities, accommodation, open-air amphitheatres, nature trails, public amenities and a comprehensive range of educational activities. It is a combination of natural and man-made beauty. Campsites in the park are a notable-improved area with facilities such as BBQ sites, tables, stools and other facilities to provide user a more comfortable environment.

The study population was adult campers (defined as anyone 16 years and older with secondary education background who involved in camping for at least one night stay). Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to the campers using purposive (those who have had experience camping)^[4]. A total of 250 respondents aged 16 and above were interviewed on weekdays, Sundays, public holidays and school holidays. A pilot survey was carried out two week before the actual field survey in order to determine the limitation of the study and to rectify any potential errors found in the questions. The field survey involved stratification based on time block done during weekends and weekdays both in the morning and in afternoon. There were a total of 150 samples that were usable. The analysis consisted of descriptive analysis, cross tabulation of variables and comparison for selected variables using chi-squared test. The 95% statistical confidence intervals were calculated for the interval that estimates the population parameter^[5].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-economics background: Socio-economic backgrounds of the campers to the park were investigated

in order to identify the majorities, minorities, characteristics and the patterns of the respondents related to their visitation and on-site camping activities. The proportion of campers was found to be predominantly males (54.7%), two-third of them are still single or unmarried (67.3%) and aged from 16 to 25 years (60.7%). Majority of respondents who visited SAAP were university students (39.3%) that reflected literally as the 'no income' category, followed by the 'lower middle' income level (20.7%). Most of the campers came to SAAP with their friends or peer groups (37.6%). This observable fact was later followed by the campers who came with their family (21.7%) and as couple (21.5%).

It is notable that more than half of the respondents (58.7%) present in the park were first time visitors and about a fifth of them (18.0%) are the repeated visitor (second time) and quite a number of respondents (14.0%) came to the park for more than three times. Majority (34.1%) of them chose to visit the park during festive and public holiday and followed by school holidays. There was almost equally balance of respondents who had camping experience (56.7%) with those who have not experienced (43.3%). The campers' profile data were analyzed for a variety of reasons including the amount of use, type of use, camper's activities and camper's characteristics and so forth^[6]. These enabled the manager to be able to react to the requirements of the campers by providing the suitable facilities and services and at the same promote this area to this group of user.

The park has managed to attract mainly local visitors that stay not far from this recreation area, whom are within the range of 20 km from the park, followed by those who stay more than 20 km and also a few visitors who stayed more than 25 km range. The mean distance from the campers' homes to SAAP is around 15 km (Table 1). Here, the mean of campers home to the park is around 15 km and it is obvious that distance of recreation area to one's home are likely to affect the recreation behaviour of individuals and their travel pattern^[7].

Campers perceptions and preferences: Most of the respondents preferred forest recreation setting as the highest choice for recreation place to visit during their leisure time. This notion is later followed by recreating at seaside, public park, theme park and national park. The

Table 1: Distance from home to SAAP (km)

Distance (km)	Frequency	(%)	Cumulative (%)
5.00	16	10.7	10.7
10.00	35	23.3	34.0
15.00	47	31.3	64.3
20.00	37	24.7	89.0
25.00	13	8.7	96.7
>30.00	2	1.3	100.0
Total	150	100.0	

Mean = 15.07 km

Table 2: Place preference for recreation

Place	Mean
Forest recreation area	3.35
Seaside	2.65
Public park	2.43
Theme park	2.08
National park	1.94
Island park	1.55
Private recreation park	1.35

Note: The most preferable will have the highest mean score

Table 3: Purpose of visit to SAAP

Purpose	Frequency	Percent (%)
To be with friends	82	54.7
Sightseeing	14	9.3
Education purpose	9	6.0
Rest and relax	16	10.7
Family trip	23	15.3
Total	150	100.0

Table 4: Recreation activities participated

Activity (N = 150)	No. of responds (Yes)	Respondents (%)
Sightseeing	129	86.0
Exercise	112	74.7
Picnicking	104	69.3
Cycling	90	60.0
Photographing	84	56.0
Family day and other similar social event	72	48.0
Educational activities	70	46.7
Living amidst nature	69	46.0
Nature hiking	66	44.0
Fishing	62	41.3
Rope activities	53	35.3
Bird watching	51	34.0
Interpretive trail or event	41	27.3
Kayaking	33	22.0
Rock climbing	16	10.6
Canoeing	16	10.6

campers however were less preferable visiting island park as it might involve more travel cost, longer distance and time consuming (Table 2). A lower preference for visiting private recreation park perhaps of the higher the cost involved^[9].

Purpose of camping: More than half of campers chose to be with friends as the main purpose of their camping trip since the majority of visitors are from youth group. At most of the times youths are usually enjoyed to be with their peers and closed associates since they have there are able to share common interests and enjoyed to pursue outdoor activities^[9]. Family trip to the park is the second most popular reason since camping activity will induce family members to stay together most of the times (Table 3) because the of the forested setting and the surrounding atmosphere seemed to be suitable for family type recreation^[10].

Activities participated during camping: The most popular recreational activities among the campers in the park are sightseeing (calculated from a total of 150 respondents for

Table 5: Conditions to be provided in campground

Condition of Campground	Mean
Cleanliness of campsite	3.72
Safety of campsite	3.67
Beauty of nature	3.65
Friendly staff	3.61
Richness of flora	3.53
Richness of fauna	3.51
Dustbin	3.42
Appropriate campsite rental rate	3.39
Easy to obtain the information	3.38
Travel distance of the campsite to other facilities	3.37
Good maintenance	3.36
Low ticket fee or rental rate for other facilities	3.31
Natural water sources	3.25
Printed material	3.21
Low admission fee into the park	3.18
The location of the park	3.11
Travel distance of the park	3.11
Easy to obtain the pamphlet	3.07
Opportunity to meet new people	3.03
Beauty of artificial landscape	3.01
Public toilet	2.97
Attractiveness of the pamphlet	2.93
Opportunity to involve in organized activities	2.93
Quietness and peacefulness	2.88
Low parking fee	2.88
Opportunity to learn new thing	2.85
Services provided	2.84
Well structured trail	2.83
Privacy	2.71
Lighting at night	2.70
Electronic media	2.68
BBQ facilities	2.63

each type of recreation activities), followed by exercising, picnicking, cycling and others. Among the less popular activities are rock climbing and canoeing were each with only 16 responds (Table 4).

Importance condition and facilities in campground: The condition of the campground is important in order to attract campers and to create the appropriate atmosphere for activities related to camping. Related to this, the respondents felt that the suitable setting and basic facilities are important to be provided or maintained in a campground (Table 5). Here, the most important condition that are conducive and fit for all campers include cleanliness and safety of campsite, natural beauty, richness of flora and fauna, dustbin, campsite rental, easy access of information and travel distance of campsite to other facilities and other conveniences that are appropriate to be provided^[11].

Relationship between recreational activities selection with age of campers: The cross-tab test shows that most of the campers in SAAP aged between 13 to 15 years old tended to chose nature hiking and cycling as the most popular activities they would like to participate while recreating in SAAP. Base on the chi-squared test (Table 6), there is a relationship between recreational

Table 6: Relationship between recreational activities selection with age of campers

Activity	Cross tab	Age						Pearson Chi-square
		13-15	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	>55	
Living amid with nature	Count	6.00	34.00	14.00	6.00	3.00	6.00	0.021*
	Row (%)	8.70	49.28	20.29	8.70	4.35	8.70	
	Column (%)	54.55	37.36	60.87	40.00	100.00	85.71	
Fishing	Count	1.00	45.00	9.00	5.00	1.00	1.00	0.080
	Row (%)	1.61	72.58	14.52	8.06	1.61	1.61	
	Column (%)	9.09	49.45	39.13	33.33	33.33	14.29	
Rope activities	Count	6.00	38.00	6.00	2.00		1.00	0.063
	Row (%)	11.32	71.70	11.32	3.77		1.89	
	Column (%)	54.55	41.76	26.09	13.33		14.29	
Rock climbing	Count		6.00	5.00	3.00		2.00	0.077
	Row (%)		37.50	31.25	18.75		12.50	
	Column (%)		6.59	21.74	20.00		28.57	
Photographing	Count	3.00	51.00	16.00	10.00	3.00	1.00	0.020*
	Row (%)	3.57	60.71	19.05	11.90	3.57	1.19	
	Column (%)	27.27	56.04	69.57	66.67	100.00	14.29	
Sight seeing	Count	11.00	79.00	21.00	12.00	3.00	3.00	0.015
	Row (%)	8.53	61.24	16.28	9.30	2.33	2.33	
	Column (%)	100.00	86.81	91.30	80.00	100.00	42.86	
Family recreation and other social Events	Count		39.00	11.00	14.00	2.00	6.00	0.000*
	Row (%)		54.17	15.28	19.44	2.78	8.33	
	Column (%)		42.86	47.83	93.33	66.67	85.71	
Educational activities	Count	7.00	56.00	5.00	2.00			0.000*
	Row (%)	10.00	80.00	7.14	2.86			
	Column (%)	63.64	61.54	21.74	13.33			
Picnicking	Count	4.00	67.00	17.00	10.00	2.00	4.00	0.207
	Row (%)	3.85	64.42	16.35	9.62	1.92	3.85	
	Column (%)	36.36	73.63	73.91	66.67	66.67	57.14	
Bird watching	Count	5.00	25.00	9.00	5.00		7.00	0.003*
	Row (%)	9.80	49.02	17.65	9.80		13.73	
	Column (%)	45.45	27.47	39.13	33.33		100.00	
Nature hiking	Count	10.00	42.00	7.00	3.00		4.00	0.003*
	Row (%)	15.15	63.64	10.61	4.55		6.06	
	Column (%)	90.91	46.15	30.43	20.00		57.14	
Interpretive trail activities	Count	2.00	18.00	11.00	4.00		6.00	0.001*
	Row (%)	4.88	43.90	26.83	9.76		14.63	
	Column (%)	18.18	19.78	47.83	26.67		85.71	
Exercise	Count	9.00	65.00	14.00	15.00	2.00	7.00	0.058
	Row (%)	8.04	58.04	12.50	13.39	1.79	6.25	
	Column (%)	81.82	71.43	60.87	100.00	66.67	100.00	
Cycling	Count	11.00	63.00	13.00	2.00		1.00	0.000*
	Row (%)	12.22	70.00	14.44	2.22		1.11	
	Column (%)	100.00	69.23	56.52	13.33		14.29	
Kayaking	Count		30.00	2.00	1.00			0.005
	Row (%)		90.91	6.06	3.03			
	Column (%)		32.97	8.70	6.67			
Canoeing	Count		12.00	2.00	2.00			0.651
	Row (%)		75.00	12.50	12.50			
	Column (%)		13.19	8.70	13.33			

A low significance value (typically below 0.05) indicates that there may be some relationship between the two variables
 * Significant relationship for 95% confidence

activities and age groups were significant^[12]. For campers aged between 16 to 25 years old, they choose educational activities and kayaking as the most preferable. Those in the aged group of 26-35 years old would choose rock climbing and interpretive trail as the event they would like to participate the most. As the age increase more passive activities were chosen, adult aged 36-45 choose family and social event as the most popular activity while those aged 46 and above prefer living amid nature.

If analyzed across the table (column percentage) we can easily see that younger visitor will choose more active

activities and which are more educational based. However, the elder visitors prefer passive and social or family type of activities in the natural environment. It can be observed that active activities such as rope activities, nature hiking and cycling the rate of involvement among campers are generally decreasing as the aged increased (Table 6). This seems to be similar for educational activities. However, it showed that the rate of participation of those passive activities, such as enjoying nature, photography and bird watching, increased with the age of respondents increased. Family

Table 7: Relationship between activity selection and numbers of visit

Activity	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		Significance
	Beta	Std. Error	β	t-value	
Constant	-2.052	1.543		-1.330	0.186
Living amidst nature	0.181	0.211	0.066	0.857	0.393
Fishing	0.160	0.218	0.058	0.734	0.464
Rope activities	-0.310	0.252	-0.109	-1.232	0.220
Rock climbing	1.022	0.379	0.231	2.694	0.008*
Photographing	0.320	0.252	0.116	1.271	0.206
Sight seeing	0.338	0.351	0.086	0.965	0.336
Family recreation and other social events	-0.856	0.282	-0.313	-3.038	0.003*
Educational activities	-0.391	0.306	-0.143	-1.279	0.203
Picnicking	0.241	0.232	0.082	1.040	0.300
Bird watching	0.119	0.223	0.041	0.535	0.594
Nature hiking	-0.185	0.244	-0.067	-0.756	0.451
Interpretive trail activities	0.452	0.228	0.148	1.979	0.050*
Exercise	1.395	0.270	0.444	5.170	0.0001*
Cycling	-0.598	0.280	-0.215	-2.133	0.0350*
Kayaking	0.366	0.359	0.111	1.020	0.3100
Canoeing	0.255	0.423	0.058	0.602	0.5480

* Significant relationship for 95% confidence, $R = 0.654$, $R^2 = 0.427$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.358$

Table 8: Recreational activities selection by campers related to camping

Activities	No. of respondents		Percentage (Agree)
	Yes	No	
Living amidst nature	7	26	21
Fishing	16	46	26
Rope activities	39	14	74
Rock climbing	13	3	81
Photographing	36	48	43
Sight seeing	56	73	43
Family day and other similar social event	23	49	32
Educational activities	24	46	34
Picnicking	37	67	36
Bird watching	21	30	41
Nature hiking	42	24	64
Interpretive trail or event	10	31	24
Exercise	45	67	40
Cycling	52	38	58
Kayaking	34	35	49
Canoeing	9	7	56

Table 9: Camping and socio-psychological outcomes

Socio-psychological outcomes	Campers responds		Pearson Chi-square
	Yes	No	
Family cohesion	20	53	0.0001*
Creativity	7	42	0.0001*
Enjoying nature	42	14	0.0001*
Social interaction	49	73	0.102
Living coexistent with the natural environment	46	63	0.048*
Learning of new skill and knowledge	41	63	0.146
Escape from stress and routine work	51	22	0.0001*
Mastering	33	42	0.869
Fun and adventure	54	64	0.249
Recognition and identity	13	30	0.040*
Physical and fitness	45	75	0.004*

A low significance value (typically below 0.05) indicates that there may be some relationship between the two variables

* Significant relationship for 95% confidence

and social event received the highest percentage for campers aged between 36 to 45 years old by comparison to others age groups. According to Patterson^[13] this age group (known as adult years) tends to spend more time with their family members. Among all the listed activities, sight seeing is the most popular activities participated by all age groups.

Age has also influenced the type of activities chosen by visitors^[14]. It is observable that those aged 16-45 involved in all of the activities listed. These happen perhaps because of their physical and mental condition as well as educational and experience level which are better than the other groups (Table 6).

Activity selection and numbers of visit: There were some activities that have shown significant relationships with the number of visit (Table 7). They include endeavors such as exercises, family recreation and other social events, rock climbing, cycling and interpretive trail activity. Among these activities, family recreation and cycling showed negative relationship with the number of visit. This might be due to the reason that more users engaging in these activities would make them feel crowded in this natural setting. Only campers pursuing specific type of activities (including exercise, rock climbing and interpretive trail activities) would come to this specific site of the park. For visitor management approach, in such situation, SAAP might be able to provide suitable or alternative spots especially for the family and cycling recreation away from the crowding condition mentioned earlier.

Camping and recreational activities participation: Camping in combination with other recreational activities is important for the campers to fulfill their recreational requirements while in the forest and enjoyment^[15]. For those who have previous camping experience in SAAP, activities such as rope activities, rock climbing and nature hiking are the most popular activities being pursued during their camp stay. Meanwhile, interpretive program and kayaking are the least popular among campers. Other activities that have shown significant influenced on campers' choices are fishing, family and social event, educational activities and cycling. Photography, sight seeing, bird watching, exercise, kayaking and canoeing have no significant influence to camping in this area (Table 8).

Camping and socio-psychological outcomes: In Table 9 the socio-psychological outcomes from camping that campers hope to gain are discussed^[16]. Two such major benefits could be identified in this study are enjoying nature and escape from stress and routine work. This

showed that campers desire for something new and not routine. This includes new environment and new experience, which is free from heavy responsibility. Other benefits that have less influenced the campers are family cohesion, creativity, living coexistent with the natural environment, reorganization and identity as well as physical and fitness^[17]. In the mean time, social interactions, learning of new skill and knowledge, mastering and fun and adventure are the benefits. However, these do not have significant influence on campers^[18].

CONCLUSIONS

The study has shown in Malaysia that it is a common scenario in regional parklands and many recreational areas, the domestic visitors and campers in particular are made up of youths with tertiary education whom are still unmarried or with fewer obligations to family or job. Majority of these visitors are first time visitors that indicated a new breed and pattern of recreational pursuits among youths have been emerging. Besides, the social status based on the foundation of aged factors, educational level and marital status also influenced the activities selection. The activities participated during camping are mainly of active and passive on-site based, including sight seeing, exercise, picnicking, cycling, photographing, social event and enjoying nature. The activities selection among the campers can be categorized into two distinctive orientation, i.e. rigorous activities with education related activities, active and risk taking, physically challenging; and the others were of family-based and social interactive that include activities that were more of health related, relaxing and held in natural environment.

In overall, as required by all civilized society, the campers' would like to see cleanliness and safety of campsite, the beauty of nature that is still intact, richness of flora and fauna that is still maintained, friendliness or approachable park's staff, availability of dustbin, appropriate campsite rental fees, easy to obtain information about the area and the practical travel distance of the campsite to other facilities. The foremost benefits that campers hope to gain through their camping activities are to be able to enjoy nature still in its original form, escape from stress and routine work and to live in co-existent with nature. Other important findings that could be highlight under this study include the inclination of the various age groups campers in their selection of on-site recreational activities including experiencing camp living amid nature, photography of natural organism and livings,

consolidation of family through social events and activities, educational experiences and outcomes, nature appreciation activities that campers could enhanced on include bird watching and nature hiking.

Suggestions for future research: Camping pattern and campers' user preference are a wide topic to be covered. Therefore, a comprehensive research should be done from time to time to get the overall picture of user recreation participation current trend. Besides, the activities programming, pricing policy, effectiveness of campsite management should be considered in the future research for better understanding of the users' recreation trend in the parkland setting. The study therefore has indicated that most of the visitors are first timers and just being exposed to the natural environment. Importantly, the management should conduct further study to understand why there are few repeated visitors and how to encourage them to use this park as their leisure outlet and nature enjoyment.

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