

# The perceived image of *en plein air* tourism: Evidence from Italy\*

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## Abstract

Tourists have been classified in the literature over the years in many different ways, with different methods of analysis and objectives. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the self-perception of *en plein air* tourists, in particular the caravanning tourists. Caravanning is a subset of drive tourism where the vehicle provides both transport and accommodation and is a growing although under-researched phenomenon.

To reach our goal we will analyze the results of a recent survey, whose primary purpose was to find a name for the most important Club of *en plein air* tourists in Italy. More specifically, by analyzing in a semantic perspective the names proposed by the tourists themselves, we will outline the main types of mental associations related to *en plein air* tourism image.

Some researchers have shown that all operators in the touristic sector benefit from a deeper understanding of the ‘meaning’ that each tourist gives to the tourism that he/she practices. We therefore believe that the results of this research can provide, from an academic point of view, a deeper awareness of a subject which is still understudied and, from a management point of view, better explain the ‘values’ and consequently the connected expectations of *en plein air* tourists. This seems an essential step in order to facilitate and make more effective business decisions.

So far, linguistic analyses on brand-names, even within the specific domain of tourism have generally adopted a sort of ‘top-down’ approach, i.e. considered brand-names chosen by professionals and brand-naming has been seen as a management strategy. On the contrary, for this study we chose the opposite perspective, which can be defined as a ‘bottom-up’ approach, as we focused on brand-names suggested directly by tourists. In our view, this perspective is better suited to grasp the self-perception of *en plein air* tourists and is more informative on tourists’ values, attitudes and behaviors. The image which emerges through this kind of analyses can be in line with the profile of the *en plein air* tourists outlined by the specialists or, on the contrary, contradict it and eventually challenge it.

We claim therefore that our approach can lead to a reflection on the relationship between the perception of tourists and more generally of consumers on one side and the perception of the marketing professionals and touristic service providers on the other.

## Keywords

*en plein air* tourism image; caravanning tourist; profile of campervan tourist; linguistic perspective on brand names

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\* Even if the paper was discussed together, in writing down the different parts Francesca Simeoni contributed to paragraph “Introduction”, 1, 2.1, 3.2 and 4 and Serena Dal Maso to paragraphs 2.2 and 3.1.

## Introduction

Tourists have been classified in the literature over the years in many different ways, with different methods of analysis and objectives. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the self-perception of *en plein air* tourists, in particular the caravanning tourists. Caravanning is a subset of drive tourism where the vehicle provides both transport and accommodation and is a growing but under-researched phenomenon (McClymont et al., 2011; Prideaux and Carson, 2011; Hardy et al., 2012). However, recent research has focused on caravanners covering aspects such segmentation and motivations (e.g., Prideaux and McClymont, 2006; Wu and Pearce, 2014).

This study focuses specifically on campervans<sup>(1)</sup> and their users, who have been labelled as campervanners (Lew, Hall, & Williams, 2004).

Italy was selected as the research setting as it is one of the most important countries in Europe for this tourism (Simeoni, 2013). Italy is a major RV (Recreational Vehicles) manufacturers with 8,802 produced campervans of the 72,163 sold in Europe (APC, 2015). Moreover, in Italy there are 214,143 registered campervans (APC, 2015), which make Italy the third country for campervans in use in Europe (CIVD, 2014).

The focus of this paper is the naming process of the main Italian *en plein air* tourism Club, which includes all these kinds of campervan tourists.

This Club was born from the main specialized magazine in Italy, PleinAir. PleinAir was born in 1988 taking place of the older magazine “2C”. The headquarters of the PleinAir developed at first a website through which more and more readers, *en plein air* tourists, started to know each other and to exchange travel experiences. Then, they gave rise to the Club, intended as a “service center” that integrates the journalist activity of the magazine itself with actions which aim to complete the so-called system “PleinAir”. The Club is considered the engine of information and training on the topic. Specifically, the Club deals with:

- “a) building partnerships with institutions, organizations, companies,
- b) conclusion of agreements in favor of the members,
- c) privileged access to all editorial services,
- d) organization of events,
- e) publication of specific teaching materials,
- f) granting the use of the logo / symbol of the Club”.

The Club has its own special section in the magazine and in the website there is a special section named “Il Club del PleinAir” (“The Club of the PleinAir). Organizationally, the Club operates in the editorial office of the magazine but operates in a completely independent way even if it acts in the orbit of the system.

Members receive a card, a document that allows them to enjoy all the services organized and promoted by the Club. As for the visual aspect, the Club has its own distinctive mark, that is a sort of Frog which has been given a name, *Libero* (Eng. ‘Free’), precisely by means of the survey which is the object of the present research.

In fact, starting from the premise that a Club (of and for the tourists) is intended as an active and empathetic listening tool that aims to foster mutual understanding between travelers *in primis* and among travelers and industry professionals, with the objective to get really significant information, the choice of the name can be a useful indication as to who is involved and what may be the tourist hallmarks.

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that a variety of labels with different shades have been used to define RV involved in caravanning. In this study, campervan is used as a synonymous with motor caravan and motor home.

Through the Club the traveler, who is the protagonist, also becomes an influencer of other travelers (Rossi, Goetz, 2011; Pencarelli et al, 2005). This potential comes from the power of experience stories lived on par (Park and Allen, 2013; Gretzel and Yoo, 2008) and in fact it has his first potential impact already with the name of the Club.

To choose the name of the Club, the PleinAir magazine has promoted a data collection of different possible names to whom 623 tourists have responded with interest and motivation.

Starting from an analysis of the available literature and then analyzing the results emerging from this data collection, the paper intends to answer three questions:

Q1: Does literature identify associations related to campervan tourism and can these associations be used to profile campervan tourists?

Q2: Do the associations that emerge from the literature coincide with the results of this survey?

Q3: Are there associations proposed in the literature that are not reflected in this survey and/or vice versa?

To the first question you will find an answer in the next section on the literature analysis, while the other two questions will be answered in §3.2. through a semantic analysis .

In terms of segmentation of tourists in general if we take into consideration *en plein air* tourists, there is no doubt that we remain within the leisure tourism market. It could also be assumed that compared to the classification of tourist demand in itinerant and sedentary tourism, we are in the first case, a tourism in which the pleasure of traveling in the narrow sense prevails, in terms of its movement (Vaccaro, 2007, p. 198). No indication emerges in terms of classification of this tourists with respect to the destination, both geographically and in terms of tourist interest, however some industry reports show preferences in some directions than others (APC, 2015).

Also knowledge of the specific use that campervanners make of their vehicle is undoubtedly useful to better define this tourist. For instance, differently from what happens in USA and Australia, short stay caravanning is prevalent in Europe (Mikkelsen & Cohen, 2015; Patterson, Pegg, & Mahadevan, 2015). The preference for a frequent, short stay, caravanning may also explain the reason why in Europe the number of newly registered campervans is higher than the number of newly registered caravans: in 2014, they were respectively 72,163 and 65,110 (APC, 2015; CIVD, 2015a, 2015b).

In addition to these features of the campervan tourists that allow a first definition of the segment, other important evidences emerge from literature with which it is possible to arrive to a profiling of this tourist.

For example, Kearns et al. (2016) show that RV are used to travel without a fixed route and make opportunistic stops and that users appreciate the benefits of spontaneity, flexibility and mobility provided by RV. Similarly, the sense of freedom felt by caravanners when using their RV emerge in many studies (e.g., Fjelstul & Fyall, 2015) as well the individuality of this travel form (Prieaux & Carson, 2003). Mikkelsen and Cohen (2015) highlight that RV are used to experience a direct connection with nature and with other people and that caravanning experiences are often undertaken in companionship with family members. In addition, most of RV owners take part to RVing neo-tribes or communities which rely heavily on the internet and on social networking (Hardy et al., 2012). Participation to such communities may even be a means to escape from their daily work and family lives (Hardy et al., 2012). Therefore, caravanners use their RV to create value in many different ways and not only during their vacation experience.

To the first question (*Q1: Does literature identify associations related to campervan tourism and can these associations be used to profile campervan tourists?*) it is therefore possible to give an affirmative answer. Synthetically associations that emerge are:

1. a tourist who travels without a fixed route and makes opportunistic stops,
2. a tourist who appreciates the benefits of spontaneity, flexibility and mobility,
3. a tourist who looks for freedom,
4. a tourist who appreciates the individuality of this travel form,
5. a tourist who wants a direct connection with nature,
6. a tourist who wants a connection also with other people,
7. a tourist who takes part to neo-tribes or communities,
8. a tourist who uses the vehicles not only during their vacation experience.

From this list and through the analysis of the results of the survey, will be possible to answer the other two questions.

## 1. Method

### 2.1 The corpus of the research

Our corpus consists in 623 possible names proposed by the readers of PleinAir magazine. The respondents have filled in a card delivered to them (Figure 1) during the last edition of the main national fair regarding the *en plein air* tourism, in Parma (Italy).

**Figure 1.** Title Scheda per la raccolta dei nomi



Source: PleinAir document: *Dai un nome al ranocchio*, 'give a name to the frog'

Among the total amount of the collected cards, there are some duplicate names, probably suggested by multiple members of the same family. From the sample 18 white boards have been removed and 4 were uninterpretable (drawings / sketches, most likely suggested by children).

The 601 remaining cards shows a great number of different names, which have been analyzed in a semantic perspective to outline the main kinds of mental associations related to *en plein air* tourism image.

In the next paragraph we will therefore propose an integrated analyses and then we will summarise the main results.

## 2.2. A proposal for an integrated analyses: a linguistic perspective on brand names

As we described in §1., the main aim of our analyses is to outline the different possible motivations for the brand names proposed by the participants to the PleinAir survey in order to verify whether it is possible to obtain an ‘image’ of the campervanner tourist and whether such a self-perceived image possibly corresponds to the one given by the academic literature.

Our investigation, therefore, will mainly focus on meaning (although it is generally acknowledged that brand names are not semantically as transparent as the other lexical items<sup>2</sup>) but will also take into consideration the network of mental associations produced by the suggested names and which might be due to factors which go far beyond meaning and simple designation mechanisms. Following Cotticelli Kurras, among others, dealing with brand names implies explaining “[...] how a word designates a certain reality and this reality relates with the thought, knowledge, or associations of human mind, which are subject to and depend on the culture of the individual, or a social group, national group, and so on. Precisely, this kind of knowledge, or culture, is what you should take into account primarily in the name of the product, in compliance with the marketing strategies you want to pursue” (Cotticelli Kurras, 2014: 452).

However, before addressing the semantic analyses (§.3.1) and dealing with the comparison with the image of *en plein air* tourism obtained by the analyses of the scientific literature (§.3.2), it seems necessary to briefly consider the main lexicalization mechanisms and naming strategies employed by the participants to the survey. This step is in fact preliminary to any observation and discussion of the mental images connected with the caravanning experience.

When we consider the motivation of brand names, two important points need to be highlighted. The first one is that motivation is clearly not a ‘yes or no question’, but rather a gradual feature which should be represented in a sort of *continuum*, from complete opaque and arbitrary names (typically the proper names, e.g. *Alberto* ‘Albert’, *Susanna* ‘Susan’, etc.) to transparent and motivated ones (i.e. generally derived words or phrases with a compositional meaning, e.g. *giramondo* ‘globe trotter’).

Secondly, motivation can be the outcome of different factors and of their interaction at multiple levels. As a consequence, although we will try to examine each single factor, it should be kept in mind that in reality they collaborate for the effectiveness and therefore for the success of a brand name. Let us briefly consider the factors which motivate a brand name.

### a) Semantic transparency

Meaning is certainly the most evident and the strongest factor for brand names’ motivation. Semantic transparency is therefore the reason for the presence in our corpus of common nouns (e.g. *erba* ‘grass’, *fiore* ‘flower’, *sorriso* ‘smile’, *melma* ‘mud, slime’) and, to a lesser extent, adjectives (e.g. *giallo* ‘yellow’, *placido* ‘quiet’, *sereno* ‘serene, peaceful’, *briccone* ‘scoundrel’, *arzillo* ‘sprightly’). Morphologically complex nouns, mainly suffixed words with the evaluative suffixes *-ino* (, e.g. *giretto*, *viaggetto*), *-ello* (e.g. *saltarello*, *girello*, *saltarello*, *camperello*), and compounds generally have a compositional meaning, both in case of existing

2 Brand names are generally considered as a borderline phenomenon oscillating between proper names and appellatives (Zilg, 2006).

and lexicalized items (e.g. *vagabondo* 'globe trotter') or new formation (e.g. *gironzolo*, *trotteriellino*, *viaggia-rana* 'travelling frog'). On the other hand, proper names are most of the time completely opaque labels (e.g. *Giulio*, *Anna*, *Antonio*, etc.) and might be proposed as brand names for their connotation rather than for their meaning, as we will discuss later. Only a limited number of proper names, still maintain a certain transparency or correspond in Italian to common nouns (*Angelo* 'Angel', *Margherita* 'daisy') or adjectives (*Libero* 'free', *Viola* 'violet').

b) Connotation due to cultural, affective, prestigious values of proper names

As we briefly mentioned above, semantically opaque proper names might have been proposed as brand names because of their connotation, i.e. added affective values suggested by the lexical items often because of their cultural connections. Schematically, the proper names of our corpus make reference to: i) historical or mythological characters (*Enea*, *Ettore*, *Eusebia*, *Domitilla*, *Ilo*<sup>3</sup>) or characters more generally connected to the heritage of classical culture and therefore perceived as prestigious (on these aspects, Caffarelli 2000); ii) cartoon characters (e.g. *Jerry*, *Simba*, *Margy*, *Balù*, *Kermit*, *Nemo*, *Simba*) or film characters (e.g. *Rambo*, *Rokie*, *Rokki*, etc.); iii) names connected to Italian popular culture (jokes, popular films, etc.), e.g. *Ugo*, *Pierino*, *Camillo* which convey ideas related to fun and amusement. Hypocoristic names and more generally nicknames (e.g. *Luigino*, *Giorgino*, *Ernestino*), are also quite frequent in our corpus as they usually indicate intimacy and affection and tend to express affective and familiar values.

c) Italian vs. other languages

Foreign origin is also a possible source of positive connotative values; this is especially true for Anglicisms which are generally associated with modernity, efficiency and prestige. In our corpus, there is a significant number of English lexical items (e.g. *frog*, *gipsy*, *freedom*, *kiss*, *trip*), sometimes transcribed 'phonetically' (e.g. both *smile* and *smail*). Lexical items or proper names from other languages are much less frequent and seem to be chosen for their exotic *allure* (e.g. Spanish *sapito*).

A quite frequent phenomenon connected to foreign items are hybrid forms, i.e. words which combine an exotic stem with an Italian affix, like in *frogghino*, *sotterino* (French 'sauter' corresponds to 'jump').

d) Existing forms vs. new formations

Our corpus attests a certain degree of linguistic creativity as, beside existing lexical items, a certain number of new formations is also present, both derived words (e.g. *bistecchino*, *crocchino*, *erbolino*) and compounds (e.g. *libercamp*, *occhiomondo*, *viaggiarana*, *salta salta*, *palmo piatto*). Moreover, new formation often includes foreign items (e.g. *travely*, *rainair*, *playran*, *granair*).

e) Phonetic associations and puns

A certain number of items of our corpus is proposed for their onomatopoeic values, e.g. *gracchia* and *gracida* 'croack'.

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<sup>3</sup> *Ilo* (name of the mythological founder of Troy) is favoured by the phonological similarity with *ila* (GRADIT). For some of them, e.g. Anacleto the fact of being the name of a cartoon character has certainly played a role.

Similarly, the high frequency of the morphological formative *-occhio* (e.g. *pastrocchio*, *verdocchio*) and of formally similar stems (e.g. *occhio* ‘eye’, *occhietti* ‘little eyes’) are due to the attraction of word form *ranocchio* ‘frog’.

In other cases, the motivation comes exclusively from items’ phonetic shape, i.e. *sgranocchio* ‘I crunch’ and *radicchio* ‘chicory’ are chosen exclusively for their assonance with *ranocchio* ‘frog’, although they do not have any semantic or morphological relation with it.

In other cases, participants’ linguistic creativity generates a sort of pun, like for *lenticchia* ‘lentil’, which is a monomorphemic word but the word ending *-icchia* is similar to the suffix *-occhio* which is present in *ranocchio* ‘frog’ and *lent-* is homophone to the possible stem meaning ‘slow’). Thus, the name *lenticchia* seems to exploit sound and meaning ambiguities, like in paranomasia processes.

## 2. Findings

### 3.1 First results of the survey: the emerging profiling on the campervan tourist

Having analyzed the sample with respect to different linguistic factors and to their interaction at multiple levels, it is now possible to classify the names that emerged from the survey with respect to the following conceptual domains:

- names dealing with “jump” and “tour” elements (idea of wandering around),
- names dealing with the holiday itself,
- names dealing with the notion of freedom,
- names dealing with the open air and the nature,
- names dealing with proper names,
- names of popular (historic or fictional) characters,
- names dealing with the “frog” (linked with the visual symbol of the Club),
- names dealing with the noun “campervan”,
- names dealing with the *en plein air* tourism,
- names dealing with sympathy and joy.

For all the names dealing with “frog”, “jump”/“tour” elements and “freedom”, in what follows we will propose a brief analyses only of the main conceptual and semantic nodes defined above. Conversely, for all other names proposed in this work there is not a specific analysis of the whole proposal taken as individual conceptual domain because they have not reached a size threshold useful and comparable.

First of all, it has to be underlined that the cards used for the survey (Figure 1) presented the Club logo, i.e. a fun green frog, and that this fact has greatly influenced the participant creativity (in fact 125 names deal with the conceptual domain ‘frog’).

#### 3.1.1. Names dealing with rana, ranocchio ‘frog’

The conceptual domain of *rana*, *ranocchio* ‘frog’ is the richest in our corpus, i.e. 125 items are somehow connected with the word ‘frog’.

Firstly, many proposed names corresponds to the word *rana*, *ranocchietto*, *ranocchietta* (sometimes with a certain degree of orthographic creativity, e.g. *ranokhio*) or contain the form in phrases (e.g. *rocco il ranocchio*, *monella la ranocchiella* which often exploit assonances or phonological effects). These names are clearly semantically transparent and therefore chosen

for their meaning. This category is in fact characterized by a strong connection with the image proposed for the survey (see Figure 1).

Connotation might have favored these kind of names as in Italian *ranocchio* is certainly perceived as a positive term, because it used within a familiar setting, to indicate a child or a little boy, especially if particularly lively (GRADIT). On the contrary, the para-synonym *rospo* occurs only in 1 case (e.g. *rospiko*), probably because of its clear negative connotation (in Italian it is connected with the idea of ugliness).

In this category a great morphological creativity is attested, i.e. many new formations which contain the *ran-* sequence (*rani*, *rano*, *ranidillo*, *ranita*, *ranchi*, etc.) or the formative *-occhio* (e.g. *pleinocchio*, *pleiarocchio*). The *ran-* formative might in some cases be favoured because of the influence of the phonetically similar English form ‘run’ (e.g. *raner*, *ranny* etc.).

A large number of names have recourse to the English form ‘frog’, with possible adaptations to the Italian orthography or morphology (e.g. *frogghino*, *frog-it*). Just one form is attested in Spanish (e.g. *sapito*).

Finally names might be connected with this concepual domain mainly for their phonetic value. As for the effect of onomatopoeia, the origin of a considerable number of names is motivated by the animal sound in Italian (e.g. *crac*, *cra cra* and the like) or in English (e.g. *croack*, with many possible phonological and orthographic adaptation *crokkio* and interference with Italian similar words e.g. *crocchia* etc.). Phonetic effects are also exploited to produce clang association, anagrams (e.g. *occhioran*, *oihccconar*) or puns, i.e. plays on words, e.g. *sgranocchio* ‘I crunch’, which although semantically unrelated, formally contains the form *ranocchio*, and *crapocchio* (*crapa* is in Italian a familiar word for ‘head’; we have discussed the attraction effect of the suffix *-occhio* in §2.2).

Semantically, the image of a frog is mentally associated with the idea of jumping which generates a quite rich series of names as jumping is connected to the idea of moving/travelling without a fixed route and therefore to the idea of spontaneity, flexibility and mobility, as discussed in the next paragraph.

Finally, frog is connected with the idea of colour green (the word *verde* is the base of a series of suffixed words *verdino*, *verdina*, *verdolino*, *verdone*, *verdotto*) with symbolizes nature and environment.

### 3.1.2. Names dealing with salto ‘jump’ and with giro ‘tour’

In our corpus, a certain number of suffixed words formed starting from the stem *salto* ‘jump’ are attested (e.g. *saltarello*, *salterino*, *salterina*) and one compound, the new formation *salta salta*.

Another series which can be reasonably connected with this conceptual domain is the one developed starting from the *giro* ‘tour’ element (e.g. *girello*, *giretto*, *girolino*, *girone*, *gironzolo*) because *giro* semantically implies the idea of mouvement without a precise destination and, thus, the idea of the unpredictability of such a movement. It has to be highlighted that the association between the semantic component ‘movement’ and the frog is strengthened by the formal similarity in Italian between the words *giro / girare* ‘tour, have a tour’ and *girino* ‘tadpole’ (although the etymological connection is bleached and the semantic relationship extremely weakened). This formal and semantic ambiguity is the source of a certain number of names.

### 3.1.3. Names dealing with libertà ‘freedom’

The names which can be ascribed to the conceptual domain of freedom are 14 in our corpus. They are mainly Italian common nouns or adjectives (e.g. *vagabondo*, *libertino* although here there is a semantic shift) or in English (e.g. *freedom*). *Libercamper* and *freefrog* are examples of morphological creativity for this category.

Finally, it has to be underlined that the proper name *Libero* ‘free’ which has been chosen as the final brand name of the PleinAir Club, belongs to this category. The reasons for this choice are multiple:

- semantic transparency and salience of the item;
- name size: quite a short form, a morphologically simple word and phonologically prototypical for Italian;
- semiotic status (a proper name but which also corresponds to a transparent adjective in Italian);
- a high number of participants to the survey proposed it, possibly because of its semantic, semiotic and formal status .

### *3.2 Comparison: from the scientific representation (literature) to the emerging idea*

To meet the two remaining research questions (*Q2: Do the associations that emerge from the literature coincide with the results of this survey? Q3: Are there associations proposed in the literature that are not reflected in this survey and/or vice versa?*) it was necessary to match each of conceptual domains above (§3.1.) to one of eight associations of ideas discovered from the literature with respect to the profiling of the campervanners (§1.). Following is a table showing the possible combinations.

**Table 1.** Combinations of the profiles that emerged from the literature and survey results

Profiling of campervan tourist according to the literature	<i>Classification as conceptual domains (from the sample)</i>
1. a tourist who travels without a fixed route and make opportunistic stops	- names dealing with “jump” and “tour” elements (wander around)
2. a tourist who appreciates the benefits of spontaneity, flexibility and mobility	- names dealing with the holiday itself
3. a tourist who looks for freedom	- names dealing with the notion of freedom
4. a tourist who appreciates the individuality of this travel form	- names dealing with proper names
5. a tourist who wants a direct connection with nature	- names dealing with the open air and the nature
6. a tourist who wants a connection also with other people	- names dealing with popular (historic or fictional) characters
7. a tourist who takes part to neo-tribes or communities	- names dealing with the “frog” (linked with the visual symbol of the Club) - names dealing with the name “campervan” - names dealing with the <i>en plein air</i> tourism
8. a tourist who uses the vehicles not only during their vacation experience	- --
--	- names dealing with sympathy and joy

Source: our elaboration

Some of the emerged combinations are very linear, such as in the first case a tourist's description as "a tourist who travels without a fixed route and make opportunistic stops" matched to a name that evokes the idea of "wander around" leaves no doubt. The same thing is true for the combinations n. 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7.

Different thing, however, if we analyze the combination chosen compared to the fourth description "a tourist who appreciates the individuality of this travel form" that has been styled with all proper names mentioned by respondents to the survey. In this case the use and the proposal of the proper name have been understood as a tourist's desire to do an own journey, so a label that indicate intimacy and affection and tend to express affective and familiar values.

Stopping for a moment to this level of the list it can be said that the associations that emerge from the literature are mostly reflected in the results of this survey (Q2), in fact we find in the identified names from the corpus almost all (except one) associations ideas that literature combines with the campervan tourist.

However, the description that literature suggests in our 8th point of the above list, i.e. "a tourist who uses the vehicles not only during their vacation experience" remains excluded. In fact it does not appear in any proposed name (Q3) an idea of campervan used as a second home, or at least a choice of use of this vehicle for leisure that recalls the idea of home, security, tranquility and knowledge in respect to what you will have available with the RV.

Finally, an important result that emerges from the analysis is that there are many names proposed that deal with sympathy and joy or fun, a feature that is not apparent from the literature to describe the campervan tourists (Q3). For example, the names "smile", "pistacchio matto" ("crazy pistachio"), "lucky", "happy", "birichino" ("mischievous"), are all names that describe features that potentially could be typical of the campervan tourist or that are usually linked to a holiday.

The 'fun' feature is either expressed by the semantics of the name (e.g. *pistacchio matto* 'crazy pistachio' or directly in English *happy* and *smile*) or, more frequently, by formal aspects, i.e. the presence of the component *-otto* as in *panzerotto*, *cipollotto* is very often associated to evaluative meanings associated to big, exaggerated quantities. In some cases, the formal and semantic aspects interact in order to create the 'fun' element, i.e. *scarabocchio* 'doodle' and *pastrocchio* 'mess, scrape' (for *pastrocchio* there is also a clear regional, dialectal connotation which contribute to the affective, familiar and 'amusement' effect).

### 3. Conclusions

This research was born from the desire to give a scientific contribution to the understanding and clarifying the image of *en plein air* tourist, especially the campervanner.

The same director of PleinAir magazine writes in fact: " (...) here is the misunderstanding about the role of the *en plein air* tourism that was rocked by environmentalism and traditional tourism. If I told you how much effort we have done to break this circle, you would say that we had courage and determination. By dint of believe we can say that we begin to see the first turnaround but the signal is weak"<sup>4</sup>.

This research fits into this context, still uncertain and unclear with respect to the perception of self-image in the marketplace and still little studied academically. The director in his

<sup>4</sup> See personal communication between the Authors and the director of PleinAir magazine.

correspondence in fact continues writing that, with the survey conducted, they, as magazine, “(...) ended at the collection of answers not having in mind, that in our objectives, a methodology: we heard the voices, to understand each other, but not the talks”.

The search for "talks" we have it translated by formulating and responding to the three research questions which we summarize briefly:

*Q1: Does literature identify associations related to campervan tourism and can these associations be used to profile campervan tourists?*

Yes, they are indeed emerged from the literature eight different associations of ideas for the campervan tourism, which have been listed in the first paragraph and then resumed in the last one.

*Q2: Do the associations that emerge from the literature coincide with the results of this survey?*

The associations that emerge from the literature are almost fully reflected by the results of the survey, indeed seven out of eight of the associations found in the literature have found fully reflected.

*Q3: Are there associations proposed in the literature that are not reflected in this survey and/or vice versa?*

Yes, it has, in particular, not been found feedback to “a tourist who use the vehicles not only during their vacation experience”. Conversely, they were collected some names that point to a lack in the literature of an important association linked to the idea of sympathy and joy that seems to connote the campervan tourists.

From a point of view of theoretical implications this paper therefore proposes a completion, or at least a better definition and description of the campervan tourist profile, adding to what has already been demonstrated by the previous mentioned studies, the connotation as a tourist in search of sympathy and joy and calling into question the idea of a use of the vehicle as a synonym or an alternative to home.

From a managerial point of view, this result should make reflect the corporate decision makers representing the offer of recreational vehicles that so much, especially in recent years, investing to propose models on the market that increasingly grow in size and increasingly enrich the interior fittings of the vehicle to resemble the recreational vehicle to the tourist's home the same. If this offer certainly dazzles and fascinates at first tourists, potential buyer, who is close to the RV, it has to wonder if it is in fact its needs related to the motivation underlying the choice of travel and holiday. From the results of this research, the answer seems to be negative.

In order to confirm the findings from this research would no doubt be useful to repeat a similar survey collecting more information about individual respondents in order to interpret and read the names proposed with greater level of trust and reliability. In addition, a limit of the current research is no doubt the use of the Italian language for the proposal of names. This choice, a must for achieving the first objective of the survey, to name the Club of PleinAir, is in fact certainly limiting to propose to a scientific comparison internationally.

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