The outdoor hospitality park (OHP) industry includes caravan (recreational vehicles, RVs) parks, tourist parks, campgrounds, and holiday resorts. In Australia, spending holidays at OHPs is a common leisure activity for families, retirees, and international tourists, particularly in coastal, tourism-dependent areas. Recently, there has been a shift towards OHPs with larger cabins, more amenities, and fewer sites for caravans or camping. This shift reflects a demand among consumers for better facilities and higher quality accommodations. Most Australian OHPs are small, family-operated businesses that face several barriers to business innovation, including a lack of financial resources, limited business experience, and complex government regulations. Innovation can be defined as finding and putting into practice new products or services in order to save money or gain an “edge” over competitors. Most research on innovation in business has focused on manufacturing or service industries at the corporate level, which may not have much relevance for the short-term focus and small business nature of tourism industries like Australian OHPs.

**Keywords:**
Innovation, Australia, tourism, hospitality management, Outdoor Hospitality Park

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### What is this research about?

The outdoor hospitality park (OHP) industry includes caravan (recreational vehicles, RVs) parks, tourist parks, campgrounds, and holiday resorts. In Australia, spending holidays at OHPs is a common leisure activity for families, retirees, and international tourists, particularly in coastal, tourism-dependent areas. Recently, there has been a shift towards OHPs with larger cabins, more amenities, and fewer sites for caravans or camping. This shift reflects a demand among consumers for better facilities and higher quality accommodations. Most Australian OHPs are small, family-operated businesses that face several barriers to business innovation, including a lack of financial resources, limited business experience, and complex government regulations. Innovation can be defined as finding and putting into practice new products or services in order to save money or gain an “edge” over competitors. Most research on innovation in business has focused on manufacturing or service industries at the corporate level, which may not have much relevance for the short-term focus and small business nature of tourism industries like Australian OHPs.

### What did the researchers do?

Four Australian OHP industry leaders identified 42 OHP operators and administrators as innovators in the industry. Thirty of these people participated in hour-long semi-structured interviews with the researchers, in which they were asked to explain how, when, where, and why innovations were adopted in the Australian OHP sector. Based on this first round of interviews, six participants who displayed unusual depth or breadth of innovation were selected for further, more extensive interviews.

### Article citation:


### What you need to know:

Three innovation mindsets exist in the Australian outdoor hospitality park industry. While minimalist operators focus on lifestyle rather than business innovations, the majority of operators are imitators, adopting incremental changes that have been proven to be successful by a handful of operators who are industry innovators.
What did the researchers find?

Unlike in manufacturing- and service-based corporations, innovation in small, family-owned Australian OHPs was generally limited to small, incremental changes that provided a short-term return on investment. Most Australian OHP operators showed a traditional approach to business, adopting new innovations only when they already had been proven to be effective by others and when forced to in order to remain competitive. Australian OHP operators were found to assume one of three approaches to business innovation. The minimalists focused on their own lifestyles rather than traditional business goals, adopting innovations only out of necessity. A small minority of operators were industry innovators, actively identifying innovative services, processes, and products from other industries and adapting them for the OHP sector. Finally, the majority of Australian OHP operators were imitators, who chose to copy business ideas that were first introduced and proven successful by the industry innovators.

How can you use this research?

Outdoor hospitality park industry leaders can use this research to understand how and why business innovations are adopted by OHP operators and administrators.

Business innovation researchers can further this research by studying whether the minimalist-imitator-industry innovator typology applies to other tourism industries dominated by small businesses.

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