

Hotels' Services and Amenities for Family Tourism

Subjects: [Hospitality](#), [Leisure](#), [Sport & Tourism](#)

Contributor: Matylda Siwek , Anna Kolasińska , Krzysztof Wrzeźniewski , Magdalena Zmuda Palka

Travelling families are interested in urban tourism due to its cognitive and entertainment aspects. Some expectations of parents travelling with children are the same independent of the accommodation location. It can be stated that the most important factor regarding family tourism, which should make the services and amenities offered by hotels diverse, is the age of children. It is their age that determines childrens' needs and interests from the earliest period of infancy to early school age. The biggest challenge for the hoteliers is to prepare an offer that meets the expectations of families with children of different ages (the greater the age difference is, the more difficult it becomes to meet parents' requirements regarding amenities and hotel facilities).

[hotels](#)[family tourism](#)[facilities and amenities](#)

1. Introduction

One of the most distinctive features of tourism as an industry is its dynamism and ability to adapt to changing conditions and the needs of consumers—in this case, tourists. The mechanism mentioned above also applies to family tourism, which, given the above dependence, is developing vigorously. Families with children are significant shareholders in the tourist and hotel industry, and their needs must therefore be taken into consideration by tour operators ^{[1][2][3]}. In 2012, Schänzel et al. ^[4] noted that tourism and hotel industry operators who neglected to prepare an appropriate and satisfactory offer for families with children would put themselves at a disadvantage in the market. In view of the growing role of family tourism and the fact that children are important customers in the hospitality industry, it has become necessary to adapt the accommodation base to their needs ^{[5][6]}. Deficiencies in this respect may be the cause of great stress instead of leisure during a family holiday ^[7]. Accommodation plays an important—if not the most important—role during a family holiday, and younger family members often impact the decisions taken by families in this respect due to their specific requirements ^[8].

2. Family Tourism—Main Issues

Many of the trends concerning family tourism observed in previous years are still valid. Peter C. Yesawich stated in 2007 that family tourism would develop at a faster pace than other forms of leisure travel, because it was perceived by parents and grandparents as a means of family reunification ^[9]. This is an extremely important aspect, especially today, when daily duties consume huge amount of work and time. In a study carried out in 2019 by Trafalgar Tours on a sample of 6000 families, 64% of parents admitted that the best quality time with their children

was during their travels [10]. Tourism has been playing an important role in building family ties [7][11][12][13][14][15], and the experience of travelling together has a positive impact on the functioning of the family [16][17][18]. Sometimes the only possibility for family members to spend more time with one another is at the weekends, during public holidays and vacation. Tourism has become one of the main ways that families spend their free time together, and parents are willing to spend increasing amounts of money and energy on travelling with children [19]. Families have been looking for destinations that offer relaxation, the opportunity to spend their time outdoors, discover art and cultural heritage, but also include adventure, excitement and some form of “newness” [14].

The diversity of families should be taken into account during the creation of touristic services for families. Most commonly, families are described in the literature as two heterosexual parents with a child or children. By contrast, this term should also mean single parents with children, parents of the same sex or mixed families (e.g., new parents' families after a divorce) [14]. Cultural differences, different values embodied in families and the objectives that are to be achieved through travels as well as socio-economic aspects should also be taken into consideration [20]. Furthermore, children's different age categories (from infants to young people) should also be considered during the preparation of an offer for tourists, both in terms of services and infrastructure [21]. Children have other needs and requirements [19] that the tourism industry should meet in order to make travelling a happy and satisfying experience both for them and their parents. In [22], the researchers noted that families with children of different ages were the most difficult in regard to meeting various expectations and requirements.

Another specific feature of family tourism is the fact that the motivational and decisive factors of the nature of travel depend not only on the adult family members but also—or even above all—on the children. Family tourism research has often been concentrated on parents [17][23]; however, the literature also shows studies of the perception of family holidays with the eyes of children [21][24][25][26][27][28] or teenagers [20]. Parents' decisions related to the choice of a place, accommodation or a type of holiday are guided by the preferences of their children, following the principle that “a happy child is a happy parent”. The more interesting (often remarkable) proposals for children that there are and the more amenities in the hotel facility there are, the more parents can rest, relax and enjoy their holiday in a tranquil manner [17]. At the same time, the above-mentioned aspect of family tourism, i.e., the possibility of spending time together and strengthening family ties, will be fulfilled.

This trend is linked to the reassessment of the child's role. It is children who are becoming the main consumers of family tourism, and they are the target of touristic offers, which take into consideration their needs and preferences. In [2], the researchers stressed that children were extremely important for the hotel sector and should be seen as active decision-makers because their satisfaction affected the satisfaction of their parents. Hoteliers see their future potential customers in today's children, as preferences acquired during childhood are frequently maintained in adult life [29]. The need to focus on the greater role of children in the decision-making process and to treat them and—and not the parents—as the main decision-makers was already emphasised in the 1990s [25]. This aspect has also been taken into account in the following years [2][30]. The researchers of [2] clearly stated that it was extremely important to identify, recognise and meet the needs of the youngest participants of travels, as this contributed to creating positive emotions that encouraged and enhanced consumer loyalty and the positive message. Moreover, according to Curtale's studies [31], children's preferences affect parents' choices, with parents willing to pay more to

meet their children's preferences, and parents' willingness to pay may vary depending on the response of their children. Ceylan (as cited in [32]) also stated that children were the most efficient family members when choosing a holiday destination. According to her, parents first consider the preferences of their children, regardless of their age. The literature emphasises the importance of amenities in the context of the expectations of parents, grandparents and children. However, there is only scant research comparing them with the hotel offer, namely on the supply side.

3. Urban Tourism in the Scope of Interest of Family Tourism

Since ancient times, cities have attracted many visitors [33]. The phenomenon of urban tourism lies, among other things, in the fact that cities have a huge variety of possibilities for tourists, and they offer countless attractions. Cities allow one to relax, spend time with family or friends away from everyday problems and responsibilities and provide a huge aesthetic, cognitive and educational experience at the same time. They provide people with the opportunity to interact with the whole diversity of culture and art that has been being created for centuries or even thousands of years. People can take part in a variety of events, increase their level of knowledge, acquire new experiences and skills and even interact with nature when visiting gardens, such as botanical or zoological gardens, parks or nature reserves, which are often located on the outskirts [33][34][35]. There are various types of tourism that can develop in the urban area. These can be connected with business, educational, cultural, cognitive, medical, sports or entertainment reasons [36][37]. There are also different segments of urban tourism recipients, such as adults, young people, children coming for school trips, families with children, seniors, people with disabilities, businessmen, etc. [34][38]. Infrastructure development and adaptation is a must to meet the needs and expectations of such diverse groups of visitors.

Holiday tourism is a dominant form of travel preferred and chosen by families, but due to the increasing emphasis on educational and cognitive aspects of travel, urban tourism is becoming more popular, also among families. Cultural institutions, museums and theme parks have been among the first to recognise children as important customers to whom an offer should be addressed [39]. In other studies, sightseeing is a frequently mentioned holiday activity. Respondents in a study [40] who were multi-family members ranked sightseeing fourth (89%) among their preferred activities. Further positions on the list were *going to museums/exhibitions* (45%), *visiting a theme park* (35%) and *going to the theatre, musicals and opera* (24%). Theme parks and cultural or famous sites are visited during travels to cities, which are the main travel destinations or an additional activity during resort holidays [21]. The experiences that even the youngest children acquire during visits to museums, science centres, etc., shape their perception of the world, their sensitivity and their willingness to acquire and expand knowledge in later years. They develop their imagination. They are also great spaces for families to spend their time together and thus strengthen their family ties [41][42][43][44]. It is important that the above-mentioned amenities are adapted to the needs of children [42] and parents at the same time [45]. The museum space allows parents to have their own leisure time, while children participate in activities such as workshops [46].

4. Adapting Hotels to the Needs of Families with Children

During holidays, families often choose to stay in hotels [40], which is why it is so important to adapt offers, infrastructure and amenities to their needs. Travelling families are not typical tourists. The needs and consumer behaviours resulting from them are different from those of other tourists [47][48]. In [49], the researchers noted that package offers targeted at families focused more on the interaction of children with other family members, and the emphasis on consumer benefits seemed to be stronger in comparison to other touristic offers. Families with children also make a different choice of accommodation [50][51], above all positively assessing those facilities which provide amenities and food for children [6]. Furthermore, in [52], it was stressed that a comprehensive approach was needed when designing amenities and services for young children. Accessibility, the possibility of interacting with other children, safety, hygiene, room size and animation programs for children should all be taken into consideration. The need to introduce some amenities for young tourists, particularly the organisation of childcare and attractive animation programs, was highlighted in the early 1990s. Even then, many hotels and holiday centres realised that the development of special programs for children could contribute to the success of a hotel [53]. However, the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has made hotel guests not only pay attention to hygiene amenities (e.g., disinfectants) but even to consider them as among the most important factors [54]. As Kim and Han [54] suggested, there has also been an increased interest among visitors in services without human interaction, often based on the latest contactless technologies. Similar conclusions in terms of the introduction of innovative technologies for various facilities were reached by Cheung et al. [55]. Buzlu and Balik [56] found that it is important to have a children's tab on the hotel's website to provide parents with easy access to information about the hotel's child-related facilities.

The main players in preparing a child-friendly offer in the hospitality industry are resorts, which, as pioneers in this field, know how to attract and provide the right conditions for families to spend time at their facilities. The opposite is true for city hotels, which only now are starting to perceive families with children as their potential customers [5].

4.1. Family Rooms and Equipment Elements

A lack of sufficient space during a family holiday may cause conflicts between family members, as noted by [7][57]. The provision of large and spacious accommodation units for families is therefore the basis for the service of this type of guests. Carr [58] suggested that accommodation providers who promoted their facilities as family-friendly in reality offered only a little bit more than cramped family rooms, but in reality, they rather focused on providing a variety of activities targeted at children that took place outside the bedrooms, in places such as children's clubs or swimming pools. Carr [58] also pointed out that there was an increasing number of hotels that were trying to meet the individual needs of children and their parents by designing family-friendly rooms that provided a certain degree of privacy.

4.2. Play Rooms, Mini Clubs

As shown above, for a family travelling with children, it is important to know if there is a play area in the common space, such as a play room or a mini club space, when taking a decision on accommodation facility. The play room is understood as a separate space for a child equipped with various equipment and amenities, i.e., jungle gyms,

small trampolines, tents or villas, tunnels, table football game, ping-pong table, etc. In contrast, mini clubs are much more likely to be found in holiday hotels, and they offer a variety of activities for children, led by qualified personnel. Regardless of the location of the hotel, certain activities and programs provided by mini clubs to make the stay at the hotel more attractive are often similar [30][59][60]. Research by [3] largely focused on the benefits of mini clubs as a tool with the potential to create a competitive advantage. The researchers pointed out that the activities proposed in such places, based on unique local themes (heritage, culture) and original materials, as well as the involvement of the local community and building a positive image of the centre, might become key differentiating elements for family hotels. In [61][62], the researchers also emphasised the educational role of hotel animation programs, stressing that the idea of sustainable development could be implemented into the activities conducted for the youngest in the mini club on holiday. In addition, not only do young people see animation as a healthy or entertaining activity, but also as an opportunity to learn more about their peers from different countries [63]. However, in [22], the researchers stressed that families from different cultural circles might have different expectations regarding the purpose and scale of activities organised for children in accommodation facilities. Research among parents from Asian countries showed that they expected more educational activities on holiday [6], while parents from Western countries ("Western") would put more emphasis on their unique character and originality (novelty and out-of-the-box) [14]. The diversity of expectations poses challenges for accommodation facilities to prepare original and at the same time universal offers. Families with children in particular want to choose hotels that are aimed both at themselves and at their children [32]. The inclusion of activities aimed at whole families, not just children, in the hotels' offerings can be an important element of becoming a family-friendly hotel [56].

4.3. Restaurant Amenities

An important element of staying in a hotel is eating meals, which is seen not only as a necessity and a way of meeting physiological needs but also as a pleasure. As noted by [64], food is linked to the maintenance of family relationships that intertwine with memories and help to develop family cohesion. That is why not only accommodation services but also food services are so important in hotel facilities. Tourists—in this case, families with children—pay attention not only to the place where the meals are eaten (atmosphere, cleanliness, service) and how tasty and healthy the meals are but also to the way they are served, what kind of a menu offer there is for children, the hourly availability and how the table is laid. It is also important to have equipment that makes it easier to eat a meal with a small child, such as a special chair or children's area in which they can spend their time waiting for a meal. Parents also appreciate the possibility of heating ready meals for young children or ordering meals for children with different nutritional requirements, such as food for allergy sufferers or those intolerant to gluten. The study by Hay [27] showed that children were critical towards some aspects of food in hotels, such as menus that were difficult to understand as well as excessive portions. In the study on Chinese children's touristic experience, it was noted that food was becoming a special attraction itself in many places, as it could provide children with a variety of sensory and cultural experiences, especially when they tasted local dishes [28].

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