

OPTIMAL TOURISM EXPERIENCE FOR INTERGENERATIONAL TRAVEL COMPANIES

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In the last decades the structure of European families has become more complicated. Longer life spans and lower birth rates have led to more vertically rather than horizontally structured families consisting of smaller core families and grandparents who are enjoying more time with their grandchildren as they live longer (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015). The large generation of baby boomers (now aged approximately 50-70 years old) is often characterized by good health (due to better medical care), increased economic wealth and more available time to spend on multi-generational holidays. Increasingly, seniors are participating in family vacations, together with their children and grandchildren (European Commission, 2014). According to Kleeman (2014), multi-generational holidays are a rapidly growing sector of the tourism market. In fact, based on a study by Sainsbury's Travel Insurance, three-generation holidays involved more than 12.5 million Britons in 2013 (Kim, 2014). Although the motivations for family travel can be common amongst family members (e.g. family bonding, quality time to ensure social connection, increased communication), individual family members often have specific needs and expectations regarding their holiday. Indeed, Schänzel (n.d.) mentions the pull of often competing elements operating during a family holiday, such as children wanting to take part in more fun activities whilst parents preferring relaxation.

The aim of this study is to gain insights into intergenerational holidays. The study focuses on motivations as well as on families' needs and expectations, and their resulting (positive/negative) experiences. Subsequently, recommendations for the tourism sector will be offered, thereby optimizing the holiday experience of intergenerational travel groups.

Firstly, it is important to delimit the concept of intergenerational holidays. The focus of this study is on family groups which include at least one family member from 3 different generations. They spend their holiday (partially) together, with a minimum of one common overnight stay.

New insights will be obtained through a combination of questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Respondents are asked about their latest intergenerational holiday, in particular the profile of all members of the travel group; his/her motivation for participating in an intergenerational holiday; the duration of the holiday and at which time of the year it took place; the holiday destination (e.g. domestic/international, rural/urban, coastal/inland etc.); the booking process; his/her needs and expectations regarding the holiday; information sources used; transport modes used; type of accommodation; tourism activities undertaken; their experiences and assessment of the holiday and their spending behavior and financing of the trip. In addition, some intergenerational family groups are selected for an in-depth interview, providing insights into the perspectives of all family members on these topics.

Bibliography

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