

Guest editorial

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This special issue of *Young Consumers* brings together seven selected papers dealing with family consumption in tourism. The authors are from Europe, Asia, the USA and Australia. The methodological approach is mostly qualitative (Capistrano and Bernardo; Mikkelsen and Blichfeldt; Khoo-Lattimore, Del Chiappa and Yang; Gram, Therkelsen and Larsen; and Drenten) rather than quantitative (Shavanddasht; and Curtale). This fact leads to our first consideration about the methodology applied to family tourism. The literature review shows that over the years, the analysis of family tourism has used both qualitative and quantitative methods, with a prevalence of qualitative studies in cases where young children were directly involved (Cullingford, 1995; Quinn and Stacey, 2010; Blichfeldt *et al.*, 2011; Bos *et al.*, 2013; Larsen, 2013; Schänzel and Smith, 2014; Therkelsen and Lottrup, 2014; Khoo-Lattimore, 2015). In a few cases, multiple qualitative methods were combined (Quinn and Stacey, 2010; Blichfeldt *et al.*, 2011; Lo and Lee, 2011; Harrington, 2014; Khoo-Lattimore, 2015) or the quantitative survey was anticipated using a focus group (Fu *et al.*, 2014) or by a consultation procedure with experts and consumers (Tinson and Nancarrow, 2005).

Tourism consumption can be divided into three main phases. As identified by Cohen (1979) and Jennings (2006), the travel experience begins long before the trip itself and finishes well after the tourist returns home. The first phase (the anticipation phase) is marked from the need to obtain a substantial amount of information to prepare the trip, taking decisions and building expectations (Gretzel *et al.*, 2006). The second stage (the experiential phase) starts when tourists travel to the destination and finishes when they return home, followed by the third phase (the reflective phase), which is strictly connected to the first two phases. In fact, during the reflective stage, tourists, who have returned home, write reviews and post photos, videos, etc. on blogs and social networks, and these provide essential information for tourists to take purchasing decisions in the anticipation and experiential phases (Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009). The articles presented in this special issue address two of the above-listed consumption phases within family tourism. There is a pre-consumption phase that consists of decision-making on which family holiday to go on and motivation to undertake a family holiday from the perspective of children, parents and grandparents. This is followed by the experiential phase that consists of hospitality needs of families with young children, emotions in family holidays, family dynamics between grandparents and grandchildren and experiences of mothers and fathers in visiting friends and relatives – VFR – tourism.

Family tourism includes the participation of both adults and children, either relatives in a strict sense or those belonging to extended family units. This phenomenon has a remarkable social and economic impact, given the fact that it represents 30 per cent of the leisure travel market (Schänzel *et al.*, 2012). Despite its relevance, family tourism is rarely investigated. In recent years, Obrador has raised the issue of family invisibility in tourism research (Obrador, 2012), and several authors have followed him by calling for comprehensive research on family tourism, including children's voices (Poria and Timothy, 2014; Khoo-Lattimore, 2015). If family is the label under which tourism activities take place in family tourism, it remains to be discussed which are the activities that are included under the tourism label. Holidaying indeed encompasses the purchase of many sub-products (for example, transportation,

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accommodation, museum visits and access to amusement parks) and the participation in manifold activities (for instance, art and history, nature-based and sports). Acknowledging the great variety of family tourism scenarios, families with children are still very active in a fragmented field of research.

According to [Thornton et al. \(1997\)](#), sedentary outdoor activities such as staying on the beach diminish with the increase in children's age. On the contrary, sport activities increase with children's age. Learning could also be part of family tourism and has been often associated to contexts of social tourism or volunteer tourism ([Lo and Lee, 2011](#); [Bos et al., 2013](#); [Germann Molz, 2016](#)). In general, families with young children show different preferences from the ones of families without children ([Thornton et al., 1997](#); [Carr, 2011](#); [Tangeland and Aas, 2011](#)), preferring less risky and facilitated activities, such as group activities, children's day programmes ([Agate et al., 2015](#)) and family-oriented activities ([Khoo-Lattimore, 2015](#)). Facilitated activities are particularly relevant for single parents ([Tangeland and Aas, 2011](#)). A balance between new experiences and stable environment appears to be what children want from holidays ([Buswell et al., 2012](#)). Moreover, although children's knowledge about holidays reflects the common representation of holidays, [Cullingford \(1995\)](#) suggests engaging families with children by looking beyond obvious entertainment activities. Children's interests concur in the decision on destination ([Madrigal et al., 1992](#)), and parents look for spatial proximity between accommodation and activities for the family ([Thornton et al., 1997](#)). Nonetheless, research on activities and preferences in family tourism still needs in-depth investigations.

The tourist experience is often the opposite of the daily routine and is associated with a search for strong emotions that can remain impressed in the tourist mind and that can offer positive feelings ([Wang, 1999](#)). One of the recurrent motives for family holidays is bonding and improving family relationships ([Nickerson and Jurowski, 2001](#); [Garst et al., 2009](#); [Lehto et al., 2009](#); [Lo and Lee, 2011](#); [Buswell et al., 2012](#); [Durko and Petrick, 2013](#); [Kim and Lehto, 2013](#); [Fu et al., 2014](#); [Therkelsen and Lottrup, 2014](#); [Bos et al., 2013](#)). According to the Core and Balance Model of Family Leisure Functioning ([Zabriskie and McCormick, 2001](#); [Buswell et al., 2012](#)), the family holiday, when considered as a balance activity, may indeed influence the family functioning in terms of cohesion and adaptability. Despite aiming at bonding the family group, each family component seeks to balance family time and own-time ([Schänzel and Smith, 2014](#); [Agate et al., 2015](#)).

The main motive of bonding and improving family relationships is thus conceptualized into the experience of quality time ([Blichfeldt et al., 2011](#); [Obrador, 2012](#); [Durko and Petrick, 2013](#); [Li et al., 2017](#)) and the sense of togetherness ([Blichfeldt et al., 2011](#); [Sedgley et al., 2012](#); [Durko and Petrick, 2013](#); [Harrington, 2014](#); [Schänzel and Smith, 2014](#); [Therkelsen and Lottrup, 2014](#)). Authors have differently attributed these concepts to either parents or children ([Quan and Wang, 2004](#); [Durko and Petrick, 2013](#); [Therkelsen and Lottrup, 2014](#)).

Differences between parents and children's motives emerge from the literature review. Children are specially moved by fun and entertainment ([Durko and Petrick, 2013](#); [Therkelsen and Lottrup, 2014](#)), as well as by interest in doing activities ([Durko and Petrick, 2013](#)). Parents are moved by children's development and learning ([Garst et al., 2009](#); [Kim and Lehto, 2013](#); [Fu et al., 2014](#); [Li et al., 2017](#)), as well as the possibility of acquiring new skills ([Harrington, 2014](#)). "Edutainment" is the result of the combination of education and entertainment ([Carr, 2011](#); [Therkelsen and Lottrup, 2014](#)). Another emergent motive for a family holiday is relaxation ([Durko and Petrick, 2013](#); [Larsen, 2013](#)) and escaping the daily routine ([Kim and Lehto, 2013](#); [Fu et al., 2014](#)). Further motives for a family holiday have been identified in self-development ([Harrington, 2014](#)), excitement ([Larsen, 2013](#)), novelty seeking ([Fu et al., 2014](#)) and self-compensation and compensation for children ([Li et al., 2017](#)).

In family tourism research, the role of children in decision-making is very relevant. Indeed, children's influence has been widely studied, and scholars agree and recognize that its impact varies depending on multiple characteristics, such as children's age (Thornton *et al.*, 1997; John, 1999; Wang *et al.*, 2004; Nanda *et al.*, 2006; Therkelsen, 2010; Kozak and Duman, 2012; Schänzel and Smith, 2014) and gender (Kozak and Duman, 2012; Schänzel and Smith, 2014). Socio-cultural contextual factors, such as parental perception of children, parental style or societal structures, may also concur in determining the different degrees of children's influence (Jenkins, 1979; Koc, 2004; Nanda *et al.*, 2006; Gram, 2007; Bokek-Cohen, 2008; Therkelsen, 2010; Blichfeldt *et al.*, 2011; Carr, 2011; Nancarrow *et al.*, 2011). Still, children (10-12 years old) frequently perceive themselves as influencers in the holiday decision (Tinson and Nancarrow, 2005).

Conversely, scholars have discordant views on determining the impact of children's influence depending on the stage of the decision process (Swinyard and Sim, 1987; John, 1999; Wang *et al.*, 2004; Kim *et al.*, 2010; Nancarrow *et al.*, 2011). The greatest moment for children's influence appears to be during vacation time. Indeed, during vacations, more negotiation power may be granted to children (Therkelsen, 2010), and children may have more pro-activeness in proposing family activities (Wang *et al.*, 2004; Blichfeldt *et al.*, 2011). Kozak and Duman (2012) have investigated the final step of the holiday consumption, which is post-purchase evaluation and satisfaction. According to the authors, both parents and children's satisfactions influence the overall vacation satisfaction. Parents' recommendations are strongly influenced by children's experiences and opinions (Kim *et al.*, 2010; Kozak and Duman, 2012). Finally, young children are recognized as exerting an indirect influence due to their special care requirements (Thornton *et al.*, 1997; Gram, 2007; Lalicic, 2014).

Overall, roles and strategies undertaken by family members interact and vary throughout the decision-making process (Therkelsen, 2010). In family tourism, many sub-decisions are included and could be affected differently by family members (Wang *et al.*, 2004). Surprisingly, the greatest part of studies on family decision-making about holidays is still based on traditional nuclear families, composed of husband, wife and at least one child. For instance, Na *et al.* (1998) describes holiday decision-making as a syncretic decision between husband and wife that children perceive as a parent-dominated decision.

A clue to an aspect of family tourism is the multiplicity and variety of contemporary families. If traditionally family consumer behaviour studies have mainly concentrated on the husband-wife dyad, shifting progressively to the inclusion of children's active contributions, family tourism literature has recently started to acknowledge and investigate modern family structures (Chesworth, 2003; Carr, 2011; Hunter-Jones, 2014). An example of this extension is provided by Schänzel and Jenkins (2017) who investigated fatherhood and non-resident fathers on holiday; Camargo and Tamez (2015) who analysed family tourism experience involving aunts and nieces/nephews; and Lucena *et al.* (2015) who studied gay- and lesbian-parented families in travel motivations and destination choices. Following this new emerging approach in the study of tourism consumption in the modern family structure, two articles of this special issue innovatively explore grandparents in family tourism studies. The article by Mikkelsen and Blichfeldt uncovers the role of grandparents in multigenerational holidays, looking for conceptualization of grandparenthood on holiday and revealing how grandparents and grandchildren deal with family, "thick sociality and domesticity". Differently, the article by Shavanddasht focusses on a marketing segmentation approach to profile grandparents according to their motivations in travelling with or without their grandchildren. By doing so, the article contributes to the identification of several profiles of elderly tourists depending on their motivation combination.

Equally relevant, the article by Khoo-Lattimore, Del Chiappa and Yang aims at identifying hospitality needs of families with young children. To contribute to hospitality-focussed studies, the authors have outlined key themes and attributes of the sub-segment family with young children within family tourism.

Three articles focus on child–parent interaction related to holidays from three different perspectives. The article by Curtale analyses children's impact on family decision with the design of a stated preference experiment with a two-step procedure, collecting children's preferences at first and combine them with parents' choices in a second step. Gram, Therkelsen and Larsen explore critical incidents experienced by families on holiday by using the voices of both parents and children. The study examines how family holidays give rise to ambivalent feelings among parents and children. Drenten explores family performances and experiences in which young consumers are the recipients of last-minute surprise vacations. For this purpose, the study uses YouTube videos as materials for a digital ethnography on family vacation decisions. Finally, Capistrano and Bernardo examined the personal meanings of hosting experiences of first-generation immigrant families with their visiting relatives. Their investigation aims at filling the literature gap related to hosting experiences of women and outlines a Matrilineal Model of Domestic Hospitality in VFR travel.

Finally, we would like to thank all authors for their contributions to this special issue. We appreciate their dedication in delivering high-quality papers and working in a tight schedule to revise the manuscripts according to the reviewers' suggestions. Our sincere thanks go also to the reviewers for their dedicated efforts in reviewing the papers. We would like to express our gratitude to Brian Young, Editor in Chief of *Young Consumers*, for welcoming our proposal of a special issue on tourism consumption and for his constant help and support during the delivery process.

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