

## RESEARCH ON DETERMINING THE FACTORS AFFECTING HOTEL CHOICE OF FAMILIES HAVING CHILDREN

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### Abstract

Research on family purchasing decisions has increased in recent years. When families having children make holiday plans, they consider whether the destination, especially the accommodation enterprises, is suitable for a family holiday. The aim of this study is to determine the factors that affect the hotel choice of families having children. For this purpose, the research, in which a quantitative approach was adopted, was conducted on families with 5-11 aged children who spent a holiday in five-star hotels in Bodrum. The data were collected by a convenience sampling method. A structured questionnaire was used in the study and 400 people participated in the research. The results show that the most important issues for families in choosing a hotel are the “qualified staff” followed by “physical properties of the hotel”, “security”, “animation activities for children”, “amenities for children”, and “location of the hotel”. A significant relationship was also found between the variables according to gender, age, and educational level of the participants.

**Keywords:** Hotel Choice, Families Having Children, 5 Star Hotel, Turkish Riviera.

**JEL Classification:** Z31, Z32, Z33

## ÇOCUKLU AİLELERİN OTEL SEÇİMİNDE ETKİLİ OLAN FAKTÖRLERİN BELİRLENMESİ ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

### Öz

Ailenin satın alma kararları ile ilgili araştırmalar son yıllarda artış göstermiştir. Çocuklu aileler tatil planları yaparken, gidecekleri destinasyon özellikle de konaklama işletmelerinin çocuklu aile tatili için uygun olup olmadığını dikkate almaktadırlar. Bu araştırmanın amacı, çocuklu ailelerin tatil yapacakları oteli seçmelerinde etkili olan faktörlerin belirlenmesidir. Bu amaçla, nicel araştırma yönteminin benimsendiği araştırma Bodrum'daki beş yıldızlı otel işletmelerinde tatil yapan çocuklu aileler üzerinde uygulanmıştır. Veriler kolayda örnekleme yöntemi ile toplanmıştır. Araştırmada yapısal bir anket formu kullanılmış olup, araştırmaya 400 kişi katılmıştır. Sonuçlar, ailelerin otel seçiminde en önemli konuların sırasıyla “nitelikli personel, otelin fiziki özellikleri, güvenlik, çocuklar için animasyon aktiviteleri ve çocuklara yönelik olanaklar ve “otelin konumu” olduğunu tespit edilmiştir. Katılımcıların cinsiyet, yaş ve eğitim düzeyine göre değişkenler arasında da anlamlı bir ilişki bulunmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Otel Seçimi, Çocuklu Aileler, 5 yıldızlı Oteller, Türk Riverası

**JEL Sınıflaması:** Z31, Z32, Z33

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## 1. Introduction

Urbanization, increase in education, and changes in economic and social conditions have the potential to shift the structure of the family, which is described as the most important consumer organization of society. These factors, which are the reason for the transformation from an extended family type to a nuclear family, may lead to a shrinkage in the family structure. They are important clues about the decrease in the number of children at home, changes in children's roles within the family, and increase in children's effect on family decisions. While in the past, the parents have the roles on making decisions for the children, who are considered to be one of the most important elements of the family (Cullen, 2004; Wang et al., 2004), today, the change in the traditional family structure has led children to be more active in the consumption habits and purchasing decisions of the family, and has made children determinant in purchasing decisions such as food and beverages, clothes, self-care products, entertainment and also vacation (Clulow, 1993; Kotler and Armstrong, 2012).

Especially in large cities, the gradual decrease in time spent with children due to difficult working conditions and lack of time led families to have different priorities. Families aiming to spend more time with their children have started to make decisions that provide them and their children the greatest benefit (Flurry, 2004; Rose et al., 2002). This situation strengthens children's position in affecting purchasing decisions and causes taking children's opinions into consideration more. Although children's effect in purchasing decisions and the products they purchase do not directly attract the attention of marketers, their power to influence in purchasing processes is of strategic importance in all service businesses. In line with these developments, children constitute one of the most valuable target markets due to their increased role in purchasing and decision-making. Therefore, factors influencing purchasing decisions of families, especially the children, have become one of the most important research topics in recent years (Mangleburg, 1990; Fallon and Bowles, 1998; Story and French, 2004; Odabaşı and Barış, 2007).

In the highly competitive tourism industry, if accommodation enterprises and travel operators desire to sustain their businesses and continue to make profits, they should determine the needs and expectations of the tourists and offer services that meet their needs. Personality, lifestyle, age, gender, income, marital status, family structure, and culture are among the factors that affect the holiday decisions of tourists. Families having children make an effort to choose the best accommodation facilities not just for themselves but also for their children. The decision of a single traveler and a family on purchasing touristic products differ significantly. One of the most vital consumer groups in tourism are families with children, as they have different requests and expectations compared to other guests. Families with children care more about the desires and needs of their children than their own. A study conducted by Emir and Pekyaman (2010) aiming to determine the factors of hotel choice of families having children, revealed that families give importance to cribs at the hotel rooms, children's pool, children menus, high security and hygiene.

These studies show the importance of children in decision-making process and purchasing behaviour of families. Therefore, it is crucial to research the factors that affect the hotel choice of families, as it creates a greater touristic demand.

Developing products and services that meet the expectations of families having children is important for determining the effective marketing strategies and increasing customer value.

Thus, the main aim of this study is to identify the factors that influence the hotel choice of families having children and to determine the significant differences according to socio-demographic variables. In the related literature, there are plenty of studies determining the factors that influence customers' hotel choice. However, there is a limited research that investigate the factors influencing the hotel choices of families having children between the ages of 5 and 11. This study is expected to contribute to the relevant literature and also to the practitioners, marketers, and hotel managers in their marketing efforts, improving their services by taking children into account.

## 2. Literature Review

Cultural background, subculture, social status, reference groups, and social interactions may influence the purchasing decisions of families. One of the most important factors that influence purchasing decisions of families is undoubtedly, children (Ekasasi, 2005). Children may make pressure to choose a particular brand or a particular store for shopping in family purchasing decisions. Children affect the family's purchasing decisions because families consider children's preferences (Ekasasi, 2005). This effect stems from the family's desire for their children to be involved in purchasing decisions. This may be linked with parents' eagerness their children to be independent and able to make their own decisions. For example, to raise independent and autonomous children is widespread in German and Danish families (Gram, 2007).

Families having children may have different expectations and desires, especially when choosing a resort, compared to other guests. Since families prioritize their children's wishes and needs, they relatively have more expectations and responsibilities. Children may not like the food the hotel serve, or they may demand more entertainment. Therefore, it is crucial for families to meet these needs (Emir and Pekyaman, 2010). According to Cullingford (1995), families consider all the factors that can make their children happy, including the existence of other children at the hotel. In short, the main concern of families is to find a place that their children will be comfortable in. Shoham and Dalakas (2003) state that the decision in buying many products, such as a car or a vacation, is made by both parents and children. However, there are some products where children are more influential in the purchasing decision. These products are mostly leisure activities in which children are the primary participants (such as travel, dining, etc.). Research has found that children are not effective in purchasing certain products (such as cars, televisions, vacations, household goods, furniture, and cereal). However, the effects on holiday and grain purchases are more than other products (Aygün, 2016).

Wang (2014) investigated the influence rates of parents and children on purchasing decision. Some decisions can be referred "child-dominant". In deciding on a vacation, children have large influences on vacation time, destination, and activities to perform. Thornton, Shaw, and Williams (1997) argued that while children may have the ability to choose a vacation, parents still make the final choice. However, the authors estimate that children's satisfaction with the holiday is higher than their parents'. A dissatisfied child negatively affects the parents' choice of next destination. Children, especially in problem identification, have a lot of influence compared with decision making, data collection and the final purchase. Besides, Jenkins (1978) concluded that children have considerable influence in deciding vacation details such as activities, timing, and destination. Seaton and Tagg (1994) concluded that children's opinions (63% of children in England and 74% of children in Scotland) on vacation choices are important to their families.

Accommodation establishments can increase demand if they realize which members of the family have a dominant role in purchasing decisions. Single individuals, newly married couples, families without children, families with children leaving home are more free in their hotel choices and can spend more money. In families having small children, it is seen that women have more share in the decision (Belber, 2007). Stemming from the fact that a family having children will be more selective in the accommodation they will stay at during their vacation, accommodation establishments should meet families' needs and make certain arrangements to create satisfaction.

According to Yılmaz (2007), some of the issues that hotels that serve families having children should pay attention to are as follows; ensuring a balance of supply between parents and caregivers, not discriminating between employees and families, knowing the expectations of families and establishing healthy communication with children. Factors that are important regarding the location of the accommodation establishment are; easy access but located in convenient areas, away from traffic and in a safe zone, close to malls and natural beauties, facade of the hotel, playgrounds and green spaces. Also, the garden should be designed to excite children (such as sculptures and figures) and not have poisonous or thorny plants. Spacious rooms and family rooms (including cribs) are important facilities for families. For children's safety, it is important that handrails are above or equal to the child's height. It is also important to have facilities such as the playroom and/or library and toys for children.

### **3. Methodology**

The aim of this study is to identify the factors which effect the hotel choice of families having children between 5-11 years and to determine the significant differences according to participants' demographic variables. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Using a convenience sampling method, the research was conducted in 5 hotels located in Bodrum between July-August, 2019, a total of 500 questionnaires were collected. However, 400 valid questionnaires were used for analysis. Questionnaires were administered to one of the parents (mother or father).

Considering the study of Emir and Pekyaman (2010), the questionnaire was prepared in 5-point Likert scale and consisted of 41 statements. The questionnaire also includes questions to determine demographic variables such as age, gender, educational level, and income.

Percentage and frequency analysis were used to analyze the demographic characteristics of the participants. In addition, factor analysis was applied to determine the factors affecting the families' hotel choice. Factor loads and reliability coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) for each factor were determined. In the study, descriptive analysis (arithmetic mean) was conducted, and also t-tests and One-Way Anova tests were performed to measure the significant differences between variables. Tukey's test was used for pairwise comparison of the groups having significant differences.

### **4. Results**

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic profile of the respondents. The distribution of gender shows that the percentage of male and female respondents are nearly equal. 43 percent of the respondents are between the ages of 38-47 while the 28-37 age group counts 34.3 percent of this study.

In terms of education, 70.7 percent of respondents hold an undergraduate diploma. 14 percent of respondents have a high school degree diploma. Regarding the monthly income level, 41.8 of respondents earn 6001 TL or more while 29 percent of the respondents' income is between 4501-6000 TL.

**Table 1:** Respondents' Demographic Profile

<b>Gender</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	196	49	Secondary School	21	5.3
Male	204	51	High School	56	14
<b>Age</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	Undergraduate	283	70.7
18-27	12	3	Graduate	40	10
28-37	137	34.3	<b>Income</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
38-47	172	43	3000 TL or below	21	5.3
48-57	63	15.8	3001-4500 TL	96	24
Above 58	16	4	4501-6000 TL	116	29
			6001 TL or above	167	41.8

#### 4.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis for the Factors Affecting Hotel Choice of Families having Children

Exploratory factor analysis was carried out in order to reveal the dimensional structures of the scale for the criteria affecting the hotel choice of families having children and to determine its validity and reliability. In the first step, reliability analysis was performed, and it was determined that the internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) coefficient was .949. According to Nunnally & Bernstein (1994) and Kline (2011), this value is above 0.70, which is necessary for the scale to be considered reliable and valid.

**Table 2:** Exploratory Factor Analysis

<b>Factors Affecting Hotel Choice</b>	<b>Loadings</b>	<b>Variance Explained %</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>
<b>Qualified Staff</b>			
Friendly staff	,814	14,76	,929
Fast check-in and registration	,810		
Consideration of complaints and suggestions	,785		
High standard of hygiene in hotel services	,700		
Immediate fulfillment of customer requests	,692		
Giving detailed information about the region and the hotel	,645		
Child discount on prices	,628		
Availability of babysitting service at the hotel	,579		
Availability of staff having childcare training	,563		
<b>Location of the Hotel</b>			
Safe and secure location	,794	14,40	,937
Proximity to the city center	,789		
Good climatic conditions	,782		
Ease of access to the hotel	,778		
Proximity to entertainment facilities	,776		
Proximity to hospital	,776		
Proximity to tourism attractions	,753		

Factors Affecting Hotel Choice	Loadings	Variance Explained %	$\alpha$
<b>Physical Properties of the Hotel</b>			
Availability of family rooms	,750	12,91	,922
Availability of baby cot and cabinet suitable for children	,722		
Availability of food and beverages for children in mini bars	,715		
Adequate lighting in the rooms	,714		
Spacious and suitable rooms for children	,688		
Soundproof rooms	,658		
Laundry and drying facility	,626		
Availability of mosquito repellent candle and window wires in the rooms	,532		
<b>Animation Activities for Children</b>			
Entertainment activities for children	,790	11,47	,891
Water slide	,751		
Children's pool	,739		
Sports activities suitable for children	,731		
Hobby areas suitable for children	,646		
Mini club	,598		
<b>Security</b>			
Handrails suitable for children on the stairs	,937	9,40	,890
Non-slip area around the pool	,937		
Safe playgrounds for children	,711		
Babysecure electric sockets in the rooms	,584		
<b>Amenities for Children</b>			
Infrangible dinnerware suitable for children	709	7,49	,900
Restaurants with child tables and chairs	,690		
Menu cards for children	,676		
Children's menus	,675		
<b>Cronbach Alfa: 0,949; Total Variance: 70,43; Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; Number of iterations: 7; KMO: 0,940; Bartlett's test of sphericity <math>\chi^2</math>: 14211,088; p: 0.000</b>			

Table 2 shows the Exploratory Factor Analysis of factors affecting hotel choice. Factor analysis can be performed since the KMO is at a satisfactory level (0.940) and the result of the Bartlett's test (0.000) is significant (Sig. = 0.000). According to the Kaiser normalization, considering the factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1, one item was excluded from the analysis as the factor load is less than 40% and 6 constructs were determined. The cumulative percentage of variance accounted for six factors is 70,3 percent of the total variance, which exceeds the threshold percentage of 50 percent indicating that the constructs are at acceptable level (Scherer et al., 1988).

Factors are constructed as follows, the first factor (9 items) Qualified Staff, the second factor (7 items) Location of the Hotel, the third factor (8 items) Physical Properties of the Hotel, the fourth factor (6 items) Animation Activities, the fifth factor (4 items) Security, and the sixth factor (4 items) Amenities for Children. The internal consistency coefficient of each of these factors is between .890 and .937.

The percentage of total variance explained by the construct for Qualified Staff, Location of the Hotel, Physical Properties of the Hotel, Animation Activities for Children, Security, and the Amenities for Children are 14.76 percent, 14.40 percent, 10.12 percent, 12.91 percent, 11.47 percent, and 9.40 percent respectively.

**Table 3: Mean Scores of Factors**

Dimensions	Mean	s.d.
Qualified Staff	4.15	.67908
Physical Properties of the Hotel	4.15	.70076
Security	4.13	.76113
Animation Activities for Children	4.06	.75480
Amenities for Children	4.04	.87028
Location of the Hotel	3.97	.88362

Table 3 shows the mean scores of factors affecting hotel choice of families having children. The dimension that participants attached more importance is “qualified staff” (4.15), followed by “physical properties of the hotel” (4.15), “security” (4.13), “animation activities for children” (4.06), “amenities for children” (4.04), and “location of the hotel” (3.97) dimensions, respectively.

#### **4.2. The Relationship Between Factors Affecting Hotel Choice Of Families And Demographic Variables**

This study also attempted to analyze the significant differences between factors affecting hotel choice of families and demographic variables such as sex, age, educational level, and monthly income. Data was accepted that they were normally distributed since skewness and kurtosis values were between -1.5 and +1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In this context, the t-test and analysis of variance were used as difference tests, and the Tukey test was used to determine which variables caused the difference.

**Table 4: Mean scores for the questionnaire items and results of ANOVA and t-tests**

Dimensions	Gender		Age		Education		Income	
	t	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Qualified Staff	.595	.552	2.191	.089	2.808	.025	.053	.984
Location of the Hotel	2.297	.022	5.571	.001	.226	.924	.556	.645
Physical Properties of the Hotel	1.450	.148	2.772	.041	1.060	.376	.701	.552
Animation Activities for Children	2.192	.029	5.292	.001	1.331	.258	.586	.624
Security	3.549	.000	2.794	.040	.910	.458	.893	.445
Amenities for Children	2.253	.025	5.260	.001	2.464	.045	1.144	.331

It was found that factors affecting hotel choices of families varied according to participants' gender. It has been determined that “location of the hotel”, “animation activities for children”, “security” and “amenities for children” are the factors that females attach more importance than males. Age was also found to be a discriminator for five dimensions except “qualified staff”. Regarding the Tukey test results, 49 years old or older participants attach less importance to these factors than other age groups.

In this study, it was also determined that participants having undergraduate degree attach more importance to factors “qualified staff” and “amenities for children” than those holding secondary school diploma. However, no significant relationship was found between the participants regarding their level of income.

## 5. Conclusion and Discussion

This study, investigating the factors that affect the hotel choice of families, was carried out in Bodrum with 400 participants who have children between the ages of five and eleven. In the research, it was determined that the most important issues for families in choosing a hotel are qualified staff, physical properties of the hotel, security, animation activities for children, amenities for children, and location of the hotel. Since the study included families having children between the ages of five and eleven, it is not surprising that families give emphasis to the babysitting services and the trained staff on childcare during their holidays. Families entrust their children to reliable caregivers during their holidays.

Security is another important issue for families. Security is at the forefront of the internal and external stimuli for the tourism movement. It is not possible to carry out touristic activities in an unsafe environment. It is possible for people to travel comfortably, have fun and rest peacefully by staying in a safe destination and a safe hotel. In their research focused on the perceptions and satisfaction of the customers visiting the Danish amusement park by Johns and Gyimothy (2002) determined that safety is an important issue in terms of giving children a sense of independence. In the study, it was also determined that female participants care more about the location of the hotel, animation activities, safety and amenities for children compared to male participants. Therefore, mothers give more emphasis on location of the hotel, safety, and amenities for children in choosing a hotel. It is clear that mothers have more expectations about the accommodation facilities than fathers (Belber, 2007: 79).

There is a significant relationship between customers' ages with their holiday preferences, destination and hotel choices, and entertainment. For example, while the younger customers choose destinations with the motivation of entertainment, the older group prefer tranquil areas. The preferences of customers regarding accommodation, dining and entertainment generally depend on the age of the customers (Emir, 2010: 96–97). In this study, it is clear that participants who are 49 years old or over give less emphasis to the facilities for children at the hotels. This may be due to the fact that the children of this group are older individuals. Accordingly, sports and animation activities, location of the hotel are less important for older age groups.

Rızaoğlu (2003) states that the demand for tourism decreases as people get older. Young people take more strenuous trips, travel to distant holiday destinations, and show more interest in countries having different culture. The research shows that families prioritize the comfort and safety of their children. In this context, the emphasis given by the hotel to the following criteria will increase the holiday satisfaction of families and will ensure the revisit of the customers. Safe playgrounds need to be arranged for children. There should be mini clubs where children between the ages of 5-11 can spend time together. The staff working in mini club should have education on childcare. Activities can be arranged both for children and families to spend their time comfortably. The hotel can organize activities for families such as games at pool or in the beach, animation shows that are not risky for children, and excursions that will allow children and families to spend time full of fun.

Giving priority to families having children during registration, checking in their rooms in a short period of time, giving priority to children's orders at the restaurants, communicating with children will help families spending a comfortable and happy holiday.

Results of this study is limited to the 5-11 age group and Bodrum destination. Therefore, the results are not generalized to other age groups or destinations. However, the results will contribute to the relevant literature and provide guidance to hotel managers and marketers working in tourism industry to arrange facilities for families having children. In future studies, different age groups can be examined, and their needs and expectations can be identified. Using qualitative research methods in future research and performing in different age groups will contribute to the determination of economic, social, and cultural factors that affect the hotel preferences of families having children.

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