

# Multigenerational Travel: A Narrative Review of Family-oriented Tourism Trends and Implications

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## Abstract

Multigenerational family travel has become a significant trend in contemporary tourism. This type of travel, involving grandparents, parents, and children, reflects evolving family structures and the growing importance of shared experiences in fostering familial bonds. Despite its increasing relevance, research on multigenerational travel remains limited. This narrative review synthesizes existing literature to explore key aspects such as motivations, benefits, decision-making, challenges, and industry responses to multigenerational travel. By providing a comprehensive analysis, this study aims to address the gap in the literature and offer insights for future research and industry stakeholders.

## Keywords:

Multigenerational travel, family tourism, motivations, benefits, decision-making, tourism industry adaptation

## **1 Introduction**

Family tourism has become a dynamic and rapidly growing segment of the travel industry, with multigenerational travel emerging as a significant trend. This rise is influenced by demographic shifts such as ageing populations, longer life expectancies, and evolving family structures (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015). Multigenerational travel provides opportunities for families to reconnect, celebrate special occasions, and create lasting memories (Lehto et al., 2012). In response, tourism providers are increasingly designing experiences that cater to the varied needs of different generations, ensuring greater inclusivity and enriching travel experiences (Durko & Petrick, 2013).

Multigenerational travel involving journeys with at least three generations—usually grandparents, parents, and children—has become increasingly popular as families seek to uphold traditions and reinforce bonds despite being geographically separated (Bengtson, 2001). This trend is further fuelled by socio-economic factors, including increased disposable income among older adults and the growing preference for family-oriented leisure activities (Li et al., 2020). As societal norms shift, multigenerational travel reflects broader transformations, including longer life expectancies, delayed retirement, and an increasing focus on family-centred experiences. In response, the tourism industry continues to adapt, offering tailored services that cater to travellers' diverse needs and preferences across multiple generations. This review explores the emerging trends, key motivations, and challenges associated with multigenerational travel, providing insights into its socio-economic impact and prospects.

Additionally, research indicates that multigenerational travel is driven by more than just leisure and relaxation, encompassing educational, cultural, and heritage-based experiences (Schänzel & Smith, 2014). Grandparents, in particular, play a crucial role in preserving family history, strengthening generational ties, and often financing these trips (Hasmanová Marhánková, 2015). This narrative review offers a comprehensive analysis of existing literature on multigenerational travel, synthesising key findings to examine its motivations, benefits, challenges, and industry adaptations. By consolidating research insights, this paper provides valuable implications for academic scholars and tourism professionals seeking to enhance family travel experiences.

## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Motivations for Multigenerational Travel**

Motivation, the driving force behind the behaviour, is critical in understanding travel decisions and tourist preferences (Dann, 1981; Iso-Ahola, 1997). It encompasses biological and psychological needs, desires, and aspirations influencing behaviours such as relaxation, exploration, cultural immersion, and bonding with loved ones (Fodness, 1994; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Family travel motivations are inherently multifaceted, focusing on maintaining family identity, fostering relationships, and ensuring togetherness (Khoo-Lattimore & Yang, 2018; Li et al., 2017; Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015).

Tourism plays a crucial role in personal development by facilitating experiential learning and broadening perspectives (Li et al., 2020). Research indicates family leisure significantly enhances family satisfaction and cohesion (Lehto et al., 2012). Contemporary family travel encompasses diverse structures, including multigenerational groups, large families, and single-parent trips (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015). Families use travel to strengthen relationships, break from daily routines, create lasting memories, and improve communication while maintaining family traditions (Li et al., 2020; Durko & Petrick, 2016; Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). Additionally, travel provides opportunities for children's learning and development through exposure to new environments and cultures (Li et al., 2020; Shaw et al., 2008).

Family travel motivations encompass multiple dimensions, as family trips often reinforce familial identity, strengthen relationships, and cultivate togetherness (Khoo-Lattimore & Yang, 2018; Li et al., 2017; Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015). According to Li et al. (2017), key motivators include spending quality time with children, creating positive memories, promoting learning and development, self-compensation, and enhancing children's experiences. Four primary motivational dimensions in cruise tourism have been identified: self-esteem and social recognition, relaxation and escape, learning and discovery, and thrill and bonding (Han & Hyun, 2019). Grand travel motivations emphasise strengthening bonds between grandparents and grandchildren, passing down knowledge, and creating a family legacy. Such travel experiences offer opportunities for shared meaningful activities, personal fulfilment, and the validation of family identities and relationships (Hasmanová Marhánková, 2015).

Specifically, multigenerational travel motivations reflect the desire to spend quality time together, engage in shared activities, and create lasting memories while prioritising safety, entertainment, and relaxation (Hajibaba & Dolnicar, 2018). Grandparents often play a pivotal role, providing financial and emotional support while fostering bonds, passing down cultural traditions, and reinforcing family cohesion (Hasmanová Marhánková, 2015; Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2011). These motivations highlight the importance of family connections, cultural enrichment, and shared meaningful experiences in shaping modern family travel behaviours.

## **2.2 Benefits of Multigenerational Travel**

Multigenerational travel strengthens family bonds by creating shared experiences that enhance relationships and communication. Studies indicate that travelling together allows family members to engage in meaningful conversations, reinforce familial connections, and develop a stronger sense of unity (Durko & Petrick, 2013). Grandparents, parents, and children benefit from quality time away from daily routines, fostering a deeper understanding of each other's values and perspectives (Yang et al., 2020). Research also highlights that these trips help improve intergenerational relationships by bridging generational gaps and fostering mutual respect among family members (Hasmanová Marhánková, 2015).

In addition to relationship-building, multigenerational travel promotes intergenerational learning and cultural awareness. Grandparents often serve as sources of knowledge, sharing historical, cultural, and personal stories that enrich

children's understanding of their heritage (Hapsari et al., 2022). Travelling to different destinations exposes younger family members to diverse cultures, languages, and traditions, enhancing their cognitive development and global awareness (Wu et al., 2021). Such experiences contribute to children's education and provide older adults with a sense of purpose and engagement, reinforcing family travel's emotional and intellectual benefits (Kluin & Lehto, 2012).

Furthermore, multigenerational travel offers significant health and well-being benefits for all ages. Studies show that shared travel experiences reduce stress, increase happiness, and improve mental health for older and younger travellers (Hu et al., 2023). Grandparents, in particular, benefit from active engagement in outdoor activities, which supports physical health and overall well-being (Yang et al., 2023). Additionally, multigenerational trips provide parents with extra childcare support, alleviating stress and allowing for relaxation and rejuvenation (Minnaert, 2017). These collective benefits make multigenerational travel a holistic experience that nurtures relationships, promotes learning, and enhances well-being.

### **2.3 Decision-Making in Multigenerational Travel**

The decision-making process in multigenerational travel involves multiple family members with diverse needs, preferences, and expectations. Unlike nuclear family vacations, where decision-making is typically centralised, multigenerational travel requires a collaborative approach to ensure that the trip meets the interests of different age groups (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015). Research highlights that grandparents, parents, and children often play varying roles in shaping travel plans, with grandparents frequently acting as financial sponsors. In contrast, parents coordinate logistics and children influence activity choices (Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2011). Additionally, decisions regarding travel destinations, accommodations, and itineraries must balance accessibility, entertainment, relaxation, and cultural engagement to cater to the entire family unit (Hajibaba & Dolnicar, 2018).

Intergenerational travel decision-making is influenced by several factors, including family traditions, past travel experiences, and perceived benefits (Li et al., 2020). Grandparents often prioritize opportunities to bond with grandchildren. At the same time, parents may emphasise convenience and safety. Children, though not primary decision-makers, can significantly impact choices by expressing preferences for specific activities, such as theme parks or adventure-based experiences (Lehto et al., 2012). Recent studies suggest that digital tools and social media platforms increasingly shape travel decisions as families research destinations, compare accommodations, and read online reviews before finalising plans (Lee et al., 2023). Moreover, travel motivations such as heritage exploration, educational value, and family cohesion further influence collective decision-making (Tseng et al., 2023).

Conflicts in decision-making are common in multigenerational travel due to differences in budgets, activity levels, and travel expectations (Whalen et al., 2024). Resolving such conflicts often requires compromise, negotiation, and pre-trip planning, ensuring that each family member's needs are acknowledged (Durko & Petrick, 2016). Industry responses to these challenges include customised travel packages, multigenerational-friendly accommodations, and flexible itineraries that

cater to various age groups (Minnaert, 2020). As the trend of multigenerational travel continues to grow, understanding the decision-making dynamics behind these trips is essential for families and the tourism industry to create inclusive and enjoyable experiences.

## **2.4 Challenges in Multigenerational Travel**

While enriching and meaningful, multigenerational travel presents several challenges due to different family members' diverse needs, expectations, and preferences. These challenges can be broadly categorised into logistical, interpersonal, and financial issues that impact the overall travel experience. Understanding these complexities is essential for families and the tourism industry to ensure a smooth and enjoyable trip.

One of the most significant challenges in multigenerational travel is coordinating travel logistics, including destination selection, itinerary planning, and accommodation arrangements. Since family members span different age groups, ensuring accessibility for elderly travellers while catering to children's energy levels and interests can be challenging (Minnaert, 2020). Research suggests that destinations must balance relaxation, adventure, and cultural experiences to satisfy all generations (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015). Additionally, the availability of suitable accommodations, such as family-friendly hotels, multi-room suites, or rental homes, can pose challenges, as families often require shared spaces for bonding and private areas for rest (Li et al., 2020).

Multigenerational travel brings together family members with diverse travel preferences, communication styles, and decision-making approaches, often leading to potential conflicts (Whalen et al, 2024). Grandparents may favor cultural and historical experiences, while younger travelers prefer amusement parks or adventure-filled activities. Meanwhile, parents often prioritize relaxation and convenience, which can result in disagreements over daily itineraries (Buzlu et al., 2024). Additionally, generational hierarchies and family roles can influence travel dynamics, with grandparents sometimes expecting decision-making authority, whereas younger members may desire greater independence (Hajibaba & Dolnicar, 2018).

To navigate these differences, effective trip planning, open communication, and compromise are essential to ensuring a harmonious travel experience. Families often opt for destinations that offer a variety of activities catering to all age groups, such as all-inclusive resorts, cruise vacations, heritage sites, and nature retreats (Li et al., 2020; Blichfeldt & Mikkelsen, 2017). Moreover, accessibility and the availability of medical facilities are crucial factors, particularly for elderly travelers, ensuring comfort and safety throughout the journey.

The financial burden of multigenerational travel is another critical challenge, as travel expenses must be divided among family members with varying financial capacities. Grandparents may contribute financially to foster family bonding, but this can sometimes create unspoken expectations or power dynamics in decision-making (Hebblethwaite & Norris, 2011). Additionally, younger family members or those with tighter budgets may feel pressured to participate in expensive trips beyond their

means (Li et al., 2020). Studies highlight that transparent cost-sharing strategies and budget-friendly planning are essential to prevent financial strain and ensure an enjoyable experience for all (Durko & Petrick, 2016).

### **3 Methodology**

This study employs a narrative review approach to explore multigenerational travel within the broader context of family tourism. A narrative review is a scholarly examination of existing literature that involves both interpretation and critique (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; MacLure, 2005; Grant & Booth, 2009; Greenhalgh et al., 2018). Its purpose is to construct a well-supported argument grounded in primary sources to convince readers while also broadening the understanding of a subject and contributing to theoretical advancements (Dixon-Woods et al., 2006). Although various forms of narrative reviews exist, they all adhere to a structured methodology and are not conducted arbitrarily. Some may utilize systematic search strategies with defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, while others may not. These reviews are also known as integrative reviews (Torraco, 2005; Whitemore & Knafl, 2005) or critical reviews (Grant & Booth, 2009; Saunders & Rojon, 2011). Regardless of the specific term used, their fundamental aim remains to expand knowledge and contribute to theoretical discourse within a particular domain.

Unlike systematic reviews that rely on a rigid methodological framework, narrative reviews offer a flexible and interpretative synthesis of academic sources, industry reports, and relevant publications, making them particularly useful for understanding emerging trends and conceptual developments in tourism research (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). Through this approach, the study integrates diverse perspectives on motivations, benefits, decision-making, challenges, and industry responses to multigenerational travel, providing a holistic view of the phenomenon.

## **4 Findings**

### **4.1 Increasing Prevalence and Economic Contributions**

Multigenerational travel has emerged as a dominant tourism industry segment, with increasing older generations' financial contributions. Studies show that baby boomers, now grandparents, often finance these trips, supporting travel expenses for the entire family (Durko & Petrick, 2016). The rise of dual-income households has also influenced this trend, enabling families to prioritize travel to strengthen relationships (Li et al., 2020). Moreover, grandparents are increasingly willing to allocate their financial resources toward travel, viewing it as a means of fostering meaningful connections with younger generations (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015).

The economic impact of multigenerational travel extends beyond family expenditures. Tourism destinations benefit from the rise in intergenerational travel by offering tailored vacation packages that include age-friendly accommodations, multi-activity resorts, and cultural heritage experiences (Lehto et al., 2012). This segment has contributed to the growth of travel markets that cater specifically to extended families, including luxury cruises and heritage tourism (Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt, 2018). As such, the increasing spending power of older travellers has

expanded business opportunities for the hospitality and travel sectors, reinforcing the economic significance of multigenerational tourism (Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt, 2018).

#### **4.2 Travel Preferences and Destination Selection**

Preferred destinations for multigenerational travel include all-inclusive resorts, cruise vacations, heritage sites, and nature-based retreats. These destinations offer diverse activities catering to different age groups, ensuring that younger and older travellers can find engaging experiences (Lehto et al., 2012). Research highlights that accessibility, family-friendly accommodations, and the availability of medical facilities play crucial roles in destination selection (Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt, 2018).

Cruise vacations are particularly popular for multigenerational travel due to their all-inclusive nature, providing entertainment, dining, and activities that appeal to various age groups (Durko & Petrick, 2013). Heritage tourism is another growing segment, allowing families to explore cultural roots and ancestral history while fostering deeper connections across generations (Schänzel & Smith, 2014). Nature-based retreats, including national parks and eco-tourism destinations, cater to families seeking outdoor experiences that promote intergenerational learning and environmental awareness (Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt, 2018). The growing interest in wellness and relaxation tourism also influences destination choices, as resorts offering spa treatments, health-focused activities, and stress-free environments are increasingly sought after by multigenerational travellers (Li et al., 2020).

#### **4.3 Emotional and Social Impact**

Multigenerational travel fosters intergenerational bonding, contributing to emotional well-being and social cohesion (Hebblethwaite, 2017). Shared experiences during travel enhance communication, reduce familial tensions, and create lasting memories (Schänzel & Smith, 2014). Grandparents play an essential role in passing down cultural heritage and values, while younger generations introduce digital advancements that enrich travel experiences (Li et al., 2020). Moreover, research suggests that these trips reinforce family identity and contribute to emotional resilience, particularly during societal or economic uncertainty (Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt, 2018).

#### **4.4 Technological Integration and Travel Planning**

The role of technology in multigenerational travel has expanded, with digital platforms simplifying travel planning (Yung et al., 2021). Online booking systems, mobile applications, and virtual tourism previews enable families to coordinate trips efficiently (Li et al., 2020). Social media has also become a key tool for documenting travel experiences and maintaining intergenerational connections beyond the trip (Blichfeldt & Mikkelsen, 2017). The introduction of artificial intelligence in travel recommendations further personalizes itineraries, catering to different generational needs while ensuring smooth travel logistics (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015).

#### 4.5 Future Directions in Multigenerational Travel

Future research should explore sustainability practices in multigenerational travel, addressing the environmental impact of family tourism (Durko & Petrick, 2016). Additionally, studies should examine the role of emerging technologies, such as virtual reality and AI-driven travel planning, in enhancing multigenerational travel experiences (Yung et al., 2021). Research on the role of smart tourism initiatives, including digital guides and augmented reality experiences, could further improve accessibility and engagement for diverse age groups (Li et al., 2020). Investigating the economic impact of sustainable tourism choices among multigenerational travellers would also contribute to developing more responsible tourism policies (Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt, 2018).

Table 1: Key Themes and Insights in Multigenerational Travel

| Themes                           | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Motivations</b>               | Multigenerational travel is driven by the desire to strengthen family bonds, create shared memories, and ensure cultural transmission. Grandparents often play a pivotal role in providing financial and emotional support. (Hajibaba & Dolnicar, 2018; Hasmanová Marhánková, 2015)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Benefits</b>                  | Travel enhances family satisfaction, fosters communication, and allows intergenerational learning. Exposure to diverse cultural settings strengthens familial identity and relationships (Lehto et al., 2012; Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Challenges</b>                | Differences in travel expectations, mobility constraints, and financial considerations often complicate planning. Ensuring inclusive activities for all generations remains a key industry concern. (Durko & Petrick, 2016; Shaw & Dawson, 2001)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Travel Preferences</b>        | <p>Preferred destinations include all-inclusive resorts, cruise vacations, heritage sites, and nature retreats that provide engaging activities for all age groups. Accessibility and medical facilities are crucial considerations. (Li et al., 2020; Blichfeldt &amp; Mikkelsen, 2017)</p> <p>The decision-making process in multigenerational travel involves input from grandparents, parents, and children, each with distinct priorities such as bonding, convenience, and entertainment (Schänzel &amp; Yeoman, 2015; Li et al., 2020).</p> |
| <b>Technological Integration</b> | Online booking platforms, virtual tourism previews, and AI-driven recommendations simplify planning. Social media facilitates experience sharing and intergenerational bonding. (Yung et al., 2021; Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

|                          |                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Future Directions</b> | Sustainable tourism, smart tourism initiatives, and AI-enhanced planning tools are expected to shape future multigenerational travel experiences. Mikkelsen & Blichfeldt (2018) |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## 5 Conclusion

Multigenerational family travel is a significant and growing sector within the tourism industry, providing valuable opportunities for family bonding and cultural immersion. Despite inherent challenges, industry innovations have improved accessibility and inclusivity, catering to the diverse needs of travelling families. This narrative review enhances the existing literature by synthesising research on the motivations, advantages, obstacles, and industry responses to multigenerational travel. As the trend continues to expand, ongoing studies are necessary to explore evolving dynamics and optimise travel experiences for families spanning multiple generations. As a transformative force in tourism, multigenerational travel bridges tradition and modernity, reshaping how families experience destinations. By addressing logistical challenges and integrating technological advancements, the tourism industry can foster greater inclusivity while maximizing economic potential. Collaboration between policymakers and businesses is essential to developing travel environments that accommodate travelers of all ages, ensuring that multigenerational tourism remains a fundamental aspect of the global travel landscape.

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