

Improving families' customer experience in accommodation in Nendaz



Module 795: Bachelor Thesis

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Source of title page illustration: Picture from the author, taken at the Tracouet in 2008.

Executive summary

Introduction and context

In today's fast-paced world, it can be challenging for families to carve out quality time together. Family holidays offer a unique opportunity to do just that. However, organizing trips abroad can be a stressful endeavour for parents, involving a multitude of decisions, from accommodation to activities. Accommodation plays a crucial role in the overall holiday experience. This research project focuses on enhancing the accommodation offerings for families in Nendaz. To address this, the study delves into the context of Nendaz and family tourism, explores customer experience and family-friendliness and provides local insights.

Literature review

The first part of the literature review focuses on hospitality customer experience and its management. Customer experience represents the interactions between a customer and a company, encompassing sensations, feelings, and behaviours. Customer experience management strategies aim at managing customer interactions across various dimensions, including rational, physical, emotional, subconscious and psychological aspects. Insights into individual customer characteristics, needs and expectations are crucial for effective customer experience management. Within the context of hospitality industry, service climate is crucial to foster customer focus among employees.

The second part explores different methods which allow for the improvement of the customer experience. To be able to enhance the customer experience, companies must have a deep understanding of marketing, operations and human resources. Several strategies exist as there is not one fit for all the different industries.

Thirdly, the theme of family-friendly accommodation is exposed as industry experts have observed a growing demand for amenities catering to families and children. Infrastructure and services play significant roles in attracting families, including room options, activities and more.

Methodology

The research methodology used mixed methods research to investigate family-friendly accommodations in Nendaz. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to provide comprehensive insights. The quantitative analysis involved studying infrastructure via accommodation establishments websites, while qualitative insights were gained through semi-

directed interviews with accommodation and industry professionals. Interview guides covered five themes: market situation, clientele knowledge, destination strategy, family-friendly certification and general perspectives. The combination of both approaches allowed to provide a holistic understanding of family-friendly accommodations in Nendaz.

Main results

The collected data was used as a foundation for the creation of three observations. The inventory and the interviews revealed a lack of family-oriented facilities and services in establishments in Nendaz which was also often poorly communicated on their respective websites. The family accommodation offer of the destination seems to overlook the major role played by infrastructure in improving families' customer experience. The lack of communication on the websites also showed that accommodation providers undermine the importance of effective communication. Secondly, a lack of coordination in efforts regarding the development of the family touristic offer has also been revealed by the collected data. The tourist office has engaged in initiatives to encourage service providers to join their efforts in developing Nendaz as a family-friendly destination. The lack of coordination is dangerous for Nendaz's reputation as it could lead to confusion for families visiting. It was also discovered that not all accommodation establishments targeted families as customers and preferred to focus on other segments. Finally, a misunderstanding of family needs was identified. Notably children's role which is often forgotten when creating customer experiences even though they influence decision-making and satisfaction. Small gestures aimed at engaging children can significantly impact both their immediate experiences and future loyalty.

Recommendations

The recommendations were categorised into three distinct stages following the customer journey: pre-arrival, during the stay and post-departure. For pre-arrival, improving website communication and visibility of family-related information, as well as the promotion of the *Cheesy passport* initiative could be put in place. During the stay, children should be included in the check-in process and baby equipment should also be provided. Post-departure, feedback should be gathered and personalized thank-you notes including children could be sent out. Recommendations vary for rental agencies and properties, due to their different structure. Rental properties could offer pre-arrival shopping services and family kits. For hotels, suggestions include creating welcome kits for children, and offering daily children's entertainment activities. Lastly, giving children souvenirs upon departure to foster attachment to the destination and the establishment is proposed.

Foreword and acknowledgments

Even though I am originally from Geneva, I have been coming to Nendaz for all my holidays since I was a little girl. My family and I stayed in our chalet in Nendaz which belonged to my great grandfather who originated from Nendaz. I have created lots of memories in Nendaz which I deeply cherish and hope to be able to keep creating with friends and family in the future.

My memories are related to skiing and hiking of course, but I also remember that the first thing we would do when arriving in Nendaz was to head up to the tourist office. Once there, my parents would ask for the weekly activity programme and all the new events and activities for families. I remember trying out archery, doing my first hikes which were motivated by treasure hunts organised by the tourist office and watching the firework show of the 1st of August. I also remember my parents constantly talking to their friends about how great Nendaz is for families and how much the tourist office does for them. I am profoundly attached to Nendaz and that is why I wanted to realise my bachelor thesis on a subject for the destination and its development.

Another passion of mine is customer experience and those were all the reasons which lead me to work on families' customer experience in Nendaz. Due to my attachment to the destination I also wanted to contribute to its development to make sure that Nendaz can still be the place where families just like mine create lasting memories.

This research project was far from being easy, notably due to the fact that interviewing accommodation establishments proved to be extremely difficult to organise. Yet, I was able to find professionals motivated by the thought of helping a future professional for her research project.

I am very grateful for my support teacher, Mrs. Monica Zumstein who accompanied me all along my thesis and provided me with numerous recommendations and much needed support. I also thank Mr. Baptiste Constantin, director of Nendaz Tourisme who played a crucial role in my motivation as he always encouraged me throughout the project and was also available when I was faced with challenges. I also thank all the participants and experts whom I interviewed and allowed me to gain crucial insights into the destination and the industry. Finally, I thank my family and friends for their never-ending support and motivation.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	viii
List of figures	ix
List of abbreviations.....	xi
Introduction	1
1. Context.....	2
1.1. The story of Nendaz.....	2
1.2. Family destination certification	4
1.2.1. Certification process	4
1.2.2. Criteria.....	5
1.3. Family-friendly certification.....	5
1.3.1. Certification process	6
1.3.2. Certified establishments.....	7
1.4. Definition of family.....	7
1.5. Family holidays	8
1.6. Family as a consumer group.....	9
1.7. Family travel habits and needs.....	9
1.8. The role of children	10
2. Literature review	12
2.1. Hospitality customer experience and customer experience management	12
2.2. Improving customer experience	13
2.3. Family-friendly accommodation.....	14

2.3.1.	Family-friendly infrastructure	14
2.3.2.	Family-friendly services / attitude	16
3.	Methodology	16
3.1.	Data used	17
3.1.1.	Primary data collection methods	17
3.1.2.	Interview guides	18
3.1.3.	Interview method	20
3.1.4.	Qualitative data analysis method	20
3.1.5.	Quantitative data analysis method	20
4.	Quantitative data.....	21
4.1.	Family infrastructure in hotels and rental agencies in Nendaz.....	21
5.	Synthesis of qualitative data	26
5.1.	Question 1	26
5.2.	Question 2	27
5.3.	Question 3	27
5.4.	Question 4	28
5.5.	Question 5	28
5.6.	Question 6	30
5.7.	Question 7	30
5.8.	Question 8	31
5.9.	Question 9	31
5.10.	Question 10	32
5.11.	Question 11.....	33

5.11.1. Establishments	33
5.11.2. Destination.....	35
6. Qualitative data summary	38
7. Discussion	39
7.1. Lack of infrastructure and services for families in accommodation in Nendaz	39
7.2. Lack of coordination in efforts to improve families experience	40
7.3. Difficulty in understanding the family persona and customer experience	41
8. Best practices	42
8.1. Famille Plus	42
8.2. Märchenhotel Braunwald.....	44
8.3. Swiss Holiday Park	48
9. Recommendations	51
9.1. General recommendations	51
9.2. Recommendations for rental agencies and properties.....	53
9.3. Recommendations for hotels.....	54
Conclusion	55
10. Reference list.....	57
11. Pictures sources	62
Author's declaration.....	64

List of Tables

Table 1: Qualitative data summary.....	38
Table 2: Märchenhotel family infrastructure	47
Table 3: Swiss Holiday Park family infrastructure.....	50

List of figures

Figure 1: Cheesy the mascot.....	3
Figure 2: Family Destination Label	4
Figure 3: Minimum number of points Family-Friendly certification.....	6
Figure 4: Family-Friendly certified accommodation establishments	7
Figure 7: Establishments mentioning family on their websites	21
Figure 8: Establishments offering children's discount on their websites	22
Figure 9: Establishments offering family packages on their website	23
Figure 10: Establishments mentioning baby equipment on their websites	24
Figure 11: Establishments member of the Cheesy passport offer	25
Figure 12: Sondage auprès de la clientèle famille - Hiver 2021-22	29
Figure 13: Plaine des Ecluses	35
Figure 14: Famille Plus logo	42
Figure 15: Play zone.....	44
Figure 16: Children's buffet.....	44
Figure 17: Bathroom.....	44
Figure 18: Indoor slide.....	45
Figure 19: Baby pool	45
Figure 20: Sirup fountain	46
Figure 21: Milk fountain	46
Figure 22: Family room.....	46
Figure 23: Construction playground.....	47

Elodie Castro

Figure 24: Baby equipment..... 48

Figure 25: Children's bowling..... 48

Figure 26: Children's buffet..... 49

Figure 27: Children's menu..... 49

Figure 28: Adventure pool..... 49

Figure 29: Indoor park 50

Figure 30: Tom the mascot 50

List of abbreviations

TO	Tourist office
CX	Customer experience
CEM	Customer experience management

Introduction

In today's fast-paced world it can be challenging for families to make time for each other. Family holidays represent a unique opportunity to schedule quality time with the whole family (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018). However, organising holidays abroad can prove to be a stressful and complex endeavour for parents. Many decisions must be made ranging from the accommodation to the different activities composing the holiday. Accommodation is a crucial aspect of the travelling experience as it can either make or break the whole holiday. This research project aims at providing guidance for the development of Nendaz's accommodation offer for families by addressing the following research question: how can families' accommodation experience be improved in Nendaz?

To answer this problematic, the context of Nendaz and family tourism are first detailed. The topics of customer experience and family friendliness are then explored using existing scientific literature as a foundation.

The development of the research followed with the quantitative analysis of the existing family infrastructure and services in accommodation establishments in Nendaz which allowed for a comprehensive inventory to be created. To gain a deeper understanding of the situation of Nendaz, some accommodation managers and local experts were interviewed. Finally, to provide some outside perspectives, experts from outside the destination also participated in interviews.

To provide inspiration for recommendations, some best practices in the form of hotels and family-friendly certification was also analysed to allow for a comparison between the existing family accommodation offer in Nendaz.

The findings and comparison of all the collected data allowed for a number of recommendations to be proposed to help the destination's accommodation establishments to develop a coherent and satisfactory family customer experience.

1. Context

1.1. The story of Nendaz

Nendaz is a mountain destination located in the Valais and part of the 4 Vallées, which offers its visitors activities year-round. One of Nendaz's specificities is that it possesses few commercial beds compared to its attractiveness and popularity. In fact, the resort welcomes tourists for temporary accommodation as well as secondary homeowners which represent a major part of Nendaz.

The destination's touristic strategy for the years 2024 to 2028 focuses on four main target markets, respectively "active sporty, active family, nature lover, secondary homeowner" (Rapport de Gestion Nendaz, 2023). Nendaz has been labelled as a Family destination since 1997 (Rapport de Gestion Nendaz, 2022), which has helped the destination to attract families. However, this label is set to disappear at the end of 2024. The disappearance of the label has encouraged Nendaz's touristic board to rethink their family offer and marketing strategy to make sure that in the future families are still attracted to the destination. Families are the priority target market as they represented 55% of tourists visiting Nendaz in 2023 (Rapport de Gestion Nendaz, 2023). Moreover, the destination strives to offer amazing experiences, especially for families. Their main objective is to create loyal customers, even amongst children as they represent the future consumers (Rapport de Gestion Nendaz, 2023). Therefore, most of the activities organised by the tourist office (TO) focus on entertaining families with children during their stay in Nendaz.

Each year the TO proposes new events and depending on their success, these are then included in the yearly programme. During the year 2023, the TO recorded that approximately 25 animations had been proposed to guests on a weekly basis during the high season (Rapport de Gestion Nendaz, 2023).

Nendaz has also been working on the development of its own mascot: Cheesy, a Hérens cow born in Nendaz (Nendaz, 2024). The mascot is at the heart of many activities proposed to children such as: creative workshops, treasure hunts and a special passport during the summer.



Figure 1: Cheesy the mascot (Nendaz Tourisme, 2023)

The *Cheesy passport* is available to guests staying in partner accommodation during the 1st of July until the 3rd of September (Nendaz, 2024). The passport offers children a free postcard of their choosing, a surprise gift, an entry to the Chaèdoz pool in Haute-Nendaz and an activity from the TO: archery, circus, climbing or a workshop. (Nendaz, 2024).

Following the news of the disappearance of the label, the destination has chosen to work with Rubio Consulting, a consulting agency specialising in the development of touristic family offers to make sure to propose a coherent and diversified offer to customers. The collaboration with the agency aimed mostly at training and informing different service providers on the needs of families. Service providers had the opportunity to take part in different workshops which allowed them to gain knowledge and exchange practices between the different providers.

The collaboration with Rubio Consulting led to the development of a Masterplan for Nendaz which sets the objectives for the destination for the next 10 years. This plan focuses on four different industries: “accommodation, outdoor activities 365, activities for bad weather and proximity services” (Rapport de Gestion Nendaz, 2023). Regarding accommodation, the objective is to develop the accommodation offer and increase the number of commercial beds available while responding to clients' needs and choosing a sustainable approach by working with local businesses and creating jobs. As of February 2024, Nendaz possesses five hotels which will amount to six in June 2024 with the opening of the MAD retreat Hotel (Nendaz, 2024). The destination has discovered that the low number of commercial beds in hotels was a limiting factor to the number of visitors it could welcome. In fact, most people visiting Nendaz

tend to stay in rented properties. During the year 2023, 63% of Nendaz's commercial overnights came from rented accommodation, making the hotel overnights amount to only 17% of the total commercial overnights (Rapport de gestion Nendaz, 2023). It is therefore not surprising that touristic officials have included the development of the accommodation offer in their development plan.

1.2. Family destination certification

The family destination certification was created by the Swiss Federation of Tourism and will disappear at the end of 2024. It pursues three main objectives:

- Quality: The destinations with the certification must comply with the criteria and therefore ensure the quality of the proposed services. The criteria also aim at motivating destinations to develop high quality touristic services, specifically for families.
- Special profile: Since the certification is attributed to destinations as a whole, it can be used as a differential tool to make the destination more attractive compared to other competing destinations.
- Transparency for guests: The certification guarantees guests a quality experience in the destination as it must fulfil the criteria.

1.2.1. Certification process

If a destination is interested in getting certified, they can first realise a self-evaluation following the criteria available on the Swiss Tourism Federation's website (STV-FST, 2020). They then communicate this first evaluation as well as other mandatory documents to the control body. An external expert will then come to the destination to make sure that the criteria is respected and will also write a full report on the situation, which will be given to the destination representative. In case the destination does not fit the criteria, the destination is given some time to correct these problematic points (STV-FST, 2020). The commission for the certification then decides whether the destination is certified or not. If the destination is certified, they will receive a certificate. If they are not certified, they can still oppose themselves to the decision and ask for another evaluation (STV-FST, 2020). Once obtained, the



FAMILY
Destination

Figure 2: Family Destination Label (Schwimmbad Schüpfheim, 2024)

destinations benefit from marketing operations directed by Suisse Tourisme, and they can also use the Family Destination logo in their marketing and communication efforts (STV-FST, 2020). The certification is valid for three years and for it to be renewed the destination needs to reapply within a specific timeframe communicated by the certification commission.

1.2.2. Criteria

The criteria are composed of conditions for the destination as well as for service providers in the destination who are interested in the certification. Regarding accommodation, destinations have to decide between two types of orientations:

- Hotel focused: The destination must be composed of at least a hotel in the centre of the destination with the specialisation “Top family hotel” or “Family welcome” delivered by HotellerieSuisse. This is the main mandatory condition with the fact that at least 5% of rental properties should be adapted to families. (HotellerieSuisse, 2020)
- Parahotellery focused: At least 20% of the rental properties must be adapted to families and should fulfil the criteria “favorable aux familles” from the Swiss Tourism Federation. (HotellerieSuisse, 2020)

For both orientations, the destination must provide a day-care option that is centralized.

1.3. Family-friendly certification

Following the disappearance of the Family Destination Label, HotellerieSuisse has developed a new certification for accommodation providers in 2023. This certification groups two different categories of establishments (Family-Friendly/Family & More, 2023):

- Family-friendly: This category is directed to families who are not looking for any handling and caring of their children and want to spend all their time together. These establishments offer family adapted infrastructure as well as adapted dining options.
- Family & More: This category is more geared towards families with young children who require their handling and caring.

The advantage of the existence of these two categories is that establishments can be certified even if they are not located in a certified family destination, which makes the certification more accessible.

This certification is a collaboration between HotellerieSuisse and Suisse Tourisme. HotellerieSuisse is responsible for the definition of the criteria and the quality control, whereas Suisse Tourisme oversees the marketing of the certification and the establishments (HotellerieSuisse, 2024).

1.3.1. Certification process

To obtain the certification, the establishments must fulfil the criteria and collect a specific number of points. Two main types of establishments are distinguished:

- Hotels / Swiss Lodge: Swiss Lodge establishments do not always offer bathrooms with their rooms and other equipment such a television are not always included. Both of these establishments have to respect hygiene and security regulations. (HotellerieSuisse, 2024)
- Serviced apartments: These establishments are more focused on the independence they offer their guests. These apartments must be composed of a bedroom and a living room as well as an equipped kitchen and eating area. Serviced apartments are also classified with stars going from one to five like hotels. (HotellerieSuisse, 2024)

	Nombre minimal de points	
	Hôtel/Swiss Lodge	Serviced Apartments
Family-Friendly		
Critères minimaux	13	10
Critères optionnels	29	20
Total	42	30
Family & More		
Critères minimaux	22	17
Critères optionnels	26	20
Total	48	37

Figure 3: Minimum number of points Family-Friendly certification (HotellerieSuisse, 2023)

The establishment can ask for the certification during the “ordinary classification procedure” which takes place every three years. An establishment can also ask for the certification at another time and may need to pay some extra fees. The experts from HotellerieSuisse then decide whether the certification can be granted to the establishment.

families has been created and reused by many authors. This definition describes families as being groups composed of at least one child and one adult (Carr 2011). Schadler's (2016) research also concluded that a family cannot be defined by its human members only as it also includes all the activities, they take part in and the entities linked to the different family members. Although both Carr (2011) and Schadler (2016) agree on the fact that there exists an infinite variety of families, Schadler (2016) insists that the only common denominator is that the members of a family are always interdependent.

Contemporary families reflect the evolution of society, and some authors predict that family travelling will be more multi-generational in the future in opposition to only nuclear families in the past (Yeoman, 2008). Some societal factors greatly influence the evolution of society according to Witte (2014): the new cultural and constitutional norms of sexual liberty, privacy, and autonomy. Demographical factors also influence family forms, notably the increase in life expectancy and the low birth rate which allow authors to predict that family travel will become more multi-generational (Yeoman, 2008).

Multi-generational families imply that due to the increase in life expectancy, more and more grandparents will be able to travel with their grandchildren (Shavanddasht, 2017). The segment of senior tourists is also set to drastically grow which will greatly impact the existing touristic offers (Sangpikul, 2008). The fact that grandparents can travel with their children and grandchildren could represent a unique opportunity for tourism providers looking to cater for families. In fact, this might mean that grandparents could look after their grandchildren, while the parents are enjoying some alone time (Gram et al., 2017). Touristic providers wanting to stay attractive must therefore adapt their offer to make sure that all generations can enjoy the experience by catering to their specific needs and adapting to their consumer behavior.

1.5. Family holidays

Family holidays are not only fun, but they also contribute to the development of a deeper connection between family members and social identity formation, especially for children (Schänzel et al., 2012). Holidays also aim at providing an escape from "everyday routines" for both parents and children (Wu et al., 2019 p.167). However, the planning of holidays with children, specifically younger ones, can prove to be a stressful experience for parents (Small and Harris, 2014). During the holidays, some conflicts may arise as often, each family member has different wants and needs. These differences are mostly present between parents and children. Parents are usually looking for relaxation and cultural / educational experiences,

whereas children are more interested in physical activities and search for new experiences (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018).

1.6. Family as a consumer group

Families with children are estimated to represent more than a third of revenues in the travel industry (Ben Lahouel and Montargot in Özel, 2015). According to Srnec et al. (2016), families represent a specific type of consumer while being the segment with the greatest consumption. In fact, marketing experts have noticed that “roles in the decision-making process are divided among family members” (Srnec et al. 2016, p. 432). Just like any other segment, families have their own characteristics, habits, and motives when it comes to planning a family vacation.

Regarding the different roles assumed by each family member, Khattak & Raza (2013) have defined four different structures in the family decision making process:

1. Husband-dominated decisions refer to decisions entirely taken by the husband.
2. Wife-dominated decisions refer to decisions entirely taken by the wife or the mother as it was explained by Srnec et al. (2016) whose research concluded that in lots of cases mothers were the only responsible for taking decisions regarding holidays.
3. Autonomic decisions refer to one parent having more influence than the other but not total power over the decision.
4. Joint decisions refer to decisions taken with both parties working together and having an equal influence on the final decision.

The evolution of the concept of family has also had effects on the decision-making process. According to the research from Khattak & Raza (2013), in the past family buying decisions tended to be more autonomous (dominated by a single party), whereas the modern family tends to make more joint buying decisions. Furthermore, children have the biggest influential role in the vacation choice (cf.1.8).

1.7. Family travel habits and needs

Some research (Kumar, 2015; Srnec et al. 2016) was also dedicated to the travel habits and motivations of families which are specific to the target segment. Srnec et al. (2016) found that most families go on vacation only once a year so this gives a lot of importance to the touristic experience.

Srnec et al. (2016) found that the most important factor influencing the choice of family vacation was pricing and the value offered for these prices. In Kumar's (2015) research, the most important factor seems to be safety which has way less importance in Srnec et al.'s (2016) research. Other authors found travel distance to be one of the most determining factors, especially for families with younger children (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018). Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2018) have focused on Asian families whereas most of authors on family tourism tend to focus more on Western families which may influence the different results.

Another factor which comes back in many studies is the quality of interactions and services provided (Khoo-Lattimore et al, 2018; Srnec et al., 2016). This factor emphasizes the importance of the staff interacting directly with children and not only adults so that they also feel included in the experience (Khoo-Lattimore et al. 2018). The research on Asian families also shed a light on parents' sensitivity to personalization and the friendliness coming from accommodation staff when interacting with their children (Khoo-Lattimore et al. 2018). Some respondents have also described their vision of a warm welcome for children by giving examples of little gestures towards children such as offering "candy or balloons" (Khoo-Lattimore et al. 2018, p. 520). Other respondents have also expressed the importance of training for accommodation staff so that they can properly interact with children as well as soothe them in case of tantrums. Trained staff should also be able to recommend activities and service providers in the destination to make sure that families are globally satisfied with their experience at the destination (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018).

1.8. The role of children

As discussed previously in chapter 1.6., children represent one of the main actors of a family holiday experience. According to Decrop in Srnec et al. (2016), children act as initiators, especially for activities. Children not only play an important role in the decision-making process, but they also have an impact on their parents' overall satisfaction with the touristic experience (Tagg and Seaton, 1995). Many authors have found that children's power in decision making specifically for holiday decisions is growing (Shavanddasht et al., 2017; Therkelsen, 2010). Children's role in decision making is highly dependent on the age of the children (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018). The age of the children also impacts the needs and expectations of parents for family holidays. Some authors have categorized children's influence on family holidays by age.

New-borns until five years old have an indirect impact on holiday decisions since younger children are often dependent on a scheduled routine with precise bedtime hours as well as feeding times (Thornton et al., 1997). Families travelling with younger children give more importance to travel distance and time than other factors when choosing a destination (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018). Furthermore, in families with young children the needs of children tend to prevail the wants of parents when choosing a destination. As parents' needs fall behind, some frustration can be experienced and this emotion even has its own term: vicarious enjoyment (Johns and Gyimóthy, 2003).

Children aged from six to 12 years old on the other hand have a direct influence on their parents' holiday decisions. They can inform their parents of their wants more or less clearly and these can lead to suggestions for holiday decisions. As this age group is quite wide, Thornton et al. (1997) argues that the inclusion of children's suggestions in the family discussion grows proportionately with their age. There also appears to exist a clear connection between the inclusion of children in holiday decision making and their overall satisfaction with the holiday experience (Seaton & Tagg, 1995). As parents feel the urge to please the wants of their children, they are also subject to experiencing the same frustration as families with younger children.

Apart from age, children's influence also depends on the place they occupy in parents' minds. Some authors have observed an evolution in the place given to children in society. Many years ago, children used to be considered as "ignorant entities in need of strict guidance" (Therkelsen, 2010, p.768). Whereas in the recent years children are now considered as "well-informed and capable beings that need responsibility to develop" (Therkelsen, 2010, p. 768). This shift explains the growing involvement and influence of children in family decision making (Therkelsen, 2010).

2. Literature review

2.1. Hospitality customer experience and customer experience management

Customer experience (CX) can be defined as the “set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company or part of its organisation” (Gentile et al., 2007, p.397) the result of these interactions can take many different forms, such as sensations, feelings and behaviours (Velooso and Gomez-Suarez, 2023), which altogether constitute the CX. As the CX is composed of interactions between the customer and the company or the service, it can be defined as a co-created experience according to Ponsignon et al. (2015).

Even though authors focusing on CX in hospitality seem to have agreed on a common definition, the challenge of commonly defining the dimensions of CX remains according to Velooso and Gomez-Suarez (2023). Two main approaches can be distinguished, the first one focuses on the customer’s subjective responses which the hotel cannot control as it is internal to each person, whereas the second approach focuses on factors that can be controlled by hotels such as the physical environment and human interaction (Velooso and Gomez-Suarez, 2023). In fact, authors adhering to the second approach argue that the hospitality customer experience not only stems from basic offerings such as food and accommodation but also from all the “supporting features and processes, such as websites, technology” (Kandampully et al., 2018, p.3). Furthermore, the hospitality CX differs from other industries as it implies longer interactions between customers and employees which also represent great opportunities to build relationships with customers (Kandampully et al., 2018).

The definition of customer experience led some authors to develop strategies to manage it: customer experience management (CEM). A first definition of CEM was given by Schmitt in 2003 who described it as a process aimed at managing customer’s interactions with a company and its services. Later, Kandampully et al. (2018) refined the definition by adding that CEM aims at managing customer interactions at a multidimensional level, composed of all types of interactions whether they be rational, physical, emotional, subconscious and / or psychological. To be able to manage customer interactions, companies must gain more insights on their customers’ individual characteristics, needs and expectations as they are factors which highly impact CX (Velooso and Gomez-Suarez, 2023). This can be done with the help of tools aimed at collecting data, such as analytics, tracking channels and studying customer preferences (Teleperformance, 2015). Another key aspect of CEM in the hospitality

industry is service climate (He et al., 2011), which refers to all the policies, practices and procedures existing in the company which encourage employees to be customer focused. Hospitality employees are one of the determining factors for customer satisfaction and loyalty as they “engage in frequent, intimate interactions with customers” (Satish and Venkatesakumar, 2011, in Kandampully et al., 2018, p.15). Several studies have shown that the relationship between customer and employee is one of the major influences on CX (Bujisic et al., 2014; Kandampully et al., 2018). Another key factor influencing hospitality CX, is customer-to-customer interaction as services experienced are often shared with other customers. These collective experiences impact the individual’s perception of the experience (Kandampully et al., 2018). This phenomenon is also linked with the increasing use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and TripAdvisor where users share their opinions and their experiences with the whole world (Khaldoun Nusair in Kandampully et al., 2018).

2.2. Improving customer experience

Johnston and Kong (2011) have proposed a ten-stage roadmap for companies to improve their customer experience through which they showed that from their perspectives, a unique approach could be used by all companies to improve their CX. On the other hand, some authors are adamant that each industry is too different from one another to be able to use the same methodology (Klaus, 2014).

Klaus et al. (2012) found that the different CEM practices could be divided into three groups: “preservers, transformers and vanguards” (Klaus et al., 2012, p. 12). Preservers are only mildly interested in CEM and view it as an extension of the existing practices in the company and are focused on using traditional service quality measurement tools such as customer satisfaction (Klaus et al., 2012). For transformers, even though they acknowledge that CX is a multidimensional concept, for them CEM is highly linked to financial performance. Transformers do believe that CEM is important for their business and understand the necessity of crafting CX strategies. According to Klaus et al. (2012), transformers sometimes lack the ability to see the “overall picture” of the CX as their strategies focus mostly on training customer-facing personnel. Finally, vanguards have the most understanding regarding CX and CEM. In these organizations, CEM strategies are clearly recognisable throughout the whole organisation and its departments. They aim at continually improving the CEM by getting inspiration from research and best practices. Klaus et al. (2012) argue that for a company to

better manage the CX it delivers, it must first define a precise strategy and its ambitions which are influenced by the typology created by the authors.

Other authors, argue that three disciplinary perspectives on CEM can be distinguished: marketing, operations, and human resources (Kandampully et al., 2018). The marketing perspective adherent, focus on studying the “positive implications of creating superior customer experiences” (Kandampully et al., 2018, p.10). On the other hand, the operation perspective is more interested in service delivery and sees service design as a means to facilitate the creation of superior customer experiences (Teixeira et al., 2012). Therefore, the efficiency and the facilitation of the customer experiences are key concerns for this group. The last group uses human resources management as the foundation for creating superior customer experience as they believe that the employees are key actors in shaping the customer experience (Kandampully et al., 2018). As they are focused on the workforce interacting directly with the customers, they also support employee training and skills development to enhance the provided customer experience.

2.3. Family-friendly accommodation

It is not surprising that the popularity of the family segment has created a growing demand for amenities for children. To attract this segment, more and more accommodation businesses aim at gaining a competitive advantage by developing their services specifically for families with children. According to Aymankuy and Ceylan (2013) “child-friendly tourism businesses are defined as tourism enterprises that can meet the needs and demands of families with children and are preferred because of these features” (p.264). A company’s ability to offer family-friendly services is rooted in the physical facilities it offers as well as the staff’s behaviors supporting the guest experience of children and their families (Buzlu & Balik 2022).

2.3.1. Family-friendly infrastructure

Several descriptive studies have been conducted to make an inventory of all the specific infrastructure available to families in accommodation establishments. One of them was realised in Turkey and created five categories to be used to classify the different family-friendly offers (Özel, 2015):

Room options for children

Regarding room options for families, they should include connecting rooms and the rooms should be spacious to provide enough space for the whole family (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018).

Apart from the size of the rooms, they should also be well furnished and some specific equipment for babies and children should be available when needed. Some basic children equipment mentioned by respondents from Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) include “baby toilet seats, bottle warmers, sterilizers, diapers, wipes” (p. 522).

Food and beverage options for children

Regarding the food and beverage offering specifically for children, some respondents of Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015), mentioned that they were looking for healthy and high-quality options for their children which contrasts with the typical deep-fried meals offered in most establishments. The same respondents also mentioned the availability of cutlery adapted to children as well as healthy snacks (cereal bars, fresh fruit...).

Activities for children

Regarding the activities available to children, respondents from Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) have put as number one swimming pools. They have also highlighted the surrounding services and infrastructure such as pool toys and floats to enhance the children's experience. Some resorts offer kid's clubs and kids activity programmes. Surprisingly, researchers have found that most parents are not convinced by these clubs (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018). Parents have expressed their want to spend time as a family and that some activity schedules were time-bonded which was difficult to include in their day-to-day programme (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015; Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018).

Khoo-Lattimore et al.'s different research also shows that Asian families are more interested in educational activities for their children (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015), whereas Western families are more interested physical activities (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018)

Children's health and safety

Regarding health and safety, researchers have found some differences between Asian families and Western families' safety perception regarding their children on holidays (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018). Asian families associate safety with the qualifications of the staff who interacts with their children. Staff training is a particular issue for childcare services as well as pool lifeguards. The study from Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) showed that parents found it hard to trust accommodation staff with the safety of their children. This lack of trust prevented parents from using childcare services provided by the accommodation establishment. Western families link children's safety to hygiene and physical safety of the different spaces composing

the accommodation (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2018). Some respondents of Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2018) mentioned the lack of cleanliness of children play areas as well as the presence of rocks with which they could hurt themselves. Even though both ethnicities seem to have different views on their children's safety, the result is the same: parents do not trust accommodation providers with their children, so they do not use the services proposed. These categories show that there are multiple ways for an accommodation establishment to attract more families.

2.3.2. Family-friendly services / attitude

Özel's (2015) research also shows that the family's experience is not only influenced by infrastructure but also by services and attention to detail. Another approach was to research the expectations of families towards hotel employees and more specifically the behaviours that they did not want to see when on a family holiday (SAĞIR and GÜDÜL, 2023):

- Threatening the safety and health of children,
- Humiliating children,
- Not accepting children as individuals and ignoring their rights,
- Not treating children fairly and not taking them into account in their services.

This research is useful and needed for the development of family-friendly tourism. Today, there is no legal standard for family-friendly touristic service, which is seen as an important problem. The creation of a standard would guarantee the same quality all throughout different accommodation establishments and a satisfying customer experience for families (SAĞIR and GÜDÜL, 2023).

3. Methodology

For this thesis, it has been decided to use the mixed model research design. According to Migiro and Magangi (2011), "Qualitative and quantitative research used together produces more complete knowledge necessary to inform theory and practice" (p.3763). The basis of the research was quantitative and descriptive to determine the different infrastructure available in accommodation establishments in Nendaz. To gain more insights from industry professionals, several qualitative semi-directed interviews have been conducted with accommodation managers as well as the TOs professionals from the umbrella associations and best practices. Semi-directed interviews were chosen as they give the opportunity to the interviewees to

expand on subjects without precisely following the interview guide and therefore produces more information to be studied.

3.1. Data used

Primary data was collected via two different channels: directly from the hotels' websites, and via qualitative semi-directed interviews with hotel managers and industry professionals. The analysis of the infrastructure available was necessary to determine whether these establishments were adapted to families. The purpose of the semi-directed interviews was also to gain insights on professional's opinions regarding family-friendly certifications. On the other hand, the interviews brought deeper insights from hotel managers and industry professionals. These interviews represented an opportunity to discuss with both sides to get a complete understanding of the current situation.

The secondary data was mostly composed of quantitative data such as statistics and figures coming from official bodies such as the Federal Statistical Office, TourObs and the Swiss Tourism Federation.

3.1.1. Primary data collection methods

An important difference between quantitative and qualitative data collection methods is the sampling method used. For quantitative data collection, "the sample size is large and randomly selected from the larger population" (Migiro and Magangi, 2011, p. 3762). Here the sample size will be the main accommodation providers from Nendaz. The infrastructure for families offered by these establishments was quantified by studying their websites.

On the other hand, qualitative data aims at providing a deeper understanding of the situation. Therefore, the sampling size must be small and purposefully selected according to Patton in Migiro and Magangi (2011). In this case, the sample for the semi-directed interviews was composed of hotel managers and rental agency managers. The interviews focused on several themes:

- Current market situation
- Family clientele knowledge
- Destination strategy
- Family-Friendly certification
- General

Elodie Castro

More qualitative interviews were conducted with experts either from fields linked to the research question or directly linked to the destination. The sample for these interviews was composed of:

- Director of Rubio Consulting
- Director of the Nendaz TO
- Director of the Association of Hotels of the Valais
- Manager of Famille Plus certification for mountain destinations

The interviews focused on the same themes as the other sample group, but the questions were adapted to each expert's field.

3.1.2. Interview guides

As mentioned in part 3.1.1, two different sample groups were used for the interviews with each having adapted questions related to their field of expertise. The general questionnaire will be detailed, and the adapted questions will be found in the transcriptions of the interviews (cf. Appendices I, II)

Current market situation

Question 1: What were the changes made to your establishment following the participation in the workshops?

In 2022, the TO worked with a Consulting agency and organized workshops for the service providers in the destination, so this question aimed at understanding the concrete effects of these workshops.

Question 2: How important is the family segment for your establishment?

The aim of this question was to determine whether all the establishment's main clientele was families' and therefore whether it corresponded with the general destination segments.

Question 3: How is your establishment marketed to families?

This question aims at finding out how the establishments communicate with the family clientele and whether they have products specifically designed for them.

Elodie Castro

Question 4: *What is the infrastructure available to families in your establishment?*

The goal of this question was to determine whether the offer communicated via the website of the establishment corresponds to the reality. The results of this question allowed a comparison with the results of the quantitative research on establishment's websites.

Question 5: *How does your establishment monitor families' satisfaction?*

The answers to this question also show the importance given to families' feedback in the development of the family offer in establishments in Nendaz.

Family clientele knowledge

Question 6: *How would you describe the typical family persona in your establishment?* With the results of this question, a persona of the family visiting Nendaz was created to be able to base the recommendations on this specific persona.

Question 7: *What are families' needs and consumer behavior when booking accommodation?*

The interviewees were able to share their experience as professionals and sometimes also as parents themselves, which helps to understand how they perceive the clientele's expectations.

Destination strategy

Question 8: *What is your opinion regarding the strategy and recent efforts put in place by the TO to attract more families?*

This question aims at collecting feedback from service providers regarding the TO and how they manage their strategy for families.

Question 9: *What is your opinion on the workshops organized by the TO?*

With this question, some feedback has been collected to determine the usefulness and efficiency of these workshops.

Family-friendly certification

Question 10: *As the label Family Destination is set to disappear, how do you think this will affect your establishment's ability to attract families?*

This question also aims at measuring the general sentiment regarding the disappearance of the Family Destination Label and the usefulness of touristic labels in general.

General

Question 11: *Regarding your establishment and the destination are you aware of any pain points regarding families?*

The goal of this question was to give the opportunity to interviewees to express themselves regarding the available infrastructure and services in the destination.

3.1.3. Interview method

The interviews were mostly conducted via Microsoft Teams and a few in the establishments following the preferences of the interviewees. Each interview began with the explanation of the research project and its objectives to give more context to the questions. The interviews were recorded via Microsoft Teams or via a smartphone which allowed the interviewer to fully focus and engage with the interviewee. All the interviews were later transcribed using the recordings and an artificial intelligence tool: Castmagic. The interviewer made the necessary corrections to the tool's transcriptions.

3.1.4. Qualitative data analysis method

With the transcriptions, the interviewees' answers were grouped by themes and synthesized to represent the different opinions and experiences for the sample group composed of hotel managers and rental agency managers. Experts' interviews were also synthesized for the common themes and were then separated by field of expertise for specific questions.

3.1.5. Quantitative data analysis method

As mentioned in part 3.1.1, the establishments' infrastructure and services for families was studied and data was collected via the analysis of their website. The researcher visited each website and reported the information in an Excel spreadsheet with the different criteria explained in the following chapter. With the data collected, each establishment's fulfilment of the different criteria was then put together to create visuals.

4. Quantitative data

4.1. Family infrastructure in hotels and rental agencies in Nendaz

The infrastructure inventory was realised by studying the accommodation providers' websites as it is often the first and main touchpoint between customers and the providers. The chosen selection of establishments was determined by the list provided by the TO's website; a total of five hotels, one bed and breakfast and nine rental agencies were researched. It is important to note that not all rental agencies were researched as some offer holiday rentals as a side business to their real estate activities and therefore their websites are not directed at tourists in particular. The full inventory can be found in appendix III. Several criteria were researched on each website:

Size of the establishment: For hotels the number of rooms offered and for rental agencies the number of properties managed. Regarding hotels, only three out of five displayed the number of rooms offered so the average room number is 33 rooms. For rental agencies, the average number of properties offered is 52. This number is high as big agencies such as Interhome Group and Alpvision Résidences SA highly impact the numbers.

Family mention on the website: Any mention of family on the landing page or in the menu that can be easily accessed when visiting the website.

Establishments mentioning family on their websites

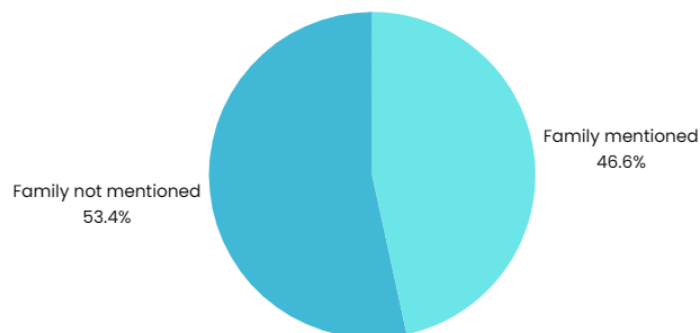


Figure 5: Establishments mentioning family on their websites (Author's data)

Existence of family rooms: Rooms that are specially designed to welcome families which are able to welcome at least three people and are often larger than other rooms, this criterion is only valid for hotels. All five hotels offered either family rooms or connecting rooms. Regarding rental properties, they were exempt from this criterion as most of them can welcome more than 3 people and are therefore suitable to welcome families.

Children discount: Small children often benefit from discounts or gratuities as they do not consume nor occupy the same space as an adult. Few establishments mentioned a children's discount on their websites. It is interesting to note that one of the establishments proposing a children's discount does not specify what it consists of and also does not directly mention family on their website apart from the children's discount and the existence of connecting rooms.

Establishments offering children's discount on their websites



Figure 6: Establishments offering children's discount on their websites
(Author's data)

Family packages: Some establishments offer special packages including accommodation, a meal, and an activity. Out of the 15 establishments, only two offer family packages and both of them are hotels.

Establishments offering family packages on their website

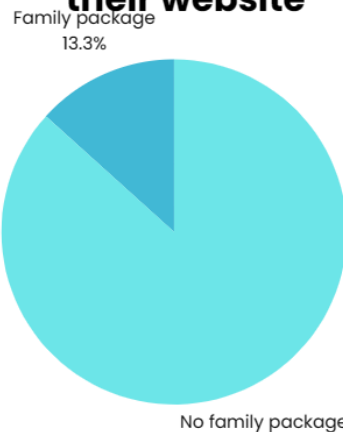


Figure 7: Establishments offering family packages on their website
(Author's data)

Family advantages: Some establishments have obtained special discounts or established some partnerships with other providers to give access to exclusive offers to their guests. The only establishment mentioning special advantages for families is Alpvision Résidences SA, which consists of discounts on sport equipment rental and ski lessons as well as a free drink with a minimal spending of 40.- CHF in a restaurant.

Baby equipment: Availability of equipment such as baby cribs, bottle warmer and microwave which can be convenient for families with small children during their stay. Few establishments mentioned baby equipment being available directly on their website. Regarding hotels, only Les Etagnes mentioned the availability of a baby bed.

Establishments mentioning baby equipment on their websites

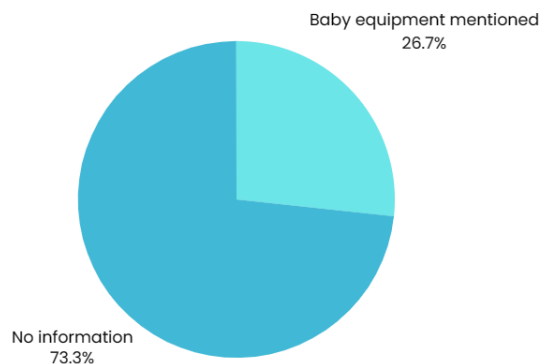


Figure 8: Establishments mentioning baby equipment on their websites
(Author's data)

Family infrastructure: Any kind of activities or infrastructure available to families during their stay such as a playroom, toys, colourings. Out of all the establishments, only the 4 Vallées hotel and the rental agency Alpine Comfort Sàrl mention the existence of a playroom and toys at the rental property.

Children's food options: For establishments with a restaurant who provide a special menu for children and time flexibility for meals. Rental agencies were exempt from this criterion as they do not possess restaurants, however Alpine Comfort Sàrl does offer children's dinner services which can be personalised and directly at the rental property. Out of the five hotels with a restaurant, only two of them offered children's menus and both of them consisted of the basic unhealthy food options (fries, nuggets...).

Cheesy passport: Some establishments have a partnership with the TO so that their guests can benefit from the Cheesy passport offer (cf. 1.1). The majority of the establishments are member of the Cheesy passport offer, however not all of them communicate about it directly on their websites. On the TO's website, the visitors can find a list with all the establishments member of the Cheesy passport offer.

Establishments member of the Cheesy passport offer

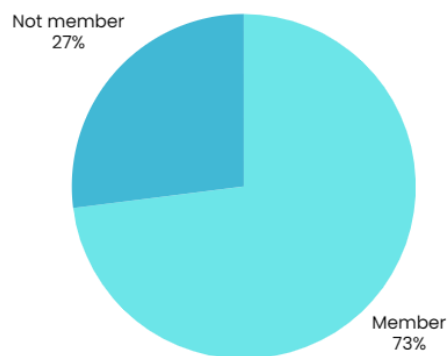


Figure 9: Establishments member of the Cheesy passport offer (Author's data)

Out of the 11 establishments member of the Cheesy passport, only Alpvision Résidences SA mentions on their website the availability of the Cheesy passport offer. However, as the Cheesy passport is only available during the summer season it is possible that some establishments only communicate around it during the summer season. Alpvision Résidences SA shows all their offers for each season of the year on their website and each destination they are active in.

Details: For any other family-oriented effort described on the website.

- Spa access for children: The two hotels offering spa facilities are the MAD Mount Hotel and the Nendaz 4 Vallées Hotel. Both establishments do not allow children in the spa zone after 6pm.
- The rental agency Alpine Comfort Sàrl offers several services for families. The first one is childcare which is available on request and directly at the rental property. Then, as mentioned in the children's menu criteria, they offer catering specifically for children where the meals can be personalised and served at 6:30pm. They also offer a pre-arrival shopping service; the clients can order ahead some materials such as diaper

for example and when they will arrive at their rental property the ordered materials will be there waiting for them.

5. Synthesis of qualitative data

Following the transcriptions of the semi-directed interviews, all the information collected was put together to be synthesized by themes and questions. The detailed transcriptions can be found in appendices I, II. To preserve the anonymity of the participating establishments, they were renamed with Greek letters. The information from the interview realised with the manager of the Famille Plus certification was used in chapter 8.1 which proposes best practices.

Current market situation

The first part of the interview guide focused on the theme of the current market situation. The director of the TO emphasized the importance of hospitality for Nendaz as it is the only category which has been experiencing continuous growth in the last ten years. If we take a look at the overnights between 2014 and 2024, a growth of 7,38% (TourObs, 2024) can be observed which is the highest percentage compared to other destinations in Valais. This observation demonstrates the importance of developing the hospitality offer in the destination. Another important point which was mentioned was the DNA of Nendaz and how people see the destination, following the study realised by Rubio Consulting, they were able to validate Nendaz's identity in two main concepts which are ski and family. Rubio Consulting also noticed that generally in Switzerland the level of family infrastructure is quite low and that many destinations are currently trying to step up their infrastructure. This information proves the importance of developing the accommodation offer with families in mind.

5.1. Question 1

What were the changes made to your establishment following the participation in the workshops?

Several participants expressed that the main takeaway from the workshops was the fact that improvements requiring little effort and resources can have a significant impact on families' experience when staying in a destination and accommodation. They also mentioned that the workshops focused on quick win potential which led some establishments to improve or implement new services to welcome families. Some respondents chose to put in place a children's corner in their reception area so that children could occupy themselves while the

parents go through the check-in process. Other respondents chose to add some steps at the check-in desk so that children could fully participate in the process with their parents if they wanted to. Additionally, a rental agency started distributing colouring materials to families upon their arrival. By completing the colourings, children could take part in a contest to win a prize. One respondent mentioned that although they had learned a lot from the workshops, they had not changed much their way of operating. This was mostly attributed to the fact that the check-in process was fully digitalised, and the accommodation providers had little to no direct contact with clients.

For the respondents that did make changes to their way of operating, they were all able to notice a direct impact on children and therefore parents as well. Some words used to describe their emotions were: very happy, surprised, and excited.

5.2. Question 2

How important is the family segment for your establishment?

All the respondents agreed with the fact that families were one of the most important segments for their establishments, especially during the high season, school holidays and long weekends. However, an establishment mentioned that upon their opening, they had not specifically targeted families with their accommodation offer and marketing, yet families represent most of their clientele. In this specific case, families were naturally attracted to this establishment by the size of the rooms which can fit multiple people at a time and are therefore interesting for families. Initially, the planned target market was young active adults wishing to stay in rooms together. Other respondents mentioned that even though families were not their first target market in terms of length of stay, they were the largest spenders as they mostly book accommodation in peak times like school holidays, which are the most expensive periods. In terms of length of stay for rental agencies, seasonal professionals and athletes were their biggest segments.

5.3. Question 3

How is your establishment marketed to families?

All the respondents mentioned that they adapted their marketing to attract families by adding different pictures of the amenities available such as playgrounds and by emphasising the family advantages that they offered. The main channels used were social media and newsletters which were more active in times of school holidays to attract more families.

Some respondents have chosen to make families' accommodation research easier by adding a special filter or category on their websites and booking platforms. The accommodation deemed as adequate for families were mostly larger spaces which could also offer an outdoor space with a playground and / or a swimming pool. All the respondents also made basic baby equipment available on request which usually included a baby crib, a highchair, and a microwave.

The majority of establishments also showcase the different activities organised by the TO on their website and often provide a direct link to get to the TO's website. For the establishments proposing the Cheesy Passport offer, they also communicate around it on their websites with the different advantages offered to families.

5.4. Question 4

What is the infrastructure available to families in your establishment?

All the respondents had the same foundation for their infrastructure targeted at families which were either connecting rooms or larger rooms and properties with the addition of baby equipment available on request.

Some respondents also created special family packages which included the overnight as well as an activity and a meal at an attractive price. On the other hand, some respondents mentioned that they did not see any interest in creating family packages as they required a lot of effort and most of the time did not lead to many bookings.

As mentioned in question 1, some establishments offer a children's corner in the form of a playroom or a dedicated space with toys and crafts materials. Respondents also mentioned the availability of the Cheesy Passport and the activities organised by the TO.

5.5. Question 5

How does your establishment monitor families' satisfaction?

All the respondents had put in place either an automatic questionnaire or used the automatic questionnaires from booking platforms like Booking.com and Airbnb. It seems that no respondent used a specific software to monitor families' satisfaction, however they had an option to filter out families' answers.

Regarding the TO, they do not do any specific monitoring as they aim to stay in close contact with tourists, which is a great way of gaining more insights. They also decided to do a special questionnaire with Rubio Consulting and the results did not bring much new information as it reinforced what they already knew about the strengths and weaknesses of the destination. The most interesting discovery from this study was that most of the people coming to Nendaz were influenced by recommendations and word of mouth as can be seen on the diagram below.

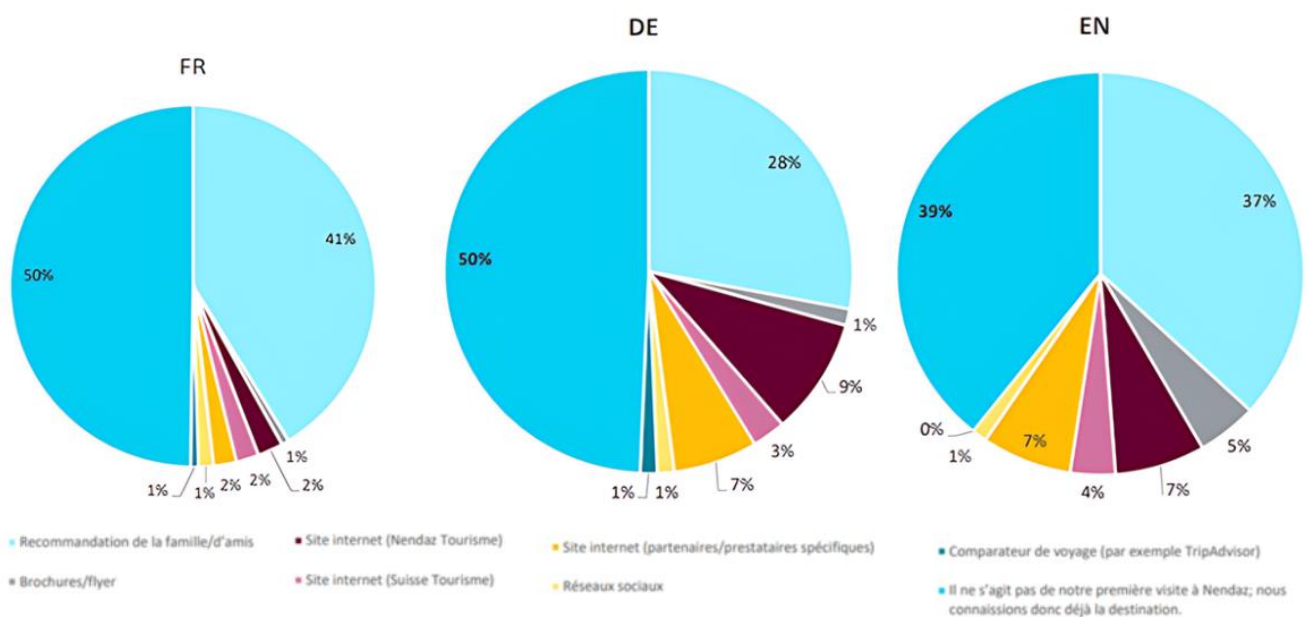


Figure 10: Sondage auprès de la clientèle famille - Hiver 2021-22 (Nendaz Tourisme & Rubio Consulting, 2023)

The TO also organizes an annual meeting with the commune and the secondary homeowners which also gives them the opportunity to discuss the family offer of the destination.

Family clientele knowledge

This second part aimed at understanding how much accommodation providers know about the family clientele segment. According to Rubio Consulting, the main challenge often faced by service providers is to understand the definition of family. As mentioned in chapter 1.4, family is a complex concept, and each destination is faced with different family profiles. The age of the children is another determining factor which must be considered when designing family experiences. The main factors impacting children's ability to enjoy an experience are competence and mobility, day structure, leisure time activities, role models, peer groups,

media, brands and purchasing power. Rubio Consulting conducts their destination analysis by studying these factors for each different age group to provide useful recommendations.

5.6. Question 6

How would you describe the typical family persona in your establishment?

All the respondents described a family persona as a family with children and most of the time of different ages, most often between three and 12 years old. Some respondents have also noticed that grandparents are often included in family holidays. According to them, this could be linked with the fact that older people are more active and in better health today than they used to be. Their fitness allows them to accompany their children and grandchildren on holidays. Respondents have also mentioned that grandparents were able to look after the children so that the parents could enjoy some alone time. Others have also observed that in some cases the grandparents are paying for the whole family holiday.

Regarding the TO, the mascot Cheesy which was completely redesigned specifically targets children from four to eight years old. The end goal is really that the children build an emotional connection with Cheesy and that they relate it to their experience in Nendaz.

5.7. Question 7

What are families' needs and consumer behavior when booking accommodation?

A recurring sentence that was used by multiple respondents was that they noticed that if the children are happy then the parents are as well. According to them the most important aspect when looking at accommodation is the location. For the winter season, families are ready to pay more to be closer to the mountain railway while during the summer season they are looking for establishments offering gardens and playgrounds.

Families are also interested in special offers and advantages that come with choosing specific accommodation. However, their price sensitivity was qualified as fluctuating by respondents. In fact, as families often travel during peak periods, they are ready to pay higher prices to go on holidays, therefore when researching destinations during the high season they are not very price sensitive. On the other hand, during the low season and outside of school holidays, they become more price sensitive as higher prices are not justified and they are always able to find cheaper alternatives. All the respondents also mentioned that as Nendaz is always full during school holidays, they felt no need to adjust their prices to families' budgets.

This segment is also very sensitive to recommendations and word of mouth as it was discovered in the study conducted by Rubio Consulting in Nendaz. Some families also choose to come to Nendaz as they have a personal emotional connection with the destination. It could be that as children themselves they learned to ski in Nendaz and want the same for their children, but it could also be because some of their friends recommended the destination. Again, the need for building an emotional connection during the experience was mentioned.

Regarding the services needed, respondents mentioned that the staff must be flexible and always kind, especially with children. The director of Rubio Consulting also mentioned that from six years old approximately, children are part of the decision-making process and can therefore influence the choice of the destination. He also mentioned that infrastructure is an important factor in family experience, especially for smaller children. The availability of basic infrastructure such as diapers, baby beds and more contributes to offering a more fluid and comfortable experience to families.

Destination strategy

This part of the questionnaire aimed at gaining more insights regarding the destination's strategy and efforts and the point of view of the accommodation providers.

5.8. Question 8

What is your opinion regarding the strategy and recent efforts put in place by the TO to attract more families?

All the respondents qualified the TO's recent efforts and strategy to attract more families as pertinent. They also mentioned that they were satisfied with the fact that the family product was evolving constantly to fit the demands of the clientele. The participants think the TO's efforts are effective and efficient in attracting families to Nendaz. Some respondents did mention that they thought more events could be organized in Nendaz and that some inspiration could be taken from other destinations in the Valais such as Crans-Montana and Verbier.

5.9. Question 9

What is your opinion on the workshops organized by the TO?

Overall, the respondents were satisfied with the workshops and felt that they were useful. Some respondents mentioned that it would be interesting to have more workshops or meetings

regularly to remind everyone what can be improved. The meetings could also act as a common thread for welcoming families in Nendaz in which service providers would be interested in taking part.

Some respondents, although satisfied with the workshops, were disappointed by the absence of feedback following the workshops. They thought they would be informed of the results of the study and the overall process. Some providers also mentioned that they would be interested in knowing more about the destination's long-term development strategy. They were particularly worried about the development of other activities than skiing.

Family-friendly certification & labels

This part aimed at gaining more information on the perception of the Family Destination label which is set to disappear at the end of 2024 as well as the respondents' general opinions regarding the use of certifications and labels in tourism. According to the TO, the Family Destination label was an interesting tool for the destination as it included a regular destination evaluation by an external expert every three years. This evaluation allowed the labelled destinations to continuously improve their offers towards families. This label was also useful as it was very specific and explicit regarding the needs of families when travelling. However, the TO also mentioned that the label was mostly a project supported by the TO and that very few service providers had contributed to the obtention and maintenance of the label.

5.10. Question 10

As the label Family Destination is set to disappear, how do you think this will affect your establishment's ability to attract families?

All the respondents agreed to say that they were not worried at all about the disappearance of the label. They feel that Nendaz can still position itself as a family destination even without the label, notably with all the activities organised by the TO. The respondents also mentioned that they were convinced that recommendations were a stronger tool to attract families when compared to using a label.

According to them, too many labels exist nowadays, and they feel like they do not bring any value to their offerings. A respondent also mentioned that they had done all the necessary paperwork to get an accommodation family certified and that they saw no effects on the success of the accommodation. Another opinion expressed was that labels are interesting for

destinations and providers as long as they do not demand too much effort and bring some added value to the final product and experience.

General

This final part was very open and aimed at gaining opinions regarding the establishments in the destination as well as a destination at a global level.

5.11. Question 11

Regarding your establishment and the destination are you aware of any pain points regarding families?

A recurring statement regarding both the evaluation of the accommodation offer and the destination was that everything is alright, yet nothing is perfect. To simplify comprehension, the opinions were classified into strengths and weaknesses, for both levels (establishments and destination). Respondents also gave opportunities to develop the accommodation offer of the destination. The participants were also aware it was easier to express the weaknesses than the strengths, which is why the number of weaknesses strongly surpasses the number of strengths mentioned in the interviews. The goal of the question was also to focus on the pain points that they were aware of.

5.11.1. Establishments

Strengths

The large diversity of rental properties was identified as a strength by the respondents. According to them, guests can find properties for all budgets and all styles. Some even include superior facilities such as swimming pools and playgrounds. The number of rental properties available was also a major strength as a large capacity of families can be welcomed in the destination. Regarding the few hotels existing, the respondents emphasised that the smaller scale of the hotels also allowed for smaller teams which lead to a closer experience for families.

Weaknesses

Regarding the weaknesses, all the respondents agreed on the fact that there existed a lack of hotel beds during the high season. The small number of hotels also leads to a particular situation regarding the competition that the hotels face, which is very minimal. Competition is

seen as a great motivation for providers to improve their services and make efforts to make families feel welcome.

Some weaknesses were also identified on the infrastructure level as very few establishments provide a playroom as well as a lack of accessibility for people with disabilities. Some respondents even mentioned that they did not think accommodation providers did much for families in Nendaz from what they knew and what could be seen online as well.

Some participants also mentioned that children were not included in the customer journey of certain establishments and that their decisional role was underestimated. This weakness was also supported by the director of Rubio Consulting.

Most of the respondents mentioned that they did not feel the necessity for developing their offer for families. The same respondents also mentioned that they did not see the interest in promoting their offer to families during the lower season. This is mostly due to the fact that children in age of going to school can only travel with their families during school holidays and therefore peak times.

Finally, a small number of participants mentioned that although they thought the diversity in accommodation available was important that they sometimes thought luxury accommodation options were incoherent with the destination's identity and services and that could lead to clients being disappointed in their experience in Nendaz.

Opportunities

Regarding the opportunities, even though some respondents expressed a lack of beds in the high season, they did not wish to build more beds but rather develop more the low season in order to transform the cold or semi-warm beds into warm beds for the rest of the year. They have identified strong potential into further developing the summer season as well. According to them, during the summer season, tourists tend to take more day trips which gives the opportunity to increase overnights by convincing them to stay for several days in Nendaz.

Another opportunity identified by respondents was that by developing the accommodation offer in Nendaz, accommodation could become the highlight of visitors' experience in the destination and even be a reason to visit. Some ideas were proposed to develop a more innovative and attractive accommodation offer. The foundation of these ideas relied on combining three main themes: service, infrastructure, and storytelling. When thinking about developing the existing offer, each touch point between the guest and the establishment

should be clearly identified and seen as an opportunity to tell a story and build an emotional connection for children and their families. To allow for a real connection to develop, the establishments should focus on developing haptical experiences in opposition to digital experiences as it is the best way for children to create memories.

A small part of respondents also expressed an opportunity to diversify the accommodation offer to target other segments such as wellness, students, and seniors. They were conscious of the fact that diversification of accommodation went hand in hand with the diversification of all the services and experiences available in the destination.

5.11.2. Destination

Strengths

A major strength mentioned by all the respondents is the Plaine des Ecluses and its recent improvements regarding ski for children as well as the childcare. This specific location was also mentioned as a major attraction for families due to the huge playground it hosts as well as the Cheesy village during the summer.



Figure 11: Plaine des Ecluses (Loisirs.ch, 2016)

Another highly appreciated point is all the animations organized by the TO specially for families which some respondents described as the foundation of the family offer of the destination. The family animations also contribute to the well-being of the local community which is also important.

The destination's great connexions to public transportation have been mentioned multiple times by respondents. According to them, more and more tourists choose to get to Nendaz exclusively with public transportation. For higher-end clients, the proximity to the Sion Airport was also mentioned as a strength of Nendaz as it allows tourists to fly into Sion and then with a short ride, they are able to get to Nendaz.

Regarding the major attractions mentioned by respondents were the ski resort, the bisses which are easy walks following water and the bike trails. They appreciated the development of family options in the ski resort such as beginner's slopes and the guaranteed snow. The bisses were also seen as a strength as they offer a wide range of possibilities for different levels and clientele. The bike trails were mentioned as a great strength to attract tourists to Nendaz during the summer season as well as to stay competitive with other nearby destinations.

Weaknesses

While the accessibility of the destination was seen as a strength, the development of public transportation to move around inside the destination was criticized by respondents. They mentioned that the buses were not circulating enough compared to the number of users and that they stopped circulating very early in the evening which prevented visitors from relying on buses for their evening activities.

The centre of Nendaz was mentioned multiple times as some respondents find it especially unattractive, notably due to the fact that it is mostly composed of rental and real estate agency. Respondents also mentioned the lack of sidewalks in the whole destination and the bad state in which some of them are. According to them, the sidewalks have a high impact on families with strollers and or wheelchair users' experiences in Nendaz. Some respondents also added that according to them the destination was not equipped to welcome people with disabilities, especially accommodation wise.

Some respondents also mentioned that the destination was lacking in terms of services, bad weather activities and family infrastructure. Regarding services, some respondents mentioned the lack of higher-end services such as chauffeurs and private chefs as well as childcare options. Currently the childcare of the P'tit Bec does not offer enough spaces for children, is not flexible enough and was found to be too expensive which caused problems for visiting families. The offer of indoor activities was evaluated as being insufficient when compared to other destinations offering indoor pools, cinemas, and indoor playgrounds. According to respondents, indoor activities could be a great addition to the destination's

current offer and would also be useful during the hot summer months. They also hinted to the fact that some old buildings could be reused to host indoor activities. They mentioned the 4 Vallées Hotel's spa as an alternative for indoor activities, but it is too small and too expensive which makes it hardly accessible to families in case of bad weather. The family infrastructure was found lacking by respondents when compared to other destinations such as Livigno and Val Thorens. Apart from the infrastructure on the Plaine des Ecluses they found that not much other infrastructure existed in the destination for families. They also mentioned that some of their clients complained that certain beginner slopes were being closed when not enough people were in the destination which was problematic for families visiting. The majority of respondents agreed that there was a lack of cohesion in the development of the family offer in the destination which made any efforts less worthy and effective.

6. Qualitative data summary

Themes	Results
Current market situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Touristic overnights growth in the last 10 years. - Workshops have shown quick win potential. - Families represent one of the most important clientele for most of the establishments. - Monitoring of families' satisfaction relies mostly on automated questionnaires.
Family clientele knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulty defining the family clientele. - Family personas are multi-generational with children of various ages, parents, and grandparents. - Most important criteria for families are the location and the proximity to activities. - Emotional connection plays a key role in families' experiences, and they are sensitive to recommendations.
Destination strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The TO's efforts and strategy are pertinent. - Respondents were satisfied with the workshops and have suggested regular follow-up workshops. - Some respondents would like to be more involved in the destination's strategy.
Family-friendly certifications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishments are not worried about the disappearance of the Family Destination Label. - Recommendations have a higher impact on families than certifications. - There are too many certifications which makes them less valuable and interesting.
Establishments strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diversity of rental properties. - Abundance of rental properties. - Small scale hotels with smaller teams create a more intimate experience for families.
Establishments weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of hotel beds in high season. - Low level of infrastructure. - Overlooking children's customer journey. - No necessity in developing family offerings as the destination is always full.
Establishments opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transforming existing cold beds into warm ones. - Developing the summer season. - Develop accommodation as a highlight for Nendaz. - Diversification of accommodation.
Destination strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plaine des Ecluses (playground, ski facilities and Cheesy village). - TO animations. - Accessibility and transportation. - Key attractions: ski resort, bisses, bike trails.
Destination weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transportation inside Nendaz. - Downtown / centre of Nendaz. - Lack of services and infrastructure. - Lack of cohesion in family offer development.

Table 1: Qualitative data summary

7. Discussion

Following the quantitative and qualitative research collection, some points were selected to be further discussed and developed:

- Lack of infrastructure and services for families in accommodation in Nendaz
- Lack of coordination in efforts to improve family experience.
- Difficulty in understanding the family persona and customer experience.

7.1. Lack of infrastructure and services for families in accommodation in Nendaz

The infrastructure inventory showed that few infrastructures was available to families with some establishments not even mentioning the availability of basic family infrastructure such as baby equipment on their websites. The interview results also reinforced the fact that establishments all propose basic family infrastructure but some of them do not advertise it on their websites. The same can be said regarding family discounts and especially children discounts which were rarely mentioned and described on the establishment's websites. As supported by the family experience consultant, infrastructure is the foundation of family's customer experience in accommodation establishments. The availability of baby equipment as well as toys and toiletries for children have a non-negotiable impact on parents' stress when preparing to go on holidays with their children. It is surprising that some establishments choose to not display the available infrastructure on their websites. Indeed, in today's world when guests are looking to book an accommodation for their next holidays, they will most likely use the establishment's website as a source of information. The websites are not only important to transmit information but are also marketing tools that should market the establishment to families and convince them to choose one option over another.

The interviews also showed that establishments do not really see a problem in the available infrastructure for families and also that they do not plan on developing it further. This perspective could be linked with the common belief that improving infrastructure of any type is a very expensive process. However, the improvements can always be done in little steps which distribute the costs on a longer period of time. Investing in developing infrastructure should be a priority to make sure that the establishment does not go out of fashion and that it stays competitive. Unfortunately, due to the lack of accommodation establishments in Nendaz, there is no real competition between existing establishments as they are nearly all at the same

level in terms of infrastructure. The fact that the resort's accommodation establishments are always full during the high season is also a factor which retains establishments from thinking improvements are needed in order for Nendaz to stay attractive.

Finally, some respondents have expressed their want to develop new segments such as seniors and students. Therefore, they do not see any interest in developing infrastructure for families as they wish to attract other kinds of visitors with different needs. While this perspective is understandable, it is unrealistic to think that developing other segments will diminish the need for infrastructure improvements as it is central to the customer experience.

7.2. Lack of coordination in efforts to improve families experience

Several respondents mentioned that there was no coordination between the destination's different actors regarding efforts to improve families' experience. The workshops organised by the TO aimed at creating a common thread between the destination's different service providers. While some participants decided to make some changes following the workshops, others also talked about making changes but did not end up acting on it. The lack of coordination is visible even from the outside. In fact, when a visitor checks out the TO's website the family offer is clearly visible. However, when visitors start looking for accommodation and might be tempted to follow the list proposed by the TO, they will land on accommodation providers' websites that rarely mention families which can be confusing in the eyes of the consumer. This possible confusion could again act as a factor scaring off families from visiting Nendaz.

As mentioned in chapter 5.2 , it should be noted that not all establishments want to target families which is acceptable as they might target other segments such as wellness for example. However, the issue lies in the fact that the few establishments mentioning families on their websites think that they are doing enough to not only attract families but also provide a satisfactory customer experience for them.

7.3. Difficulty in understanding the family persona and customer experience

As discussed with Rubio Consulting, establishments wanting to target families should completely rethink their customer experience as it is often done with only the adults perspective in mind. The fact that establishments do not include children in their customer experience could be due to a lack of understanding of children's role in decision making, satisfaction and loyalty. Chapter 1.8 provides more information regarding children's role. The importance of considering children in the construction of the experience was also pointed out by the TO from both a personal and professional point of view. The personal perspective of being a parent and booking a certain accommodation following your daughter's opinion shows how important children's opinion is. In this particular case, the daughter's choice was purely influenced by the pictures of the bedrooms which showed some neon lights on the walls as well as bed linen with tigers on them. The simple sight of these rather simple and cheap objects were the deciding factors in choosing that accommodation and not another. This story proves again that small efforts can have a huge impact on parents' and children's experiences and that big investments are not essential.

Establishments should also keep in mind that developing loyalty amongst children can have an influence on their future destination choices when they will be adult, which is an invaluable asset marketing-wise. Allowing children to not only be part of the experience but also contribute to it by having the staff engaging with them for example also ensures that they are able to develop their own story with the establishment. Once back home and back to school, children also have the habit of telling each other their holiday experiences which represents another marketing opportunity to gain more customers in an organic manner with few investments required.

Recommendation and word of mouth are extremely powerful marketing tools which are hard to control and promote. These tools also have a huge impact on decision making in both ways; if someone had a bad experience somewhere and shares that with their entourage it is very likely that they will never visit that specific location, on the other hand if someone shares an amazing experience they had it is very likely that the entourage will undertake the experience as well. The results of the study conducted in Nendaz also show that most of visitors coming to Nendaz chose their destination based on their entourage's recommendations. This data shows the importance of ensuring that the word of mouth about Nendaz stays positive, especially for families. As families have different needs than other types

of tourists, they are even more sensitive to word of mouth and should therefore be closely monitored.

8. Best practices

Some best practices were found and are presented in the following chapter to serve as inspiration to create recommendations for the development of families' customer experience in accommodation establishments in Nendaz.

8.1. Famille Plus

Famille Plus is France's national family touristic certification created in 2006 by three touristic associations (Famille Plus, 2024):

- Association Nationale des Maires des Stations de Montagne
- Association Nationale des Elus des Territoires Touristiques
- Fédération Française des Stations Vertes de Vacances et des Villages de Neige

The certification acts a global level in each destination as it focuses on specific criteria regarding families' experiences in French destinations:

- Hospitality and information
- Animations in the commune
- Activities
- The discovery and sensibilisation to the environment and the local heritage
- Accommodation, food and beverage and local shops and services
- Infrastructure, transportation, and security
- Adapted pricing for families and children



Figure 12: Famille Plus logo (Famille Plus, 2024)

To allow for even more specific criteria to be developed, the certification exists for four different types of destinations: sea, mountain, nature, and city. Each type of destinations comes with their set of supplementary criteria. To this day there are 102 certified destinations in France, 39 of them being mountain destinations (Famille Plus, 2024). In the context of this research project, the mountain destination criteria and way of operating was researched by collecting quantitative data on the certification's website and by conducting an interview with the manager of the certification for mountain destinations.

The certification process is similar to that of the Family Destination label (cf. chapter 1.2). First the destination carries out an auto-evaluation with the available assessment grid online and if it is successful, the destination must designate a responsible for the destination's certification. Then, an audit will be realised by an outside organisation to determine whether the destination fulfils the requirements. (Famille Plus, 2024) Once the destination receives the certification, they can access to several tools:

- An online platform which allows them to auto-evaluate their destinations at any time.
- Use of the Famille Plus certification on all their communication materials.
- Support from experts from the certification.

The certified destinations must renew their certification every three years, which is validated by an audit (Famille Plus, 2024). Each destination is responsible for certifying the service providers which fulfil the criteria and during the official audits, the certified service providers are also controlled.

Famille Plus is somewhat different from the Family Destination label as it has put in place a specific family monitoring strategy. Each year, all the certified destinations must administrate a questionnaire to the families visiting their destination. The results are then put together by the certification to identify needs and trends from the family clientele, which is then used to guide certified destinations in their development.

According to their research, one child over two will go back to a destination they visited as children when they reach adulthood (Famille Plus, 2019). Regarding the certification they have also been able to evaluate that from their research 43% of respondents know about the certification and half of them have declared that the certification played a decisive role in choosing a destination for their holidays (Famille Plus, 2019).

8.2. Märchenhotel Braunwald

The Märchenhotel is located Braunwald in Switzerland and is over a century old (Märchenhotel, 2024). The hotel specialises in welcoming families and providing an extensive range of amenities and services. Some of the family infrastructure available at the Märchenhotel is presented in the table below with pictures as they are the best description of the infrastructure.

Family infrastructure Märchenhotel Braunwald

Children play zone with different zones for all ages.



Figure 13: Play zone (Märchenhotel, 2024)

Children's buffet restaurant presented on a small train.



Figure 14: Children's buffet (Märchenhotel, 2024)

Adapted bathrooms to children's height.



Figure 15: Bathroom (Märchenhotel, 2024)

Suite with indoor slide.



Figure 16: Indoor slide (Märchenhotel, 2024)

Waterslide, parkour on water and baby pool.



Figure 17: Baby pool (Märchenhotel, 2024)

Sirup fountain



Figure 18: Sirup fountain (Märchenhotel, 2024)

Milk fountain as a cow for the breakfast buffet.



Figure 19: Milk fountain (Märchenhotel, 2024)

Toys in family rooms with a play table.



Figure 20: Family room (Märchenhotel, 2024)

Mini construction site playground.



Figure 21: Construction playground (Märchenhotel, 2024)

Table 2: Märchenhotel family infrastructure (Märchenhotel, 2024)

Regarding the family services available at the Märchenhotel some could be qualified as basic in the context of welcoming families. These include the childcare available from 9am to 9pm and the weekly children's programme filled with different indoor and outdoor activities. The Märchenhotel also possess some animals on their property such as alpacas, goats, ponies, and chickens which are also part of the activities proposed to families. The guests are directly in contact with the animals for different activities and also during breakfast when they can go collect the eggs directly from the chicken barn which is quite unique. Another original service which is linked to the name of the hotel as Märchen meaning tales in German, is the daily tale reading which takes place every day at 6pm. An employee of the Märchenhotel reads a different tale to children. During the tale hour, parents have the opportunity to taste the daily wine in the cellar to enjoy some time away from their children. The tradition of tale reading at the hotel is over 40 years old and encounters great success from guests. The Märchenhotel tries to make parents' lives easier and allow them to fully enjoy their holidays by also offering a children's laundry service. For stays of minimum three nights, the children's laundry can be done free of charge by the hotel the day before departure so that parents do not have too much laundry to do at home upon their return. As for the description of the infrastructure, only a part of the available services at the Märchenhotel were described but already show the hotel's efforts to welcome families.

8.3. Swiss Holiday Park

The Swiss Holiday Park located in Morschach (canton of Schwyz) is the largest vacation and leisure resort in Switzerland. Annually, they realise approximately 160'000 overnights which are shared between their rental properties, hostel, and hotel (Swiss Holiday Park, 2024). They target different kinds of tourists ranging from families to corporate outings by offering a complete experience in the resort from activities to accommodation. Their family offerings are all grouped into a single section on their website called "Family holidays".

Identically to the Märchenhotel, a table was realised to present some of the family infrastructure available at the Swiss Holiday Park.

Family infrastructure Swiss Holiday Park

**Baby products available
free of charge**



Figure 22: Baby equipment (Swiss Holiday Park, 2024)

Children's bowling



Figure 23: Children's bowling (Swiss Holiday Park, 2024)

Children's buffet



Figure 24: Children's buffet (Swiss Holiday Park, 2024)

Children's menu



Figure 25: Children's menu (Swiss Holiday Park, 2024)

Adventure pool



Figure 26: Adventure pool (Swiss Holiday Park, 2024)

Indoor park



Figure 27: Indoor park (Swiss Holiday Park, 2024)

Table 3: Swiss Holiday Park family infrastructure (Swiss Holiday Park, 2024)

Regarding the family services at the Swiss Holiday Park, childcare and baby care services are available for guests. Guests can also book babysitting services so that their children are looked after separately at the rate of 28.- CHF per hour. Many activities are proposed for children and there is a weekly programme that changes constantly. The childcare also provides healthy snacks such as fruits to the children. At this resort, all children aged up to 15 years old eat for free, including three meals per day and an afternoon snack. Babies also eat free of charge as the resort provides organic baby food from a Swiss company. At the resort's spa, wellness services are also available for children, including massages and pampering sessions. In order to make the holiday preparations easier for parents' the resort also provides a holiday checklist on their website to make sure that parents do not forget anything before leaving their home. Finally, throughout the resort, the children can interact with Tom, the resort's mascot. Tom also visits children at breakfast time every day and is present during children's activities as well as on different souvenirs available to take home.



Figure 28: Tom the mascot (Swiss Holiday Park, 2024)

9. Recommendations

Following the data collected and the study of best practices some general recommendations were created for each stage of the experience: pre-arrival, during the stay and post-departure. The propositions are purposely focused on small efforts which could have a significant impact on families' customer experience in accommodation establishments in Nendaz. To respect the different types of establishments different propositions were created to be put in place specifically during the guest's stay. For the pre-arrival and post-departure stages, it was estimated that rental agencies and hotels could put in place the same ideas as they both have similar processes for these stages.

9.1. General recommendations

Pre-arrival

A major difference between Nendaz's establishments and the best practices were notably the availability of information regarding families on the different websites. To encourage families to choose their establishments, it is important that the information is easily findable on the websites. This could be done in multiple ways, either by including a family section directly in the website's menu or by adding a special family filter in the rooms / properties section. It is also important that all the available equipment for families is mentioned directly on the website as they can also be an important factor when choosing the destinations. It also allows for a more efficient selection and booking process for the establishments as the clients will be able to find all the necessary information to make their choice.

The pictures presented in these family sections or accommodation on the websites should also be attractive and be realised by keeping in mind that children might see these pictures and that they could potentially peek their interest. As mentioned previously, some simple changes could be done to enhance the pictures, such as pictures of bedrooms with fun bed linens or pictures of a playroom for example.

The research conducted also showed that most of the establishments member of the Cheesy passport offer do not mention it on their websites apart from Alpvision Résidences SA. Cheesy represents a great opportunity for establishments to market themselves to families. They could start by communicating more around the Cheesy passport and the mascot in general. It would also be interesting to collaborate with the TO and develop Cheesy's story throughout the establishments. This could be done by adding some decorations to add Cheesy

in the establishment or the rental properties and could also allow children to develop an emotional attachment to the mascot and the destination.

During the stay

When welcoming guests for the check-in, it is crucial that children feel included in the process, even though it is mostly administrative, and their parents need to fill in documents. The simple fact of having some small steps allowing children to be high enough to see behind the desk and interact with the staff can have a huge impact on their experience. It also makes them feel more important and welcomed in the establishment which is very important to create a memorable experience. This proposition can be realised only for establishments with face-to-face check-in processes. For establishments with digitalised check-in processes, they can opt for the welcome kits which will be detailed in the following chapters for each type of accommodation.

As mentioned in the discussion, having baby equipment available to guests is crucial to make sure that families can fully relax and enjoy their stay in Nendaz. Both establishments presented as best practices offer an extensive range of baby equipment which goes beyond the usual baby crib and highchair. The purchase of this equipment represents an investment; however, it can have a huge impact on parent's experience as it can contribute to lowering their stress and more satisfaction with their experience overall. All the establishments should at least provide the basic baby equipment and it should be mentioned on their websites so that the parents can organise themselves and know what will be available at the establishment. The basic baby equipment consists of baby cribs, highchairs, bottle warmers and some hygiene products such as diapers could also be available free of charge or to buy out directly at the establishment.

Post-departure

After the guests leave the establishment, it is crucial to obtain their feedback regarding their experience. This could be done via automated questionnaires as it is already the case for many establishments, however specific questions should be asked to families, notably to also gain some information from children's experiences. The opinions of the children would of course come from the parents filling the questionnaire but at the end of the stay children should also be asked for their opinion during the check-out process.

To keep in contact with the guests, thank you notes could also be sent by post to welcome guests once they are back home. In these notes, we could also imagine a special message from Cheesy addressed to the children. Personalisation of the cards would make the gesture even more thoughtful in the eyes of both parents and children as well. To follow-up, some birthday cards could also be sent from Cheesy to the children if the parents are willing to communicate the children's birthday date. This would ensure that the children are reminded of their experience in Nendaz and their encounter with Cheesy.

9.2. Recommendations for rental agencies and properties

Rental agencies and properties offer more independence to their guests which limits the actions they can undertake to improve the family customer experience. Another limiting factor is the fact that some agencies are responsible for the management of properties but do not own them which can make it difficult or impossible to make some changes to the properties.

An additional service that could be implemented as an extra that could be booked directly through the agencies websites is pre-arrival shopping service which already exists for guests staying at Alpine Comfort Sàrl's properties. This service allows guests to make a list with items that the staff of the agency will go get for them so that they can be delivered directly at the rented property before the guests' arrival. This service could be seen as a luxury, however for the agencies it could represent an added source of revenue and for families it would bring more comfort and contribute to lowering the stress of planning a holiday with children. The pre-arrival shopping could be especially helpful to families with small children in need of diapers and other baby specific items for example.

An alternative to making important changes to the rented properties could be to offer a family kit upon arrival either at check-in if it is done at the agency or directly at the rented property. This kit could be adapted depending on the number of children and their ages, it could be composed of a personalised welcome letter, some information regarding the destination and the family offer, baby equipment, a basic first aid kit, some snacks and colouring materials for small children for example. To add value to the experience, the kit should aim at making parent's lives easier during their stay, by providing equipment for example which means they have to take less from their homes. The kit should also aim at providing a little surprise for children which could consist of a small snack and a toy or some colourings for example so that they also feel welcome when arriving at the rental property.

Another idea would be to propose some toys and board games that could be lent to guests during their stay by the rental agency. This would allow parents to not take all of their children's toys with them as they know some toys will be available at the destination. Investing in toys and board games represents a reasonable investment and ensures that the families are entertained directly at their rented property.

9.3. Recommendations for hotels

Hotels have different options from rental agencies to improve families' experience, three main ideas were chosen to be presented. The first idea is similar to the family kit proposed for rental agencies. As hotels often have baby equipment available to the guests, the welcome kit in hotels could be directed more towards children. This kit could also be useful for hotels who do not possess a playroom for example or who have limited infrastructure for families and children. Similarly, to the welcome kit for rental agencies, toys, boardgames and creative materials could be included to help entertain the children during their stay and also during less exciting times where they have to be patient during dinner with their parents for example. Providing entertainment options for children could allow parents to relax and spend more time in the restaurant for example which all in all could lead to a more satisfactory experience of the establishment.

When developing the customer experience with Cheesy in mind, the hotels could even go a step further by hosting meet and greets with Cheesy for their guests. This is notably done at the Swiss Holiday Park where the mascot visits children during breakfast time every morning. Realistically, this service would certainly be available during school holidays and long weekends where more families come to visit Nendaz. As mentioned beforehand, giving children the ability to meet and interact directly with Cheesy represents a great opportunity for children to build their own story and emotional attachment to the mascot and Nendaz.

The interviewed establishments explained that they were not really interested in creating any activities for children and families as they felt that the TO was already organising a lot of different things. However, they could add an included service for children to entertain them for a short period of time which would give more value to their experience. The Märchenhotel Braunwald does this by offering the daily tale reading which is very interesting as it only requires one member of the staff to read the story and can be attended by a large number of children at the same time. The Märchenhotel also offer parent's a wine tasting at the exact same time as the children's tale reading which allows parents to get a little bit of alone time.

The establishments could take some inspiration and offer either a story reading time or a snack-time that could be available during the afternoon for the guests.

Lastly, to encourage children to build an attachment to the destination and the establishment, a small souvenir could be given out to children at the end of the stay as a way of thanking them. Rubio Consulting has explained the importance of children being part of the whole customer experience and this also includes the check-out process. The souvenir would depend on the investment the establishment is ready to make, keeping in mind that the more personalised the item is and the more value it will have for children and families. The souvenir is also an object which reminds the guests from their stay in Nendaz and if it is an object to be used daily such as a plate or a cup it could even become part of their daily routines.

Conclusion

This research project aimed at producing a comprehensive analysis of the accommodation offer for families in Nendaz to provide recommendations for its development.

The collected data shed a light on the fact that there is a lack of infrastructure and services for families in accommodation establishments in Nendaz. These results contrast with the family offer designed by the TO which is very complete and diverse by proposing a multitude of different events and activities year-round. The accommodation establishments completely rely on the TO for the attraction of families and their entertainment which creates an unbalanced family offer in the destination which could be dangerous for the future development of Nendaz. The destination's labelling as a Family Destination since many years and the total occupancy rate during the high season have caused the accommodation establishments to stay in their comfort zone. However, many destinations are stepping up regarding their family offer and in order to stay competitive, Nendaz's accommodation establishments must improve the experience they deliver to families.

As developing the infrastructure would require an important budget and some time, the recommendations proposed were mostly aimed at being quick wins requiring little effort and that could have a significant impact on families' experience in the accommodation establishments of Nendaz. The establishments should invest in solutions to make parents' planning and holidays easier, notably by providing basic baby equipment and hygienic products. Including children when thinking about the customer journey is also at the centre of the future development of Nendaz's accommodation offer. Children should play a role throughout the whole stay, by interacting with the staff and with the establishment in order to

Elodie Castro

create their own story and memories from the experience. Creating this story also allows children to build some emotional attachment to the destination which is a valuable asset. The use of Cheesy could be a great tool to develop children's experience in the establishments in Nendaz.

Finally, it should be noted that only a few establishments were able to participate in the research project which creates limitations to the significance of the results. The experts also provided a more general perspective but were also in a limited number which also impacts the significance of the results. Furthermore, the visitors' point of view was not included in this research project, and it would be interesting to conduct qualitative interviews with guests of Nendaz to gain a deeper understanding of the situation regarding the family offer.

10. Reference list

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Author's declaration

I hereby declare that I have carried out this final research project on my own without any help other than the references listed in the list of references and that I have only used the sources mentioned. I will not provide a copy of this paper to a third party without the permission of the department head and of my advisor, including the partner company with which I collaborated on this project, with the exception of those who provided me with information needed to write this paper.

Sierre, the 13th of May 2024

Elodie Castro