

Exploring the Intersection of Children and Food in Tourism and Hospitality

Abstract

The purpose of the article, which takes the form of a bibliometric scoping analysis, is to expand the discourse of children's position in tourism and hospitality scholarship from a food perspective and to highlight the emergent nature of research focused on the important and changing role food plays for children when they travel. The Extension for Scoping Reviews' approach (PRISMA-ScR) was applied to identify suitable articles which resulted in six theoretical and empirical themes on the intersection of children and food in tourism and hospitality undertaken by researchers. The original contribution of this article lies in delineating a future research agenda and recommending a child-inclusive approach to academic scholarship as part of a broader social justice and childism agenda.

Keywords Children, Food practices, Tourism, Hospitality, Childism, Tourists

Introduction

The link between families, food, and space is underpinned by social significance, personal involvement, and emotional impact (Jackson 2009), and scholars have already devoted a lot of attention to food-related practices and meanings in family life (O'Donohoe et al. 2021). However, this is only the case in everyday life and not when it comes to holiday dimensions which involves exposure to foreign or unfamiliar food cultures. Moreover, children have always had specific consumer needs in family tourism (Schänzel and Yeoman 2015), Consequently, there is a lack of awareness about how food impacts children in tourism and hospitality.

Adults and children have different food cultures (Boni 2015). What is meant by 'food culture' is not only the foods consumed but also the norms and values, meanings, and practices related to these foods shared by a certain group of people in a certain historical and

geographical context (Fischler 1988). Children's food culture is not considered homogenous but is filled with contradictions and tensions. To some extent, it is created in opposition to the hegemonic adult world and the dominating norms. It is created against what, how, and when food is eaten by adults and against their ideas of how children should eat. Thus, at the same time, children's food culture incorporates the food culture of adults (Boni 2017; Hay 2018). Moreover, children are both criticised for their ostensible incapability and antipathy to make 'sensible' eating choices and are also depicted as the victims of neglectful parenting practices (Curtis, James, and Ellis 2010). Whatever discipline is used to explore children's relationships with food, the 'food that children eat constitutes a lens through which adult-child relations can be explored' (Hay 2018: 71).

Most tourism and hospitality research has applied an adult lens leading to a gap in children's tourist experiences (Poria and Dallen, 2014) which is slowly being addressed. These studies are often not inclusive of children's voices and research family tourism from an adult-centric or 'adultist' perspective (e.g., Khoo-Lattimore, Prayag, and Cheah 2015; Lehto et al. 2012). Wall (2019) states that 'adultism' is an entrenched and persistent lens through which the world and social realities are perceived. Some social and cultural research has challenged normative assumptions and encouraged critical and intersectional ways of conceptualising reality (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, and class), yet childhood is seldom one of these social dimensions (Warren, 2020). In general, children are considered immature, vulnerable, and in need of protection from research. This, however, reflects a narrow, developmentally determined attitude to understanding children's ability and agency (Canosa and Schänzel 2021), ignoring the important role food plays in children's lives when travelling.

This bibliometric scoping review aims to expand that discourse to a broader understanding of children's position in tourism and hospitality scholarship from a food perspective. The original contribution of this article resides in highlighting the emergent nature of research and themes focused on the important role food plays for children in tourism

and hospitality. Children are social actors allowing us to move beyond a narrow focus on the micro-world of the child, and instead give them agency in a foreign social and cultural context. The critical discourse taken here is underpinned by a broader social justice agenda privileging children’s rights, valuing their contribution in a world dominated by adults, and ultimately informing policy and planning (Canosa and Schänzel 2021). The themes on the intersection of food and children on holiday are situated within the children’s socio-cultural discourse, called ‘childism’. Originating from childhood studies, childism is situated among ‘the perspectives that have brought debates about children and childhood into dialogue with wider currents in sociopolitical thinking and practice’ (Burman 2023, 1021). Following Biswas and Wall (2023), we use the term ‘childism’ referring here to the necessity for children’s lived experiences to be heard in the context of holiday food, foodservice, and eating – to question current social theory and encourage a fundamental rethinking of the nature of human responsibility toward others’ (Wall 2006, 524).

The focus of our paper is thus on three questions –presented in Figure 1.

[Figure 1 near here].

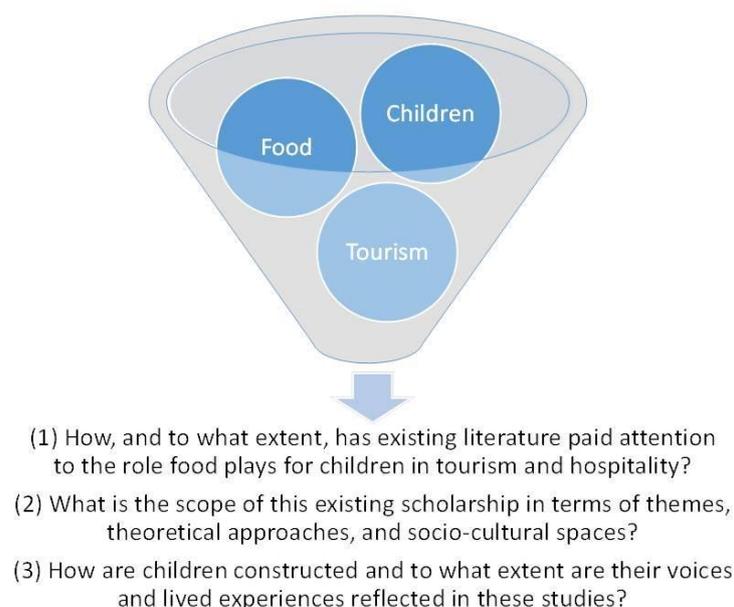


Figure 1. Research questions pertaining to this study.

Nowadays childhood studies are institutionalized as a subject discipline and are not only cross- and multidisciplinary but also trans- and interdisciplinary (Burman 2023). Instead, tourism, and hospitality – due to its inter-, multi-, cross- and transdisciplinarity – draws on the achievements and research of various disciplines. Therefore, the results in this review study are situated in multiple disciplines.

To conclude, this bibliometric review of articles concerning the role of food for children in tourism/hospitality is essential for several reasons. Firstly, it allows us to assess the current state of research in this critical area, identifying gaps and areas needing further investigation. Secondly, it provides an opportunity to synthesize existing knowledge, potentially uncovering patterns or themes across studies that may not be apparent when examining individual articles. By recognizing theoretical themes and knowledge gaps, the review sets the stage for a future research agenda that acknowledges the important role food plays for children in tourism and hospitality. It underscores the necessity of incorporating children's perspectives and experiences into research efforts to develop a more comprehensive understanding of their interactions with food in these contexts.

Research on the Intersection of Children and Food in Tourism and Hospitality – Theoretical Assumptions

It is increasingly common for children and food to become the starting point for researchers to undertake childhood research across various disciplines. Literature in the space of childhood studies has increasingly focused on aspects of feeding children in everyday life (e.g., Boni 2017; Sandell et al. 2016; Utter, Fay, and Denny 2017), while children's eating practices in non-family time are more marginalized (Curtis et al. 2010). Literature in tourism studies presents some information on the intersection of children and food in tourism and hospitality, although this is not extensive given that children in tourism research is an emergent field (see

Khoo-Lattimore 2015; Obrador 2012; Poria and Dallen 2014; Small 2008) which only in recent years has become more inclusive of children's voices.

Children as Social Agents in Research

Canosa and Schänzel (2021, 2) highlighted some general aspects of this kind of research: 'Relatively few studies have explored family holidays 'through the eyes of a child' (Rhoden, Hunter-Jones, and Miller 2016)'. The tendency was that children's views and opinions were gate-kept by adults (Canosa and Graham 2016; Poria and Dallen 2014). Some hospitality studies became more attuned to children's needs, stressing their role as independent consumers (e.g., Lugosi et al. 2016; Chen et al. 2016), but they were still considered passive objects (noteworthy exceptions are Hay 2017, 2018). Though, the perception of children as passive objects is increasingly redundant not only within the social sciences but especially in childhood studies, which acknowledge children as active social agents through a paradigm shift in thinking (e.g., Canosa and Graham 2020; Punch et al. 2010; Curtis et al. 2010; Handel, Cahill, and Elkin 2007). Childism theory also implies that childhoods are socially active and constructed in a diverse manner (Biswas and Wall 2023).

Research with children is increasingly conducted 'with' rather than 'on' children to address the disparity in power between adults and children and to treat the latter as competent research participants (Canosa and Graham 2020). Children have become participants rather than subjects of research, and their experiences, knowledge, and viewpoints have become valuable data for researchers. There are increasing studies (e.g., Cullingford 1995; Small 2008; Carr 2011; Obrador 2012; Poria and Dallen 2014; Khoo-Lattimore 2015), who call for research to enquire more broadly into the perceptions that children form regarding foreign countries and people, and the influence of these childhood experiences on children's lives.

This approach often leads to unknown and surprising conclusions such as the one by Brembeck et al. (2013, 79) that 'The children turned out to be gourmets, seriously interested

in various aspects of food and taste'. Nonetheless, a child-centered approach has yet to take hold in the tourism and hospitality field: 'Although recent research activities are becoming more inclusive of children as tourism and hospitality consumers (...) there is still a lack of research on children as tourism and hospitality suppliers' (Canosa and Schänzel 2021, 2).

Research on Food in Children's Lives on Holiday

The necessity to address the intersection of children and food in tourism and hospitality is postulated by Schänzel and Lynch (2015), who suggested that family holiday mealtimes are poorly understood. This idea is also present in the words of Therkelsen (2015, 317), who noted that 'we know relatively little about the meanings and practices related to food consumption in holiday contexts'. These issues are important for modern knowledge regarding tourism, childhood, and nutrition. This is reflected in statements by researchers from various disciplines. For example, Cullingford was one of the first researchers to recognise that for most children, 'travel means holiday – not cultural sightseeing, but beaches, good weather and eating out' (Cullingford 1995, 125). Additionally, Rhoden, Hunter-Jones, and Miller (2016, 426) found that 'even on package holidays, children were discerning observers of differences in dress, manners, food and language'. Furthermore, according to Small (2008, 781), 'the recollection by all age groups of the taste of foods consumed in childhood holidays further confirms that holiday memories are not only visual'.

Traditionally, most studies of children and food on holiday have been conducted from a Western, middle-class perspective (Schänzel, Urie, and Lynch 2022), although substantial differences between Western and Asian family tourists exist. It is only recently that the concept of childhood and food has become more diversified to include Chinese children's perspectives (Wu et al. 2019). This predominantly singular concept of childhood in tourism reflects a lack of consideration of intersectionality (e.g., gender, ethnicity, age, and class) in literature.

Sharing a family meal on holiday is often seen as central to the success of a good holiday (Therkelsen 2015). While Kirkegaard-Larsen (2013) stated that a good holiday is constituted by family meals, as a part of an agreed set of common family activities. According to Boni (2017), children – in opposition to parental rules – use food to develop their private, personal, and concealed safe space, and holidays provide them with such ‘safe spaces where norms are suspended, and children engage in more autonomous food practices’ (Boni 2017, 5). Hay (2018, 75) pointed out that ‘for children, the family holiday meal provides an opportunity to exercise a higher degree of control over their food choices than they are allowed at home’.

Other researchers, e.g. Organ et al. (2015), suggested that encouraging children to sample unfamiliar food when on holiday may create long-term changes in their eating behavior. Similarly, Lupton (1994) and Sandell et al. (2016) highlight that childhood food experiences may influence food preferences in their adult lives and are important guides to eating behavior in adults.

Methodology

To examine academic scholarship at the junction of food, tourism and hospitality, and childhood, we decided to employ a systematic scoping review methodology. This method is especially useful when mapping applicable literature intersecting multiple fields of research and when identifying future research agendas (Arksey and O’Malley 2005). We employed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) (Moher et al. 2009; Tricco et al. 2018) to identify appropriate articles to include in our review and the PRISMA 2020 flow diagram (Page et al. 2021) for graphical presentation of the identification and inclusion strategy.

The scoping review was approached in a systematic, replicable, and transparent way, and included the following steps: (1) review questions were defined (see Figure 1); (2) relevant search databases were identified; (3) along with relevant articles; (4) studies for inclusion in

the analysis phase were selected; (5) the information was analysed and synthesised. Steps 2-5 are described below and presented in Figure 2.

[Figure 2 near here].

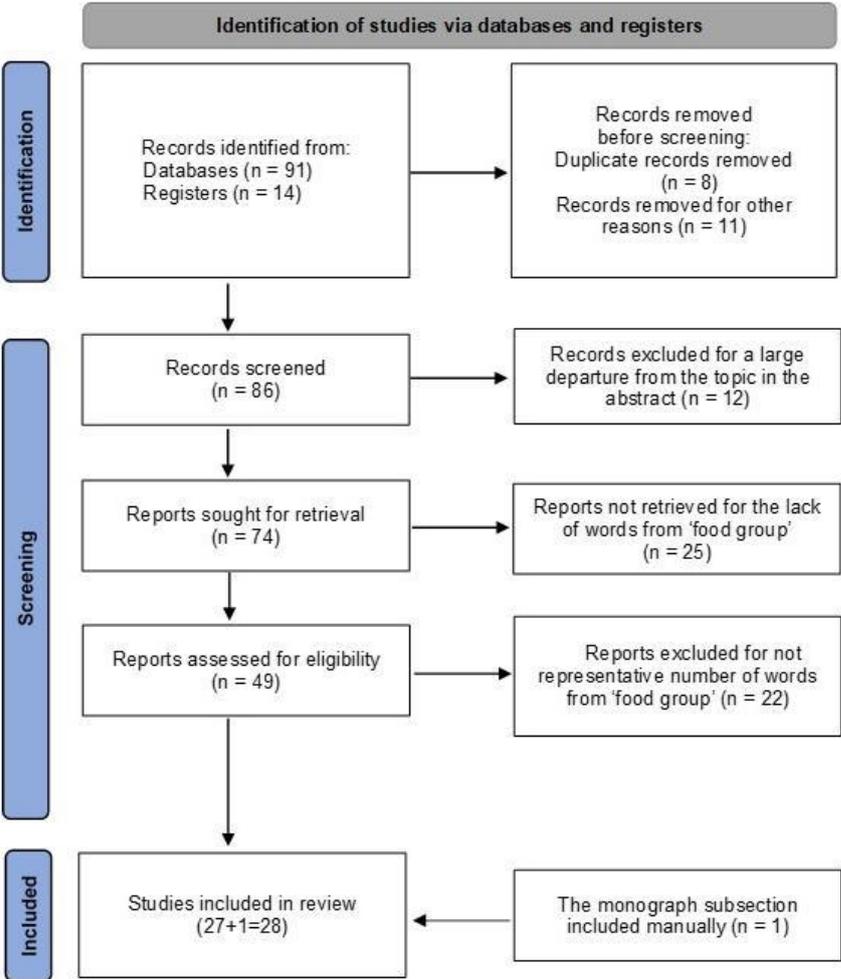


Figure 2. PRISMA selection and inclusion strategy (adapted from Page et al. 2021)

Identifying relevant Databases to search

For the analysis, we decided to use existing English-language scientific articles and monographs on child and family tourism. Regarding the articles, we identified relevant studies published in the last 30 years via searches of sources such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science. The search protocol included all peer-reviewed, scholarly articles published until 2023. They were first searched using the joined key terms: (“child” OR

“children” OR “childhood” OR “kid(s)” OR “baby(-ies)” OR “family(-ies)” AND (“tourism” OR “travel” OR “holiday(s)” OR “vacation(s)” OR “hotel(s)” OR “hospitality”) AND (“food” OR “foodservice”). Following this, when the full word correlation did not identify many results, the words “food” and “foodservice” were eliminated, and the search was adapted only to two groups.

There was only one book that met the requirements, *Children’s and Families’ Holiday Experiences* by Carr (2011), containing a chapter titled: “Catering to children in the holiday experience” (with the paragraph on feeding children in the holiday environment), which was referred for further analysis.

Identifying relevant Articles

The initial search returned 105 English-language articles. Through further consideration of the articles, we eliminated eight duplicate records and 11 articles that related to the issue of the lack of research with children (four articles) and research methodology in the field of child tourism and family tourism (two articles) and represented existing literature reviews in this field (five articles). However, these texts were used to prepare the theoretical basis for this article. Following this, from the remaining 86 texts, we excluded 12 whose abstracts indicated a large departure from the topic of child tourism and family tourism, such as articles focusing on economic aspects, or roles in the family. As a result, 74 articles were selected for the next stage of the research (see Figure 2).

Screening Studies for Inclusion in the Analysis Phase

After identifying the articles, to obtain the most complete picture of the information appearing in the research topics in scientific texts, we prepared an extensive list of words concerning food (we call them the words from the ‘food’ group; see Figure 3 in the *Word analysis* part). The content of the words from the ‘food’ group was further examined in each of the 74 articles using the N-Vivo program, and manual checking, which involves the elimination of

words from the references. Among the 74 articles surveyed, 25 did not contain any desired words in the text and, thus, these articles were excluded from further analysis, resulting in 49 articles for the proper analysis (Part 1). The monograph subsection was also attached to these articles (see Figure 2).

Analysing and Synthetising the Information

The list of journals in which articles on the analyzed topic were published highlights its popularity among specific groups of researchers – mostly from the tourism and leisure field, and a lack of journals of childhood studies (only one identified). The analysis of the publication date of these articles shows a clear increase in interest in the last decade. The authors' affiliations are further important, indicating the regions of the world that engage in the given issues and where the research takes place.

The process of analysing and synthetising the information has covered the words from the 'food' group, which aims to determine the verbal and thematic scope in the context of food, what aspects of the nutrition of children while traveling the researchers pay attention to, and what issues would be justified to include in future research.

Profile of publications

The chosen 49 articles were published across 27 different journals between 1995 and 2020 (see Table 1). Three journals had the highest proportion of articles published – these were: *Annals of Leisure Research* (six articles), *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing* (six articles), and *Tourism Management* (six articles). In turn, articles with the most numerous references to words from the 'food' group were published in *Hospitality and Society*, *Tourist Studies*, *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, and *International Journal of Hospitality Management*.

The analysis of the years in which the texts were published (see Table 1) showed that only three were published in the 1990s, over 10 were published in the next decade from 2000 to 2010, and the largest number, almost 35, were published in the last decade from 2011 to

2020. This highlights that the topic of food while traveling is relatively new but is receiving increasing attention from researchers reflecting a shift in emphasis on food related topics. However, there is a noticeable lack of publications on the issue of child nutrition while traveling in 2021-2023. We do not know the reason for this situation but suspect that it was caused by the Covid pandemic, when other topics dominated tourism research, including research on children's tourism.

Table 1. Journal outlets of publications

	Journal title	Number of articles with words from the 'food' group			Year of publication
		Total	10 words or more	100 - 300 words	
1	<i>Annals of Leisure Research</i>	6	3		2011, 2015 (3 times), 2016 (2 times)
2	<i>Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing</i>	6	2		2005, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2017
3	<i>Tourism Management</i>	5	1		1995, 1997, 2004, 2005, 2020
4	<i>Hospitality & Society</i>	3	3	2	2012, 2017, 2018
5	<i>Tourism Management Perspectives</i>	3	1	1	2019, 2020 (2 times)
6	<i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	2			2009, 2019
7	<i>Asia-Pacific Journal of Innovation in Hospitality and Tourism APJHT</i>	2	1		2008, 2013
8	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	2	2	1	2010, 2013
9	<i>Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism</i>	2	2		2005, 2011
10	<i>Anatolia</i>	1			2017
11	<i>Current Issues in Tourism</i>	1			2017
12	<i>E-review of Tourism Research</i>	1			2015
13	<i>Journal of China Tourism Research</i>	1	1		2018
14	<i>Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Administration</i>	1			2004
15	<i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management</i>	1	1		2015
16	<i>Journal of Tourism Futures</i>	1			2018
17	<i>Journal of Vacation Marketing</i>	1			2001
18	<i>Leisure Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Journal</i>	1			2014

19	<i>Leisure Studies</i>	1	1		1996
20	<i>Leisure/Loisir</i>	1	1		2010
21	<i>Mobilities</i>	1	1		2016
22	<i>Tourism & Hospitality Industry</i>	1			2016
23	<i>Tourism Recreation Research</i>	1	1		2013
24	<i>Tourist Studies</i>	1	1	1	2015
25	<i>Transportation Research</i>	1			2019
26	<i>Via – Tourism Review. Experience Touristiques</i>	1			2016
27	<i>Young Consumers</i>	1			2018
	Total:	49	22	5	

Regarding the topic analyzed in this study, most authors were linked to universities in the United States (17), the United Kingdom (13), and China (10), followed by Australia (8), New Zealand (7), and Denmark (7). Interest in the topic was relatively evenly spread over the continents of North America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania highlighting an absence of research from the Global South such as Africa and South America.

Word analysis

The popularity of individual words from the ‘food’ group was analyzed, as the words were used with varying frequency (see Figure 3). The base word ‘food’ was used most often and accounted for nearly a third of all identified words in the group. [Figure 3 near here]

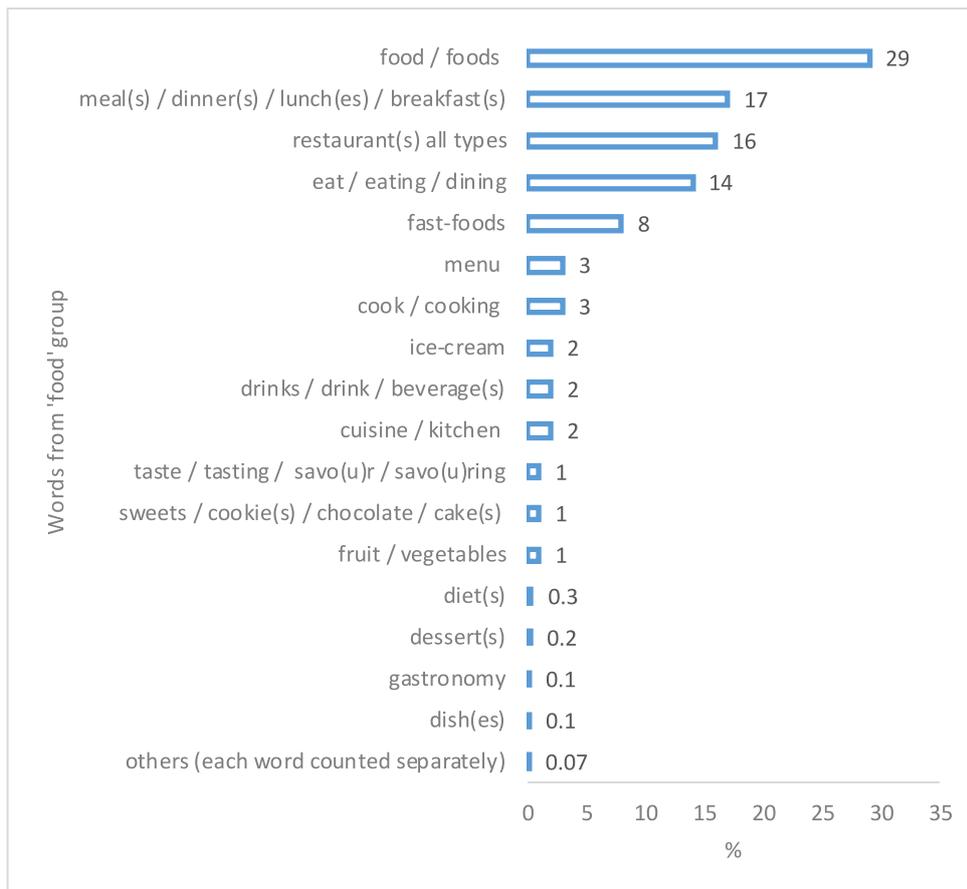


Figure 3. The frequency of occurrence of individual words from the ‘food’ group in the analyzed texts.

Legend: ‘restaurant(s)’ means also: ‘bar(s)’, ‘café(s)’, ‘tavern(s)’, ‘pub(s)’, ‘food-truck(s)’, ‘drive-thru(s)’, ‘cafeteria(s)’, ‘coffee-house(s)’, ‘canteen(s)’, and ‘eat’ or ‘eating’ or ‘dining’; the fast-foods group contains among others ‘nuggets’, ‘pizza’, ‘pancakes’, ‘nachos’, ‘fries’, ‘chips’, ‘snacks’, ‘McDonald’s’, ‘burger(s)’, ‘hot-dog(s)’, ‘hamburger(s)’, ‘cheeseburger(s)’, ‘barbecue’, ‘spaghetti’, ‘fish-fingers’; ‘other words’ means: ‘vegan’, ‘vegetarianism’, ‘feeding’, ‘placemat’, ‘hungry’, ‘chef’, ‘nutrition’, ‘spicy’, ‘culinary’.

During the analysis, it was identified that the words ‘food’, ‘dining (out)’, ‘meal’, ‘restaurant’, and ‘eating’ were used in conjunction with the word ‘experience’ nearly 40 times in 10 of the analyzed texts, creating key phrases such as ‘food experience’ and ‘eating experience’ highlighting the importance of experiential aspects of family meals on holiday.

Moreover, the word ‘food’ appeared almost twenty times in combination with the adjective ‘healthy’ confirming an increasing preoccupation with healthy eating.

The next stage of the research was an in-depth analysis of all the texts in terms of their contexts, the substantive value of the use of words from the ‘food’ group, and their

methodologies. Twenty-eight collected texts, including 27 articles and Carr's (2011) monograph, were selected for the detailed discussion of this issue as they contained the most numerous, developed, valuable, or substantive use of these target words (see Figure 2 and Appendix 1).

Findings

Methodological Considerations of Previous Research

A methodological analysis was conducted with the selected 28 texts, focusing on the applied research approach, the selected goals, methods, and research groups, and the nature and place of research (see Appendix 1). Empirical research was conducted in 25 of the studies, two were theoretical texts, and one contained statistical data. The authors of 16 research texts invited children to participate in their research from various age groups, ranging from 4 - 16 years old, with most children aged 9 - 11. More than half of those studies focused only on children, and the rest investigated the family. The remaining nine research studies were conducted only with adults. This means that only half of the texts included the voices of children, highlighting that adultism or adults-only perspectives are still pervasive.

Interviews represented the most used research method in the analysed texts, and these were usually semi-structured, in-depth, and sometimes accompanied by visual stimuli (e.g., auto-photo-elicitation method). Research with children was conducted either one-on-one or with parental supervision. The studies of whole families usually included both family collective (we-mode) and individual perspectives (I-mode) structures (Schänzel and Smith 2014). Some of the interviews were pre-holiday interviews, some were in-situ interviews, and some were post-holiday. These interviews were conducted in respondents' homes, hotels, caravan sites, or schools. Three research teams used other methods, including analysis of children's scrapbooks and story writing, as well as longitudinal ethnography. Studies with adults were most often based on results obtained from various survey questionnaires. This

means that qualitative research was used to include children and quantitative research more for adult-only perspectives, highlighting the perceived suitability of qualitative and more innovative approaches when researching children.

The research was conducted in different locations: in Australia (five) and New Zealand (four); in Europe: UK (four), Denmark (three), Ireland, and Italy; in America: USA (three), and Canada; in Asia: China (two), Hong-Kong, Taiwan, Korea, and Malaysia. The results highlight that most of the research (almost 80%) was conducted in Western countries with the remaining research coming out of Asia, confirming the lack of non-Western research.

Theoretical thematization relating to Children, Food, and Tourism

Researchers of child tourism and family tourism agree that the most frequently conducted studies focus on two major aspects: family travel decision making and family travel experiences (see Li, Lehto, and Li 2020; Fu, Lehto, and Park 2014; Wu et al. 2019; Kim et al. 2010). However, this does not mean that research is limited to these topics. The analysis of the theory and empirical research in all reports assessed for eligibility allowed us to extend the topic list and to determine five theoretical streams of research in children and family tourism and hospitality: 1) Family and children's travel and holiday decision making (e.g. Hay 2018; Kim et al. 2010); 2) Family and children's travel and holidays experiences (e.g. Lugosi et al. 2016; Schänzel and Lynch 2015; Wu et al. 2019); 3) The benefits (outcomes) of travel for family and children (including aspects relating to socialization) (e.g. Schänzel and Lynch 2015); 4) Children's attitudes (including expectations perceptions, feelings, and needs) toward tourism and holidays (e.g. Hay 2018; Hay 2017; Rhoden, Hunter-Jones, and Miller 2016), and 5) Travel patterns and holiday family functioning (e.g. Mottiar and Quinn 2012; Wu et al. 2019; Carr 2011; Lugosi et al. 2016; Backer and Schänzel 2013).

During this procedure, in correlation with those theoretical streams, the citations underlying food aspects in the title aims of the researched articles were studied in detail. Consequently, it was possible to identify six themes covered by scholars on the intersection of

children and food in tourism and hospitality: food choice/menus/healthy eating, role of food for children on holiday, children’s food service experience, family holiday food environment, family food performances and food on holiday, tourism and hospitality industry perspective (see Figure 4). [Figure 4 near here].

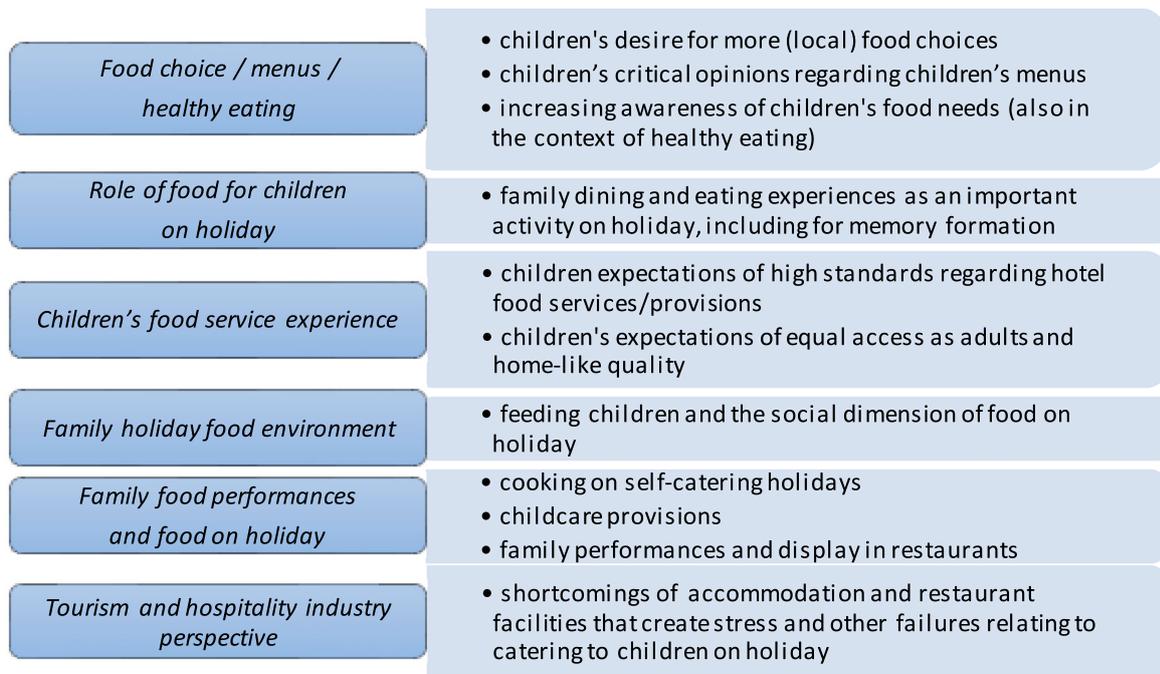


Figure 4. The intersection of children and food in tourism and hospitality – theoretical and empirical themes.

The theoretical and empirical themes above relate to important issues in children’s lives when exposed to unknown food cultures and highlight the critical perspectives with which children perceive food choices, desire for healthy eating, memorability of family dining occasions, expectations for high service standards, the social environment of family eating, public family performances, and shortcomings of industry providers.

Discussion

The themes on the intersection of children and food in tourism and hospitality collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted role of food for

children in the tourism and hospitality sector, informing policy and practice to enhance the holiday experience for families. Scholars have explored the intricate relationship between children, food, and the tourism/hospitality industry and several key themes emerged, such as enhancing family dining experiences and promoting family engagement through food-related activities (as commensality on holiday). Commensality signifies the distinctive social interactions people create when consuming food together (Oren et al. 2024), in this case in the holiday environment which is especially important for time-poor families. Other key themes centred on the importance of diverse and unique food options, meeting children's expectations for food services – mostly for high standard of food services and provisions (demanding equal access to them as adults and non-commercialised quality), , and addressing challenges within the industry. Research highlights that children desire more food choices, including local food, that children have critical opinions regarding children's menus and display increasing awareness of their food needs (especially in the context of healthy eating). These findings underscore the significance of prioritizing children's food experiences to ensure quality of family holidays.

The scoping review highlights the changing food preferences for children who increasingly want to experience a destination's food culture and novel food options instead of standard fast-food fare (Schänzel, Urie, and Lynch 2022; Wu et al. 2019). This might reflect changing food cultures (Boni 2015), more sophisticated palates in children, increased prevalence of eating out (Paddock, Warde, and Whillans, 2017), higher travel propensity, and generally children having more say in families today. Thus, using tourism and hospitality as a discipline to explore children's relationships with food, it becomes clear that the food children 'want to' eat (rather than what is offered) constitutes the prism in which the relations between adults and children (Hay 2018) can and should be viewed, albeit from a more intersectional lens.

Food, being a strong representation of relationships, emotions, social structures, and behaviours is currently redirecting research in this direction, departing from simply considering its nutritional importance (Punch et al. 2010) to include its socialities as commensal practices (Oren et al. 2024). The results confirm a Western dominance highlighting the necessity of conducting more exploration into various cultures/ethnicities to uncover the particulars and similarities of being exposed to unknown food spaces and what that means to children in the short and long-term. Despite the prevalence of qualitative approaches, none of the texts took a long-term perspective to provide further insights into the importance of taste sensations and food memories of childhood holidays (Small, 2008).

This review article addresses the ‘missing voices’ within tourism and hospitality research by adopting a broader social justice agenda that values children’s rights in matters that concern them. Including the voices of children– the review highlights that food is much more than nutrition, that commensal practices are valued (Schänzel and Lynch 2015) and novel food experiences are vital for holiday memories (Wu et al. 2019), potentially influencing future eating and travel behaviors. Taking a child-inclusive approach indicates that a much more diverse understanding of children and childhood is needed and that hospitality providers would do well to heed the voices of children with their food offerings.

The analysis of texts in the field of children, food, tourism and hospitality presented here demonstrates that this is an emergent topic deserving of more attention in children’s academic scholarship even when this appears a difficult undertaking. Despite the limited number of existing texts regarding the role food plays for children during travel, the review provides important aspects of children’s exposure to unknown food cultures that are absent in the existing scholarship. The researchers examined this issue from different theoretical perspectives and what emerged is that a gap exists between what the children expect and desire when it comes to food choices and food service provisions, and what the industry

delivers. This gap is noticeable among the issues presenting theoretical and empirical themes of the intersection of children and food in tourism and hospitality (Figure 4), and supported in Hay's research (2017, 2018). We can therefore conclude that what the tourism and hospitality industry offers is based on often outdated assumptions made by adults of what children want rather than providing agency to children themselves.

Conclusion

The scope of the research spanned 25 years, a timeline in which the daily eating habits of children and societies have changed significantly in Western and many Asian countries (Wu et al. 2019). What became apparent is that commensal practices (Oren et al. 2024) and food choices play an increasingly important role for children and that children demand to have a say, not just at home but especially when travelling. The predominance of the Western concept of childhood in food research makes it impossible to discuss the role of food for children from a global perspective, without being able to identify differences between children from different cultural spaces and contexts. This confirms that there is a need for a more intersectional understanding of the issue from diverse ethnic backgrounds when in unknown cultural spaces. Significantly in a world marked by increasing diversity and travel mobility, this research moves beyond the idea that children grow, develop, and want agency only in home contexts (Warren, 2020). Accordingly, changing children's food habits, taste developments/sophistication, eating out propensities, exposure to dietary trends, and increasing mobility in foreign food spaces need to be considered together.

Implications for future research and/or practice

This bibliometric scoping review seeks to challenge researchers to contemplate more wide-ranging perspectives of food in tourism inclusive of children's voices. This theoretical knowledge is needed by tourism and hospitality researchers, the education system, and many sectors of the economy, including the tourism, hospitality, and gastronomy industries.

Tourism and hospitality researchers and industry should take note of these clear messages and become more inclusive of the voices of children by moving away from adult-centric or ‘adultist’ perspectives (Wall 2019) when it comes to food on holiday, such as making menus more child-inclusive and considering changes in eating habits.

This scoping review article intends to highlight knowledge gaps and outline future research directions on the intersection of children and food in tourism and hospitality embracing a social justice agenda. In most cases, children are still considered immature, and their interpretations of reality are dismissed in tourism and hospitality research and management (Canosa and Schänzel 2021) as confirmed by almost half of the texts including research ‘on’ rather than ‘with’ children. There is a need to move away from established adult perspectives and accept more child-inclusive research including an understanding of changing children’s food behaviours. Moreover, ethical and methodological challenges must be addressed which are often conceived as barriers to the inclusion of children in tourism and hospitality research, and instead more interdisciplinary approaches adopted.

This review article appeals to tourism and hospitality scholars, to treat children with more respect in their research, particularly relating to their food needs and desires, and proposes a future research agenda inclusive of children’s voices. It fundamentally questions the existence of the ‘children’s menu’ instead of letting children eat what they want on the menu at reduced portion sizes and discounted prices. The original contribution of this article resides in stressing the significant and changing role that food plays in children’s lives and proposing a paradigmatic shift towards a ‘childist’ approach to research, which has substantial implications for management in tourism and hospitality.

Further research should be carried out on the variety of food phenomena that children may experience while traveling, such as healthy food, difficulty of sourcing vegetarian/vegan food with a prevalence of plant-based diets in children (Alexy, 2023), locality of food, and

memorable novel food experiences, including longer-term research on implications for eating habits and travel behaviour.

However, a priority should be to extend the research on the role of food for children in tourism and hospitality to various social and cultural spaces and to conduct research not only from children's perspective but also in terms of diverse cultural concepts of childhood. This would allow for a more intersectional and diverse understanding of childhood and children's food issues in the future.

Conflict of Interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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Appendix 1. Methodologies and research assumptions of the analyzed texts

	Author	Methods	Respondents	Number of respondents	Research site
1	Hay, B. (2018)	semi-structured interviews	children 9-14 years (Australian)	26 children	Australia - 4/5 star hotels
2	Schänzel, H.A., Lynch, P.A. (2015)	interviews – family group and individual	whole-families	10 families with 20 adults and 20 children	New Zealand
3	Hay, B. (2017)	interviews – face-to-face parental supervised	children 9-14 years (Australian)	26 children	Australia - 4/5 star hotels
4	Carr, N. (2011)	no research – literature-based text	-----	-----	-----
5	Lugosi, P., Robinson, R.N.S., Golubovskaya, M., Foley, L. (2016)	semi-structured interviews	parents and guardians (from 6 countries: Azerbaijani, German, Italian, Indian, Mexican, Zambian)	30 adults	The United Kingdom, Australia
6	Wu, M-Y., Wall, G., Zu, Y., Ying, T. (2019)	photo-elicitation interviews	children (Chinese) in primary schools, 8-11 years	139 children	China
7	Hong, G.-S., Fan, J.X., Palmer, L., Bhargava, V. (2005)	data from the Consumer Expenditure Surveys conducted by BLS	-----	-----	The United States
8	Hall, S. M., Holdsworth, C. (2016)	a longitudinal ethnography (observation; field immersion; single-person and group interviews)	families (with children 0-15 years) from North West of England	6 families (12 adults and 8 children and teenagers)	The United Kingdom
9	Mottiar, Z., Quinn, D. (2012)	questionnaires and focus groups (a mixed-method approach)	women/mothers	145 adults	Ireland (Greater Dublin Area)
10	Lin P.M.C. (2018)	one-to-one interviews – semi-structured questions	parents of children in primary and secondary schools	16 adults	China (Mainland), Hong Kong, Taiwan and Australia
11	Lehto H.Y., Lin, Y-Chi, Chen, T., Choi, S. (2012)	self-administered survey questionnaire	parents (one per family) from The Family Traveler Database (travel clubs)	265 adults	The United States (the mid-west region)
12	Cullingford, C. (1995)	lengthy, semi-structured interviews	children (British) 7-11 years who experience holidays overseas	160 children	The United Kingdom
13	Gram, M. (2005)	semi-structured interviews	families (Danish and German) with one or more children 0-11 years	26 families (adults and 49 children)	Denmark
14	Khoo-Lattimore, C., Prayag, G., Cheah, B. L. (2015)	Interviews	parents (one per family) (Asian) with young children	15 adults (women)	Malaysia - a resort
15	Blichfeldt, B.S., Pedersen, B.M., Johansen, A., Hansen, L. (2011)	in-depth interviews	children - tweens (Danish) 8-12 years	89 children	Denmark
16	Hilbrecht, M., Shaw, S.M., Delamere, F.M., Havitz, M.E. (2008)	in-depth interviews	children 5-16 years from 15 different families	24 children	Canada
17	Kim, S.S., Choi, S., Agrusa, J., Wang, K-CH, Kim, Y. (2010)	questionnaire	parents (one per family) with children (+ respondents with no children)	265 adults	Korea - the food and drink festival
18	Nanda, D., Hu, C., Bai, B. (2007)	no research – theoretical article	-----	-----	-----

19	Schänzel, H.A. (2013)	1) survey 2) interviews – family group and individual; auto-driven photo-elicitation	parents and children 6-16 years	1) 110 adults 2) 10 families (20 adults, 20 children)	New Zealand - domestic tourism
20	Mikkelsen, M.V., Blichfeldt, B.S. (2015)	in-situ interviews; observations; visual data (pictures)	parents (4 nationalities)	437 adults (177 from families with children and 163 empty nesters: 210 interviews)	Denmark - five different caravan sites (research at playgrounds, common kitchens, barbeque plots)
21	Backer, E., Schänzel, H.A. (2013)	online questionnaires with in-depth open-ended responses	families with young children	71 adults	Australia (State of Victoria)
22	Davidson, P. (1996)	semi-structured interviews;	mothers of children below school age	24 adults (women)	Australia (the border of NSW and Victoria states)
23	Kennedy-Eden, H., Gretzel, U. (2016)	interviews – family group and participant; observation	families (from Australia, and the USA) with children 1-18 years	10 families: 25 adults and 24 children	
24	Rhoden, S., Hunter-Jones, P., Miller, A. (2016)	analysis of 39 children's scrapbooks	children 9-10 years (from the UK) who experienced primary tourism	39 children	The United Kingdom
25	Elmi, B., Bartoli, E., Fioretti, Ch., Pascuzzi, D., Ciucci, E., Tassi, F., Smorti, A. (2020)	children's story writing (narrating real trips and ideal trips)	children 9-10 years (mostly Italians)	162 children	Italy (Tuscany) - two primary schools
26	Wang, K.Ch., Hsieh, A.T., Yeh, T. Ch, Tsai Ch.W. (2004)	the 4-part questionnaire	parents purchasing group package tours (GPTs) and their children	205 adults and 35 families (35 adults and 35 children)	
27	Schänzel, H.A., Smith, K.A. (2014)	repeated interviews–family collective (we-mode) and individual perspectives (I-mode)	families (from New Zealand) with children 6-16 years	10 families: 20 adults and 20 children (11 boys and 9 girls)	New Zealand - schools
28	Radic, A. (2017)	interviews; analysis of children's drawings	children (from the USA) aged 4-14 (age was limited by the researcher) with cruise experiences	12 children	The United States