

Editorial: Ready or not: an in-home amenities boom is coming

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The meteoric rise of the vacation home marketplace directly corresponds to the adventurous identity of the millennial generation who are now having families. This generation's travel values lie in finding authentic and intimate experiences that reflect the environment they are in. Therefore, any home rental vacation brand that prides itself on attracting families to its locations will need to develop engaging amenity options to compete in this highly competitive space.

The act of simply visiting new places is not sufficient for today's travelers. It is the authenticity of the experience that has become a fundamental motivation for visitors in general (Jiang, Ramkissoon, Movondo, & Feng, 2017). The home vacation market is already well positioned to accommodate this need. Guests looking for something authentic are going to feel more drawn to homes since, by their very nature, they give off the vibe of being lived in, providing that sense of authenticity (Paulauskaite, Powell, Coca-Stefaniak, & Morrison, 2017). One of the ways hotels maintain a strong foothold within the family travel market, despite not providing equal authenticity, is by offering a variety of easily accessible amenities for its guests. According to a recent Value Penguin survey of 1,000 American travelers 72% of them prefer hotels over vacation rentals with 37% interviewed saying that amenities offered was the top reason (Papandrea, 2021). This need for amenities especially applies to families when making a more informed decision on where to stay while on vacation. According to a family travel study done by NYU, 72% of families interviewed said that proximity to attractions and activities was a deciding factor when it comes to deciding whether to stay in a vacation home (Minnaert, 2019). Properties that might contain a lot of attractive features for families can lose potential business due to their distance from local amenities around them. The study went on to show that families making over \$150,000 dollars a year were more likely to utilize vacation rental services, so we can extrapolate that higher priced amenities would be appealing to them.

In-home amenities

Families who seek out vacation rentals do so for the conveniences they provide, such as larger group living spaces, access to a backyard, more cost efficiency for parties of six or more, the use of a larger kitchen and a higher sense of privacy. These conveniences, plus a growing nomadic ability for adults to work due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have shown that the average length of stay past seven days has more than doubled since 2019. Modern guests are now past the point of looking at these conveniences as satisfactory. This has led properties that were once run by a single host to the emergence of companies that supply services that are integral to the management of the property (Sigala & Dolnicar, 2017). Families not only are expecting a higher level of service but if that service level is not being met, guests will



reflect that deficiency in reviews of the property, that drastically affecting the booking requests that property receives in the future. It is reflected in a herding-type model (Banjerlee, 1992), where future guests not knowing the quality of rental themselves imitate their booking preferences based on the previous users of the accommodations. So, it behooves property owners to be proactive in their service options and design amenity options that not only enhance the rental's value to customers but also gives them an incentive to share their positive experience online. As stated by [Dmitrovic et al. \(2009\)](#), tourism experience is the core of tourism services and the satisfaction derived from those experiences leads to an intention to return in the future and share their experiences directly with others. There are three different in-home amenity options that research shows could be incredibly beneficial to a vacation property's growth: well-being, authentic interactions and co-creation experiences.

Wellbeing

Properties that provide amenity options that are beneficial to their guest's wellbeing are found to enhance memorability therefore creating a more meaningful vacation experience. [Mody, Suess, and Lehto \(2017\)](#), found that between hotels and Airbnb properties the same level of memorability existed when there were experience options that contributed to a guest's wellbeing. These options can range from meditation classes, yoga classes, painting groups, creative writing workshops and exercise classes to activities that give something back to the community the guests are staying in. Guests want to feel more connected to themselves and their loved ones after vacations and properties that go out of their way to offer such options will find guests incredibly amenable to these options and will develop a higher sense of loyalty to the vacation brands that do so.

Authentic interactions

The search for authenticity is highly subjective but vacation rentals are already in a stronger position to accommodate this ideal as potential guests are already seeking a home environment as their location of choice. [Wang \(2007\)](#) found that authenticity in an experience is never absolute but rather a social construction created by the participants in it. So, property owners can enhance a feeling of authenticity by having amenities steeped in local culture. Private cooking classes that feature local cuisine, musicians who specialize in local music, artisans who can create pictures or projects built around local traditions and dance classes based on dances specific to the region. [Mura \(2015\)](#), states that travelers construct their own notions of authenticity composed by the elements of their stay and modifications made for their comfort. These ideals can become the backbone for building out the experience side for the vacation rental owner.

Co-creation experiences

The search for value in a vacation experience comes from the consumer having more say in how their vacation is being shaped. Value of an experience is not achieved merely by spoiling consumers with luxury items. A co-creation experience is based on consumers who form values and interact with companies to form shared values ([Prebensen, Vitterso, & Dahl, 2013](#)). Because of this, property owners should find ways to get as much personalized feedback before the experiences, via customized questionnaires. Then based on these questionnaires they will be able to provide a sense of customization to their guests, such as making sure the ingredients or materials for a baking class have a touch of personalization for the family baking together, ensuring the DJ knows all the songs the follow along dance songs for a family reunion, creating personalized jewelry in the style of a grandmother's old necklace.

Creating a higher level of participation in creative based activities with a company creates a more connective relationship to the consumer (Alves & Mainardes, 2017).

In conclusion, home vacation rental brands can position themselves to capture the young family marketplace by being aggressive in developing amenity options to take place on their properties. Vacationing families want what they want, ready or not.

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