The role of children and resort mini-clubs in community-based tourism

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27
THE ROLE OF CHILDREN
AND RESORT MINI-CLUBS IN
COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM

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27.1 Introduction

Over its history, humankind has undoubtedly developed a set of stereotypes, narratives, and allegories to mark the countless commonalities and differences among humans. As ethnology and anthropology have widely showed, the idea of selfhood situates contrastingly to an “alterity” and vice-versa. Ranging from ethnicities to castes, without mentioning classes, society has adopted different internal forms of organization, which were initially structured on productive systems. To put the same in blunt terms, inter-class, genre, and age differences are culturally and arbitrarily imposed by the status quo at the time that the social order and the law are established. As Phillip Aries puts it, in the Middle Ages, as well as during the nascent rise of industrialism, the archetype of children or, more importantly, children’s rights were not only unknown but also a utopia. In medieval times, children died and worked as adults without any type of privilege (Ariès, 1965). When the structure of the family changed – through the imposition of the capitalist system – the autonomy of the child gained more recognition and status. Legislation did the rest. Let’s explain to readers that the children’s rights area under broader human rights was confirmed in 1989 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), a foundational moment where a child was defined as a human being under the age of 18. This system of protection included physical care, civil rights, and state-paid education, to name a few. From that moment onwards, the child has been seen as the cultural and biological reservoir of the next generation, which should be protected from violence and the abuses other adults may very well exert. Although the pictorial invention of childhood as a sacred and innocent imprint dates back to the 18th century, it is no less accurate is that it required further dynamism in the middle of the 20th century (Wilson, 1980).

Against this backdrop, at the same time that society was finally being divided by the age-cohorts, the emerging interest for protecting environmental resources and ensuring the necessary income for the next generation was becoming the touchstone of ecological movements. In this vein, it is safe to say that in 1972, the United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm stated that the resources of the earth were to be safeguarded for future generations. This declaration was followed by the 1987 Brundtland Commission, which in turn said that the present must ensure its needs without compromising the ability...
of the future generations to meet their own needs. In 1992, the UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, a follow up to the previous conferences, was the origin of Agenda 21. The 1997 Earth Summit+5 in New York accelerated the implementation of Agenda 21. The UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002); the UN Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20 (2012); and the UN Sustainable Development Summit, New York (2015) are in line with previous conferences and summits. It is essential to mention the fact that it is this 2015 summit that launched the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This chapter is suggests that resort mini-clubs (and resorts as a whole) could be managed with engagements with Indigenous communities in mind. Resort mini-clubs have a strong potential due to the fact that:

- Mini-clubs offer an environment where experiential activities that educate children and their families can be delivered
- “Children are the tourists of the future” (Cullingford, 1995: 126).

Organizing workshops offering children opportunities to learn about local culture and communities and organizing events to showcase what they learned, not only offer authentic activities to children and visitors but also contribute to developing social capital between locals (suppliers and sponsors) and visitors (children and parents); and finally, also offer opportunities to celebrate for all stakeholders. With the 17 SDGs in mind, the focus of this book chapter will be on children’s (local and tourists) interaction, with the objective of addressing SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production and SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions.

### 27.2 Children in the tourism industry

Besides their importance for the tourism industry, children played a bit-role in the elaboration of predictor models to explain the tourist experience. In this context, Yaniv Poria and Dallen Timothy (2014) call attention to the role of children in tourism-related research. While the professional aims of researchers were historically associated with investigating the tourist behaviour and inclinations of adults, children were systematically ignored as a source of information. This point resulted in a “scarcity” of empirical research that sheds light on this emerging but not less-powerful segment. Children are important stakeholders in the tourism industry and related sectors, such as hospitality and cruises, because they influence the decision of their parents regarding the type of holidays and the destinations of holidays (Dowse, Powell & Weed, 2018; Radic, 2017). They do not have any income, but they are significant decision-makers and influencers (Lugosi, Robin, Golubovskaya & Foley, 2016). Because children are so powerful, they can’t be ignored. More importantly, everything needs to be done to meet their needs (Albayrak & Caber, 2015; Lugosi et al., 2016). To meet their needs, it is essential to know what they want. Researchers have attempted to identify their needs by collecting data using different techniques, such as are drawings (Rakic & Chambers, 2012), and observing them when they are playing (Whitebread & O’Sullivan, 2012). Resort mini-clubs could be considered the first step of children into the tourism industry. The mini-club is an animation service offered to children according to their age (Ozel, 2015). The objectives of mini-clubs are to contribute to children’s development; arouse their interest toward learning; enable them to spend quality time; and allow them to socialize and interact with other children (Ozel, 2015; Radic, 2017). If children like active and stimulating
activities when on holidays (Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001), their parents also want them to learn in a safe environment (Johns & Gyimothy, 2002). Too many instances be compared to resort mini-clubs, KidZania is a day-care center that entertains 1–14 year-old children, while providing them an opportunity to learn (Di Pietro et al., 2018; Lonsway, 2016).

That said, despite the role that resort mini-clubs play in the experience of children while on holidays, it is worth highlighting the fact that resorts are enclaves; in other words, they are a destination within the destination, exclusively dedicated to visitors. It is a space that does not enable visitors and locals to mingle (Seraphin & Butcher, 2018). The enclave model is not beneficial for the destination as it limits the multiplier effect of tourism on local communities (Carlisle & Jones, 2012; Seraphin & Butcher, 2018). This is all the more worrying as tourists are interested in experiencing authenticity and in meeting locals (Kowalczyk, 2014). It is, therefore, essential to find a way to integrate resorts as a whole (mini-clubs included) within the tourism ecosystem of the destination.

From this review of literature on children and resort mini-clubs, the key findings are: Children and parents want to have fun and learn when on holidays and this could potentially happen by being involved in local culture and meeting local people. The opening of resorts and, more specifically, resort mini-clubs to the local community was suggested by Seraphin and Yallop (2019). This new approach could be part of a community-based tourism (CBT) approach, as opposed to an enclave approach.

Last but not least, Canosa and Graham (2016) enumerate some ethical concerns about the exploitation of children in marketing campaigns. Children, in some circumstances, show signs of immaturity, vulnerability, and some incompetence in embracing the cognitive frames and rules created by adults. The needs of protecting children has led historically to undermining their voices in the applied research; but what is more critical, child-based studies have been recently surfacing in the tourism and hospitality fields. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that the interest of scholars in exploring children’s attitudes should be adjusted to a strict protocol of ethics that guides the investigation. Authors have filled the gap by introducing “The Ethical Research Involving Children (ERIC) Code” now widely available worldwide as the first entry in this hot debate.

### 27.3 Community-based tourism and sustainability

As part of CBT, community-based festivals (CBFs) have been identified as good ways to address issues between locals and visitors, such as tourismphobia and anti-tourism movements (Seraphin, Gowreesunkar, Zaman & Bourliataux-Lajoine, 2019). The benefits of CBFs are for locals and visitors both. For visitors, it is an opportunity to be involved with locals in a non-staged activity, which contributes to the authenticity of their experience. As for the locals, CBFs commit to attracting visitors, strengthening their feeling of belongingness and national identity, and contribute to the development of social capital (Seraphin et al., 2019). CBFs offer a dialogical space to visitors and locals, which in turn helps the development of social capital between both groups (Seraphin et al., 2019) and, in the long term, sustainability.

At the moment, durability is the main issue faced by the industry (Edgell, 2017). An activity is said to be sustainable if it does not impact negatively the environment, human interactions, or local communities, and if it has positive impacts on the local community (such as the reduction of poverty) and the experience of visitors (Carballo, Carballo & Leon, 2019; Seraphin & Nolan, 2019; Tribe, 2012). To reach sustainability, all actors (or stakeholders) in the tourism industry need to work together (Garcia, Amorin & Korstanje, 2019). Other essential elements to achieving sustainability, which is in line with the topic of this chapter,
is the education of visitors (Seraphin, Zaman & Fotiadis, 2019; Seraphin & Butcher, 2018). CBFs have proven to have a strong potential to do this (Seraphin et al., 2019).

### 27.4 CBFs and children: the case of Winchester (UK)

As a Special Interest tourism and events destination, Winchester has developed events and a form of tourism that contribute to the happiness of locals and visitors (Seraphin, Platania, Spencer & Modica, 2018). As for CBFs for children, there are quite a few. They represent 18% of events in the city (Figure 27.1).

Still, according to a survey carried out by Seraphin et al. (2018), the events organised for children, which are also family events, are very popular and also contribute to locals’ happiness (Table 27.1).

The following section is going to investigate the role that children can play in CBFs and CBT, and the impacts for the destinations and the children (and families).

### 27.5 Placing children within the tourism ecosystem

To place children within the tourism ecosystem, and more specifically within the CBF and CBT ecosystems, the approach of this chapter is going to be threefold: (a) use the KidZania service ecosystem as an example (b) how it could be adapted to the tourism industry (c) proposed strategy and projected impacts

a  **Step 1: KidZania model**

Different actors are involved in the KidZania concept, such as industry partners, franchisees, sponsors, schools, children, their families, etc. (Di Pietro et al., 2018).

b  **Step 2: The desired place of children (and resort mini-clubs) in the tourism ecosystem** (see Figure 27.2).

c  **Step 3: A strategy to put in place to situate resort mini-clubs at the center of CBT ecosystems and potential outcomes**

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**Figure 27.1  Community-based festivals in Winchester**

*Source: Seraphin et al. (2018).*
The resort mini-clubs could have a local name while local products should be served; educational activities delivered by locals (Seraphin & Yallop, 2019). Other strategies could include involving children in local events dedicated especially to them. Alternatively, resort mini-clubs could be opened for local children. Implementing this strategy could help to achieve some of the SDGs12 and 16. Indeed, finding a way for local children and children on holidays to interact can foster a better understanding of each other and affect long-term peace.

Table 27.1 Events in Winchester and locals’ happiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Type</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts (e.g., Hat Fair, Winchester Festival, Winchester Mayfest, Winchester School of Art Degree Show, Winchester Speakers Festival, Woolly Hat Fair)</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports (e.g., Winchester Community Games, Winchester Criterium and Cyclefest)</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science (e.g., Winchester Science Festival)</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music (e.g., Alresford Music Festival, Boonstown, Graze Festival, Winchester Chamber Music Festival, Winchester Jazz Festival)</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>1.164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature (e.g., Winchester Poetry Festival, Winchester Writers Festival)</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>1.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and drink (e.g., Winchester, Hampshire Food Festival, Harvest Festival, Winchester Beer and Cider Festival, Winchester Cheese and Chilli Festival, Winchester Cocktail Week, Wine Festival Winchester)</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>1.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horticulture (e.g., Winchester Cathedral’s Festival of Flowers)</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History (e.g., Heritage Open Days)</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>1.020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film (e.g., Winchester Short Film Festival)</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion (e.g., Winchester Fashion Week)</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>1.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedy (e.g., Winchester Comedy Festival, Winchestival)</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas (e.g., Winchester Christmas Lights Switch On, Winchester Christmas Lantern Parade, Winchester Christmas Market and Ice Rink,)</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>1.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s (e.g., Children of Winchester Festival)</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>1.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture (e.g., Winchester Cathedral’s Stonemasonry Festival)</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valid N (listwise)</td>
<td>368</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Seraphin et al. (2018).
The tourism industry experienced different stages and modes of production. As Jafar Jafari eloquently observed in his theory of the four platforms, the future of tourism depends on the marginal costs and benefits for the local community (Jafari, 2005). The idea of sustainability in community-centred contexts has flourished and flooded the top-ranked journals over recent years, just after the current ecological crisis (Sharpley, 2000; Harrison & Schipani, 2007; Okazaki, 2008; Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). The question of whether in the 1980s and 1990s fieldworkers were entirely interested in investigating alternative modes of tourism to mitigate the adverse effects of mass tourism led towards a new philosophical interrogation of poverty. Pro-poor tourism, associated with a reconsideration of tourism development, paved the way for the rise of a new paradigm: community-based tourism (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009).

Some of the benefits of CBT that global scholars agree on are as follows:

1. Local communities experience not only a multiplier effect on local economies but also a re-articulation of social and power relations (Reed, 1997; Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Sebele, 2010)
2. The protection of natural resources (Andereck et al., 2005; Kiss, 2004),
3. The empowerment of local agencies, or at best, the revitalization of communal culture (Scheyvens, 1999).
4. The eradication (alleviation) of poverty (Manyara & Jones, 2007; Zapata et al., 2011).

In a more than interesting paper, Noel Salazar (2012) interrogates the future of CBT as well as the manifest limitations of the theory. The host-guest encounter is entirely characterized
by the mediation of tour guides, leaving the locals behind in the interaction with foreign tourists. Beyond the importance CBT has had for the academic community, or the fact that destinations receive some tangible benefits from tourism, there is still no consensus on to what extent locals control their economic and environmental resources at the time tourism is accepted as a main economic activity. Not only are there some power imbalances but also the programmes turn relational in nature rather than maintaining a participatory logic, where locals are included in several negotiations of the process. Furthermore, some CBT promoters lie in the process and outcome, changing the measured variables to meet the expected goals. Salazar writes that local guides not only are far from the cultural mediators the literature suggests they are, but also are the real entrepreneurs who package, sell, and exchange images, knowledge, and access to ideological dispositions to foreign visitors (but in the name of the community). In some cases, historical and tensional forces play a negative role in the mediation between guides and local communities. Local-level commitment seems to be essential for bringing CBT to a successful stage, but – as Salazar reminds us – the power of local authorities moulds the complexity of social relations more than policymakers surmise.

Among the stakeholders involved in CBT are tour guides. Because of the communicative power of tourism, representations of cultural heritage have direct and potentially significant influences on the peoples and communities being presented, represented, and misrepresented; “this means that any CBT programme wishing to achieve sustainable success needs tour guides who are well trained and, if possible, local. If guides belong to the community in which the tourism activities are taking place, their insider positionality at least gives them the advantage of knowing what the cultural sensibilities are” (Salazar, 2012: 18).

Paradoxically, in spite of the attention given to “pro-poor” tourism, as well as the increase of research in this field, the most critical studies were published beyond the established tourism journals. To set an example, in a critical insight, K. Blackstock (2005) reminds that CBT emphasizes the relational involvement of the local community in the process of planning and moving resources towards a fairer distribution of amassed wealth. From this stance, tourism sustainability was strictly based on an economic-centred paradigm, which places profitability in the foreground. It enables a strictly functional approach of what the community is, but, second, it standardizes life in the local community as “a homogenous bloc,” rejecting the socio-cultural constraints that may control the evolution of the tourism industry. Based on the case study of Port Douglas, Australia, Blackstock argues convincingly that the specialized literature of CBT should be reconsidered on the basis of important points. At a first glimpse, exegetes of CBT are not interested in promoting local development but in making tourism more accessible or comfortable for locals. The lack of understanding of what locals overtly say is symbolically marked as “anti-tourist attitudes.” The axiom that accepts that profitability is the only pathway towards local development is never questioned. This creates a paradoxical functionality for the external powers, which should be narrowly scrutinized by the local institutions. Second, the figure who speaks in the name of the community is daily subject to different tensions and controversies. The term community sounds too broad and vague to be logically operationalized in measured variables. As a result of this, the CBT paradigms imagine the community as a well-integrated entity based on shared consensus and interests. The fact is that the adoption of tourism often creates new dormant conflicts for the monopoly of the surplus. Third, when the ideals of profit-maximization are posed as a maxim to follow, public participation is undermined in view of the material asymmetries that the arrival of the capital often creates. In their seminal book, entitled Ethnicity Inc, Comaroff and Comaroff (2009) remind us how, far from solving the problems of native peoples, the adoption of tourism to alleviate poverty caused by years of segregation may revive the long-dormant
conflict between the involved ethnic group and the dominant “nation-state.” As Korstanje (2012) puts it, tourism still carries the long-dominant stereotypes of colonialism, which not only stresses the blessing of the free market but also creates a relational domination where the aboriginal, the community, or poverty are essentialized to mere exchangeable commodities. Helping the inferior “Other” is a way of accepting we are part of the correct (if not superior) class. This begs a more than an interesting question: What are the contributions children’s tourism might make to the controversy revolving around CBT?

Over the years, children – like local aborigines – were considered, according to European paternalism, as immature, lacking any rational logic, or simply dispossessed of any rationality. Education, in such a process, would play a leading role not only in incorporating the child into society and the family, but also in them adopting dominant Western institutions. In the same way that children were subordinated to adult voices, CBT was reframed in view of the interest of the most powerful actors. This chapter introduced a hot debate in the fields of CBT and children’s tourism, which has laid the foundation of a new epistemology of applied research. Most probably, we question Cartesian dualism (emotions and mind) while exerting a radical criticism of the current Western rationality encapsulated in tourism research. Children and the aboriginals were historically relegated as real sources of information for fieldworkers and investigators. The Western tourist was enthralled as the only valid and reliable source of knowledge for the elaboration of models that help understand the complex worlds of experiences. The administration of open- or close-led questionnaires was the mandatory methodology, while others like ethnography or life stories were certainly overlooked. In the same way, like the children, the aboriginal was erroneously esteemed as a vulnerable “Other” to be protected. These types of methodologies, needless to say, not only failed to give accurate models of interaction to prevent tourist behaviour but also obscured or led to misleading findings. Because people (interviewees) sometimes lie to protect their interests or simply because they are incognizant of their innermost emotions. The Western epistemology (which stems from classic positivism) undermined the action of emotions in human behaviour, appealing to the efficacy of the technique. This chapter offers a new methodological alternative to stress the figure of children – and aboriginals – in tourism research, towards a more sustainable community in the years to come.

27.7 Conclusion

The Western notion of sustainability was constructed according to an exclusionary logic where the “non-Western Other” was incorporated in a subordinated role. This non-Western Other is culturally rejected – like the case of migrants and asylum seekers – or protected as a child. The present chapter unravels the complexity of children’s tourism and its real intersection and dialogues with the controversies around the term “CBT.”

To locate children in the tourism ecosystem, and more concretely within the constellations of CBFs and CBT ecosystem, the overarching aim of this chapter was to empower children as fully fledged stakeholders of the industry. They have been designated by the tourism industry and left alone by responsible tourism as passive and powerlessness. This chapter provides (conceptual) evidence that if empowered, children could be part of the tourism ecosystem and contribute to the sustainability of the industry. To do so, the chapter was articulated around a threefold construct that can be summarised as follow: (a) follow the KidZania service ecosystem as an illustrative guide or example (b) how it could be adapted to the tourism industry (c) proposed strategy and projected impacts. In a final section, the chapter calls attention to develop new methodological insights on the role of children and
locals in the professional plan. Beyond the particularism of this chapter, the other significant contribution of this study is conceptual as it has provided (conceptual) evidence that a particular situation could be reframed. Just because something is, doesn’t mean it should be.

Investigating CBT or CBPs is investigating sustainability. It is important to determine collegiately what sustainability means and what action needs to be taken to achieve it, as at the moment there is no clear definition and/or agreed strategy to achieve sustainability (Burrai, Buda & Stanford, 2019). Additionally, because in this chapter evidence has been presented that resort mini-clubs can play a role in sustainability, it is essential for the staff working in resort mini-clubs (children representatives) to be fully aware of issues related to sustainability. By what is equally important, they need to be pedagogical and averse to working with children. Based on this, future research could seek to determine the perfect profile of staff working with children, alongside the type of activities that should be delivered in resort mini-clubs.

References


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