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### RESEARCH PAPER

## Exploring the neglected voices of children in sustainable tourism development: A comparative study in six European tourist destinations

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# **Exploring the neglected voices of children in sustainable tourism development: A comparative study in six European tourist destinations**

For years, sustainable tourism has commanded the attention of academics and practitioners given its achievement through participatory planning. However, much research in the area has neglected to consider all voices of those (i.e., children) affected by tourism. This study, employing a post-test only experimental design, addresses this gap by including the voices of 498 children from six diverse European destinations concerning perceptions of tourism. Results show that children are willing to express their opinions given the opportunity. Moreover, their attitude towards tourists is negative, while they perceive locals to hold a subordinate position to tourists. In general, this study offers insight into children's attitudes to tourism from the host perspective, demonstrating that there is a unique insider's perspective that needs further research.

**Keywords:** children, sustainable tourism, resident attitudes, experiment, involvement.

## **1. Introduction**

Tourism is used as a development tool by governments, and it is known to impact the quality of life of individuals and the well-being of communities (Moscardo, 2012; Uysal et al., 2016). Thus, tourism needs to be seen as an important social practise taking place in a community and as an economic activity that is to be evaluated through its impacts on different community groups in order to determine its overall value. Such a view is especially needed when evaluating tourism impacts on the lives of children who live in communities where tourism represents one of the main economic activities and thus plays a significant role in their socialization process (Poria & Timothy, 2014; Yang, Yang, & Khoo-Lattimore, 2020). Hence, tourism can be used as a tool for development and improvement of life in a community, however, its impact on shaping children's lives cannot be neglected.

Canosa, Moyle, and Wray (2016, p. 327) have rightfully observed that “community-focused tourism research has reached a level of maturity displayed by the theoretical and

methodological eclecticism of studies in this area and the varying disciplinary influences.” Nevertheless, many studies (Byrd, 2007; Garrod et al., 2012; Šegota, Mihalič, & Kuščer, 2017) have emphasised that not *all voices* have been heard and that more research is needed to include marginal voices of host communities, such as children and young people (Canosa, Moyle, & Wray, 2016; Yang et al., 2020). This also testifies to the concept of sustainable tourism being perceived as more than a piecemeal policy solution, which Agyeman and Evans (2004) described as ‘just sustainability’. Therefore, the current generation that is undertaking the governance of tourism and sustainability (Bramwell & Lane, 2011) should be aware that at this moment there is a generation of young people whose lives have already been affected by tourism. However, their views on tourism are very often neglected (Lugosi et al., 2016; Poria & Timothy, 2014; Small, 2008; Thornton, Shaw, & Williams, 1997), making the sustainability concept incomplete.

Moreover, as Small (2008, p. 773) argues, young people need to be involved in tourism research, but their involvement should go “beyond the commercial incentive”. In other words, young people’s voices are usually overlooked due to methodological and ethical issues. Also, young people are very often perceived as not significantly contributing to tourism business and development. However, ending the silence of marginalized community members and increasing the interest of child-centred research will be possible with better advocacy of critical scholarship (Canosa et al., 2016).

The neglect of the role of children in sustainable tourism literature needs to be addressed. Since there are only a handful of studies that offer insight into children’s attitudes towards tourism from the host perspective (for example, Canosa, Graham, & Wilson, 2018; 2019; Koščak et al., 2018, Seraphin & Green, 2019), we aim to address this gap by answering the following research questions:

*RQ1.* What are children’s attitudes towards tourism and hospitality business in general?

*RQ2.* How do children perceive the impact of tourism on family life?

*RQ3.* Are children involved in decisions related to tourism planning and development, and to what extent?

*RQ4.* How do children evaluate the dynamics in their community in relation to the tourist-host relationship?

From a methodological standpoint, this study employs a single group post-test only experimental design with children between the ages of 11 and 16 in six different European tourist destinations. Children's perceptions and attitudes towards tourism were explored using a non-verbal semantic differential measurement instrument, a method that represents an innovative approach that can be applied to collecting data from children in comparative or cross-cultural studies. With our study, we aim to demonstrate that children and young people are active participants in tourism and careful observers of the environment around them. The findings may encourage both academics and tourism decision-makers to adopt a similar method used in this study to summon perceptions of tourism from this generation of residents and to stimulate their inclusivity and engagement with the industry that affects their lives today and in the future.

## **2. The neglected voices of children in sustainable tourism development**

Children's and youth's attitudes have been heavily "under-researched and undervalued in tourism studies" (Thornton et al., 1997, p. 287). Not to be mistaken, there is a considerable body of tourism research that includes children (Poria & Timothy, 2014; Yang et al., 2020). In the systematic quantitative literature review of tourism studies involving children, Yang et al. (2020, p. 238) concluded that "among the 70 papers, fewer than half (34 studies), collected empirical data". Also, we should emphasise that the research *indirectly* included children, as they were theoretically considered objects and not agents of research (Gram, 2007). For

example, much recent empirical research has studied children from the perspective of how they influence family travel decision making (Schänzel, Yeoman, & Backer, 2012; Khoo-Lattimore, Prayag, & Cheah, 2015; Khoo-Lattimore, delChiappa, & Yang, 2018; Wang, Xu, & Wang, 2016, to name a few). The role they play in holidaying decisions was found to be significant but secondary, as their perceptions were not directly surveyed. To illustrate, Khoo-Lattimore et al. (2015) summoned parents' vacation choices when they holidayed with their children, meaning that children were recognized as having an important role in the decision-making process, but were not directly asked about their choices.

By focusing our debate on the research object-agent discourse in connection to sustainability, studies that collected the empirical data *directly* from children, placing children at the centre of the research as its agents, predominately observed children in the role of tourists (Yang et al., 2020). For example, their experiences were summoned in relation to family holidays (Koo-Lattimore et al., 2015), dark tourism sites (Kerr & Price, 2016; Israfilova & Koo-Lattimore, 2018), and cruising (Radic, 2019). Moreover, among those studies that collected empirical data directly from children, but without involving any other research agents (e.g., guardians, adults, government, etc.), only 15 studies directly presented children's voices. For example, studies by Al-Frehat and Alhelalat (2015), Monterrubio, Rodríguez-Muñoz, and Durán-Barrios (2016), and Montgomery (2008) were interested in children's attitudes on child labour, while there are only 12 studies that elicited children's perception of tourism spaces (e.g. Buzinde & Manuel-Navarrete, 2013; Canosa, Graham, & Wilson, 2017, 2019; Ohashi et al., 2012; Seraphin & Green, 2019), tourists (e.g., Canosa, Wilson, & Graham, 2017; Molero et al., 2003), perception of themselves (e.g., Gamradt, 1995; Koščak et al., 2019), and impact of tourism on their health (e.g., Anderson-Fye, 2004; Dancause et al., 2011; Leatherman et al., 2010). For example, Canosa, Graham and Wilson (2017, 2019) used a rich collection of qualitative methods (i.e., ethnography, interviews, focus

groups, etc.) to study how young people, aged 10 to 24, experience life in the Australian tourism destination Byron Bay. Drawings as a surveying technique were used by Koščak et al. (2019) and Seraphin and Green (2019). Koščak et al. (2019) surveyed children's perception of tourism development plans and whether they had an opportunity to participate in decision-making. They focused on Slovenian children, aged 11 to 12, distinguishing between three destinations with different levels of tourism development. The authors showed that children differ in their perception of tourism depending on the communities they live in. On the other hand, Seraphin and Green (2019) studied children's visions of the destinations for the future. The authors demonstrated that children are aware of the existence of cutting-edge technology and recognise its potential to shape the future of their communities.

Overall, all these studies significantly demonstrate that children and young people are not to be mistaken for 'muted' or even 'silent' social groups. Moreover, they demonstrate that living in a particular community where tourism is the main economy has implications for children's lives. Children are receptive to how tourism affects their lives, in particular, and community life, in general. This is why tourism needs to be viewed as a sustainable and responsible developmental option for such communities (Mihalič, 2016). Moreover, there are many opportunities to bring children into the spotlight of tourism research. For example, previous commentaries (e.g., Koo-Lattimore, 2015; Poria & Timothy, 2014; Yang et al., 2020) have indicated that the majority of research has explored the objective dimension of tourism impacts, but limited attention has been focused on host-children satisfaction with tourism impacts on their lives or their subjective wellbeing. However, exploring childhood experiences in tourism destinations based on children's opinions, rather than adults' or experts' assumptions, is an essential element in advancing tourism scholarship and knowledge of the industry. At the same time, such research has the capacity to contribute towards the development of a more inclusive view of tourism and its impacts (Poria & Timothy, 2014)

and to help expand the researcher's capacity to conceptualize the social, economic, and cultural constructs of tourism (Carr, 2011).

### **3. Positioning children within the sustainable tourism development discourse**

Resident attitudes towards tourism have received significant attention among academics and practitioners over the last fifty years. Much of this research has been based on social exchange theory that suggests that the more residents perceive that they are benefitting from tourism, the more they will have a positive perception of the industry in general and will support its development (Ap, 1992; McGehee & Andereck, 2004; Perdue, Long, & Allen, 1990; Sharpley, 2014). Many studies have found support for this theory (for example, Andereck et al., 2005; Ko & Stewart, 2002; Palardy, Boley, & Johnson Gaither, 2018; Su & Swanson, 2020, to name a few). However, except for a few notable examples mentioned above, resident attitude studies predominately involve the adult population and pay little attention to children and youth as residents of host communities. The reason for this limited attention appears to be due to the tendency of destination stakeholders to regard children as having no commercial value (Canosa & Graham, 2016). However, tourism is not merely an industry but also a social force with both a transformative and a disruptive power over host-communities (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2006). This is also why there are many studies that are eliciting residents' attitudes towards tourism, e.g., to enable better quality of life and minimize tourism's negative impacts on communities. However, this does not mean that children do not also form attitudes towards tourism. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the social capacity of tourism, as children will become, in due course, important business or social stakeholders in tourism destinations (Seraphin & Green, 2019). To address the gap of minimal research on children as hosts that includes directly eliciting children's attitudes towards tourism, we propose the following research question:



*RQ1.* What are children's attitudes towards tourism and hospitality business in general?

In light of tourism's social capacity, some studies have observed the changes tourism has on the community through the lens of social disruptive theories (McKercher, Wang, & Park, 2015; Perdue, Long, & Kang, 1999). McKercher et al. (2015) identified a U-shaped curve between place change, attitude change, and destination lifecycle, which reflects a negative-positive-negative arch. However, tourism not only disrupts life in the community, but also family life. Studies suggest that families benefit from tourism financially, but that overall family relationships are deteriorating (Chan, Kwok, & Siu, 2015). Chan et al. (2015) showed that for families where parents are employed in tourism, fatigue and incompatibility of schedules impose significant challenges to childcare and family functioning. Similarly, van Schalkwyk, Tran and Chang (2006) showed that families in tourism-intensive destinations suffer from the disruption of relationships and the psycho-social development of individuals. This is because families, where parents work in the industry, do not have sufficient time to dedicate to their children and they tend to avoid social places with many tourists, as these places are where they would be connecting with tourists on a social level, which is what they wish to avoid. These insights provide a valuable resource for observing tourism and its impact on family life, however, they represent parents' views and not the views of children. Therefore, we ask the following question:

*RQ2.* How do children perceive the impact of tourism on family life?

Sustainable tourism development addresses the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and host communities (UNEP & UNWTO, 2005). and it requires "the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders" (Edgell et al., 2008, p. 195) and for all voices to be heard (Byrd, 2007; Šegota et al., 2017). In line with this approach, children's and young

people's experiences should not be marginalized but included in future tourism planning and development studies (Khoo-Lattimore, 2015; Poria & Timothy, 2014; Small, 2008). However, little attention has been paid to children and to understanding if they are involved in the planning and development of tourism in their communities (Koščak et al., 2019). Therefore, the following question is posed:

*RQ3.* Are children involved in decisions related to tourism planning and development, and to what extent?

As the term community, a socially constructed territorial and relational structure evolving around the use of resources, implies (Prilleltensky & Prilleltensky, 2006), once a community becomes a tourism destination, the use of those resources is negotiated within the resident-tourism exchange process (Uysal et al., 2016). Therefore, studies of resident attitudes have traditionally been based on a dichotomy, such as tourists or *guests* and residents or *hosts* (Meethan, 2001). Residents as hosts accept tourism and both its positive and negative impacts as “part of the price of remaining in a tourism destination” (McKercher et al. 2015, p. 63). Such a perspective indicates structural, social, and behavioural interdependencies in the tourist-host relationships. However, little is known about how children evaluate both tourists and residents. Therefore, we ask the following question:

*RQ4.* How do children evaluate the dynamics in their communities in relation to the tourist-host relationship?

## **4. Methods**

### *4.1. Research design and ethical challenges of working with children*

Examining the interconnectedness of tourism impacts, happiness, and satisfaction among the adult population is challenging as it is, let alone on children (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2011).

Regardless, past tourism research has shown that children are a valuable source of information that is important for developing tourism communities. We decided to approach children using an experimental one-group posttest-only study. This quasi-experimental research design enables researchers to measure a dependent variable for one group of participants following a treatment without a control group (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2018). The one-group posttest-only design is used to gather information from participants through their recollections that are often subjective (Garson, 2013a). By being interested in children's attitudes towards tourism and their participation in decision-making in their communities, which are subjective and are based on recollections, it is believed that this research design is suitable for seeking answers to our research questions.

The research took place in schools and was conducted in groups. Due to the nature of our study (i.e., children as participants), we had to address two ethical issues. The first was to inform the parents about the research and obtain their permission for the children to participate in the research. For all participating children, local research teams received all necessary agreements from local educational authorities and from parents. The second issue was the immediate motivation of children to participate in the research. Local research teams explained to the children that they were participating in a study in which they would, in some way, evaluate adults (including their parents) and were asking for their consent. They also told them that, at least in the first part of the research, they would have to clearly impart some of their views on the work of adults engaged in tourism. Thus, the basic ethical principle employed by the research teams was complete openness to children. No child refused to participate. Overall, the experiment lasted for 20 minutes.

#### *4.2 Development of measurement instruments*

In the research, the measurement instrument consisted of two parts. The first included non-verbal semantic differential (Bujas, 1967), which we used to examine children's attitudes to tourists and residents. The non-verbal semantic differential is an instrument that consists of 12 pairs of abstract drawings. Each pair of drawings belong to one of the three dominant factors that are well known in traditional verbal forms of semantic differentiation (for a detailed description see Bentler & Lavoie, 1972 and Bujas, 1967). In general, the semantic differential is a technique that largely reflects the connotative meaning of terms (Garson, 2013b). In our case, they were not verbal concepts (i.e., questions or statements) but abstract drawings (i.e., the non-verbal semantic differential). These drawings reflected sets of paired opposite items, where a set of items represented important dimensions associated with children's evaluation of tourists and residents based on three factors. The first factor was Evaluation, which provided information on the grading of the object as good or bad. It indicates propensity or aversion to an object (Petrović & Kuzmanović, 2005). The second factor was Potency, which provided information on the object's strength as strong or weak. The third factor was Activity, denoting whether the object is active or passive. Each of the three factors was represented by four sets of drawings, whose meanings were standardized in the process of the test design (Bentler & Lavoie, 1972; Bujas, 1967). Once a respondent was presented with the non-verbal semantic differential, they were asked to circle the drawing that best suits their mood or feelings that connect the drawing and the concept being analyzed (Bentler & Lavoie, 1972; Garson, 2013b), which in our study were tourists and residents. The results for each factor are obtained by summing the values of the grades given to each corresponding drawing. The second part of the measurement instrument included closed-ended questions on participation in tourist activities and demographic data of children and their families.

There are many reasons why we decided to use this measurement instrument in the study. First, non-verbal semantic differentials can be understood by children who speak

different languages. Its important feature is reducing social conformism because it is tough for respondents to control the answers to abstract drawings rather than words (Bujas, 1967). Moreover, when children observe the standardized drawings, they give their own meaning to them based on their own experiences, thoughts, feelings, and imaginations. They bring it all into communication with the instrument template. As much as the technique is different from a child's usual experience with various other questionnaires found in journals or online, children tend to engage with this technique, as it is usually very entertaining and attractive to them (Catterall & Ibbotson, 2000). Moreover, contrary to verbal expressions, in non-verbal semantic differentials changes in meaning over time are insignificant, making Bujas' test relevant. However, there are very few such tests. Apart from Bujas' test, the most famous is the Bentler and Lavoie test (1972), which is more extensive. It consists of an additional two factors to the classical semantic Osgood differential, while Bujas's version directly follows Osgood's differential. Therefore, we thought it would be better to use the Bujas test, because it is shorter and simpler for use in children-centered research.

#### *4.3. The description of the study sites*

As a continent, Europe is the number one tourist destination in the world, leading in international tourist arrivals (Statista, 2020). The six tourism destinations chosen for this study were selected because all of them are based in countries that have seen an increase in tourist arrivals in recent years (UNWTO, 2018) and they all represent local communities with exclusive subordination to tourism development. The following is a brief description of each destination, which was paired based on the predominant type of tourism development (i.e., sun and sea tourism, winter tourism, and health and wellness tourism).

Sun and sea tourism destination are represented by the cities of Opatija in Croatia and Malaga in Spain. The city of Opatija developed from a small fishing village to a prestigious

tourism resort in 1844. Almost 50 years later, Opatija was pronounced a health resort, then saw rapid transition into an elite summer resort, known as the Nice of the Adriatic. This was due to the construction of landscape parks, luxurious villas, hotels, and similar facilities at the beginning of the 20th century and as such it was considered the cradle of Croatian tourism (Grad Opatija, 2019). The city boasted a total of 1.45 million overnight stays in 2018 (MINT, 2019), of which more than 40% were in family-owned accommodations (private rooms and apartments). When asked about their attitudes towards tourism, residents of Opatija's responses were positive (Birkić, Primužak, & Erdeljac, 2019) and there was the belief that the application of the smart city concept in Opatija would improve their quality of life and also have a positive impact on future tourism development (Krstinić Nižić, Vodeb, & Šverko Grdić, 2020).

Malaga started its tourism development boom in the early 1950s. Nowadays, it is considered the second-fastest Spanish province when it comes to increase in economic growth, mostly thanks to tourism. The tourism industry activity increased by 127% in the last decade, with almost 300 cruising ships docking in Malaga's port in 2017, making it the fastest-growing port in Spain and the second fastest one in the Mediterranean (Ministerio de Fomento, 2018). In 2018, the city recorded 27.6 million overnight stays, of which more than 70% were in hotels, followed by apartments (23%) and camps (7%) (Turismo y Planificación Costa del Sol, 2019, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2018, 2019). Malaga has seen rapid growth in tourist numbers in recent years, similar to other Spanish cities (e.g., Barcelona, Madrid, etc.). Hence, the general academic proposition has been that this rapid growth would result in many residents exhibiting tourism-phobia. However, a recent study by Almeida-García, Cortés-Macías, and Balbuena-Vázquez (2019) shows that residents do not view the presence of tourists or cruise passengers as something negative, but rather they are appalled

by some of their activities (e.g., binge drinking, bad behaviour by tourists, dirt and noise) that they believe could be addressed and changed by improving the city's tourism management.

Among the two winter tourism destinations, Kranjska Gora in Slovenia and Erzurum in Turkey, the former has a history of tourism development dating back to 1904. Kranjska Gora is one of the top five tourism destinations in Slovenia (MGRT, 2017). It saw the beginnings of the growth of its winter and ski tourism in 1930. Kranjska Gora quickly became a synonym for mountaineering and skiing, at present offering more than 18 different ski programs. In 2018, there was a total of 828 thousand overnight stays in Kranjska Gora in almost six thousand available beds (SURS, 2019), offered across 186 accommodation establishments, of which 85% represented privately owned apartments (Občina Kranjska Gora, 2015). According to Cigale (2009), residents of Kranjska Gora have accepted tourism with a very positive attitude, believing that tourism benefits not only individual quality of life, but also quality of life of the whole community.

Similar to Kranjska Gora, Erzurum in Turkey is another ski resort that contains two famous ski centres - Palandöken and Konaklı Ski Center. Erzurum is the highest major city in Turkey, which boasts the Palandöken ski centre that ranked 18th among the world's best ski resorts in 2012. Erzurum accounted for 1.8 million domestic and 2.3 million international overnight stays in 2018, with most of them realized in seven ski hotels (37 %), followed by 59 city hotels and facilities in the city centre (Kudaka, 2018). In 2011, Erzurum hosted the Winter World University Games, the largest multi-sport event in the world apart from the Olympic Games, organized for university athletes. According to Kalkavan and Alaeddinoğlu (2017), residents of Erzurum perceived the event to be very beneficial for the city, especially its younger generations who were cheering for the city to apply to host the Winter Olympic Games.

Bad Gleichenberg in Austria and Topola in Serbia are two destinations that represent health and wellness tourism. Both destinations offer a variety of curative therapies, especially in combination with the very high mineralization of local thermal water. Bad Gleichenberg was established as a health and wellness tourism town in 1834. In that first year, 118 guests visited the booming place, which at that time was little more than a collection of villas and health clubhouses. Soon it became the favourite among the cream of European aristocracy, which by 1890 helped to swell visitations to six thousand guests (Region Bad Gleichenberg, 2020). The town saw its largest hotel built a decade ago, offering 107 rooms.

Topola is situated in the Shumadia region in Serbia and offers different tourist activities, predominately centred around health and wellness, but also around wineries, cultural events, and museums. Yearly, more than 100 thousand registered tourists visit the galleries and museums, and more than 200 thousand tourists visit a famous tourist event, the Oplenac Grape Picking (TO Topola Oplenac, 2020).

#### *4.4. Justification and description of the sample*

In this paper, the term ‘young people’ is frequently used interchangeably with the term ‘children’. The United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child defines ‘child’ as all those under the age of 18 years (The United Nations, 2010, p. 1). The definition also acknowledges the social construction and cultural relativity of the term ‘childhood’, which may have a differential application in terms of the specific context, culture, or environment (Morrow, 2011). This cultural relativity is explained in the manner in which young people are placed in a conceptualised context in the studies presented in this article. Therefore, in our study, we intentionally focus on such samples within a range of tourism destinations and make a clear objective to research children’s willingness to be consulted on tourism development, as well as their opportunity to actively participate in such processes. Moreover,



for the purposes of this paper, we will continue using the term ‘children’ when addressing this social group under the age of 18 years.

Our study represents international research that involved children aged 11 to 16 who were attending school and lived in six different tourism destinations. Several factors influenced our decision to focus on children in this specific age group. First, the studies on children’s attitudes towards tourism from the host perspective either sampled very young children (i.e., aged 5 to 11) (Seraphin & Green, 2019), a very wide age range (i.e., 10 to 24 years) (Canosa et al., 2018, 2019), or was very limited (i.e., 11 to 12 years) (Koščak et al., 2019). Second, children aged 11 to 16 are considered adolescents (Blakemore, Burnett, & Dahl, 2010) “who can imagine things not seen or experienced” (Arrington-Sanders, 2013, p. 354). This allows them to develop the capacity to think abstractly and to form formal operational thinking characteristic i.e., meta-cognition (Arrington-Sanders, 2013). The latter was considered more suitable for the research we designed.

The sample comprised a total of 498 children, with 53.7% female and 46.3% male respondents. As seen in Table 1, most children participating in the study were 12 to 13 years of age, with an average age of the sample at 12.5 years. Nearly 80% of children came from families in which both parents were employed, with 22.3% of parents and 44% of relatives employed in the industry.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of the sample (in %)

Demographics	Overall	Erzurum, Turkey	Bad Gleichenberg, Austria	Opatija, Croatia	Malaga, Spain	Topola, Serbia	Kranjska Gora, Slovenia
<b>Number of participants</b>	498 (100%)	60 (12.0%)	96 (19.3%)	84 (16.9%)	88 (17.7%)	94 (18.9%)	76 (15.3%)
<b>Gender</b>							
Male	46.3%	41.7%	49.5%	49.4%	40.9%	50%	44.6%
Female	53.7%	58.3%	50.5%	50.6%	59.1%	50%	55.4%
<b>Age</b>							
11 years	13.7%	26.7%	0%	3.6%	0%	0%	64.5%
12 years	37.8%	28.3%	43.2%	73.8%	0%	48.9%	28.9%

13 years	31.8%	35%	40%	22.6%	59.1%	24.5%	6.6%
14 and more	16.7%	10%	16.9%	0%	40.9%	25.8%	0%
<b>Employment of parents</b>							
Both parents	76.2%	70%	77.9%	82.1%	83%	55.3%	90.7%
Just father	16.5%	25%	15.8%	14.3%	13.6%	27.7%	2.7%
Just mother	4.6%	1.7%	3.2%	3.6%	3.4%	8.5%	6.7%
None	2.6%	3.3%	3.2%	0%	0%	8.5%	0%
<b>Parents employed in tourism</b>							
Both parents	22.4%	8.3%	5.3%	35.7%	20.5%	18.1%	48%
None	73%	90%	83.2%	64.3%	67%	81.9%	52%
Only one parent	4.6%	1.7%	11.1%	0%	12.5%	0%	0%
<b>Relatives employed in tourism</b>							
Yes	44.4%	20%	43.2%	53%	46.6%	38.3%	60%
No	55.6%	80%	56.8%	47%	53.4%	61.7%	40%

## 5. Results and discussion

### 5.1. Children's attitudes towards tourism

Attitudes towards tourism were educed with multiple questions that were simplified so children could understand them. The first set of questions elicited their opinion on the tourism and hospitality industry in general. Children were asked if they thought tourism is a simple or difficult job. Only about 11% of children (10.6%) answered that the job is simple, 44.8% that job is demanding, and 44.6% stated they were not able to answer the question. When comparing the different destinations, the  $\chi^2$  test showed no statistically significant differences between samples, indicating that children have a somewhat similar perception of the weight of jobs in the tourist industry (simple job:  $\chi^2$  test value is 3.85,  $df = 5$ , critical value 11.070,  $p = 0.05$ ; hard job:  $\chi^2$  test value is 24.20,  $df = 5$ , critical value 11.070,  $p = 0.05$ ) with the exception of children from Turkish Erzurum who, compared to children in other destinations (see Table 2), perceive jobs in the tourism industry to be easy.

**Table 2.** Differences in children's attitudes towards tourism

	Erzurum, Turkey	Bad Gleichenberg, Austria	Opatija, Croatia	Malaga, Spain	Topola, Serbia	Kranjska Gora, Slovenia	Chi-square test
<b>In your opinion, where is most of the tourism work done?</b>							
In the office	<b>4</b> <b>3.92%</b>	<b>40</b> <b>39.22%</b>	12 11.76%	20 19.61%	15 17,65%	<b>8</b> <b>7.84%</b>	$\chi^2 = 47.88,$ $df = 5$

With machines in factories	1 7.14%	3 21.43%	1 7.14%	1 7.14%	<b>6</b> <b>42.86%</b>	2 14.29%	$\chi^2 = 8.29,$ df = 5 (n.s.)
Outside	<b>39</b> <b>32,77%</b>	<b>6</b> <b>5.04%</b>	21 17.65	26 21.65%	20 16.81%	<b>7</b> <b>5.88%</b>	$\chi^2 = 34.46,$ df = 5
A little bit of everything mentioned before	<b>16</b> <b>6.23%</b>	46 17.90%	47 18,29%	40 15.56%	50 19.46%	<b>58</b> <b>22.57%</b>	$\chi^2 = 24.20,$ df = 5
<b>What kinds of characteristics must people that work in tourism have?</b>							
They must know a lot about various things.	<b>33</b> <b>28.70%</b>	23 20.00%	<b>6</b> <b>5.22%</b>	<b>7</b> <b>6.09%</b>	<b>34</b> <b>29.57%</b>	12 10.43%	$\chi^2 = 41,68,$ df = 5
They must know many foreign languages.	<b>3</b> <b>1.33%</b>	41 18.14%	<b>58</b> <b>25,66%</b>	<b>54</b> <b>23.89%</b>	<b>36</b> <b>15.93%</b>	34 15.04%	$\chi^2 = 50.69,$ df = 5
They must have a lot of money.	<b>7</b> <b>46.67%</b>	<b>0</b> <b>0%</b>	1 6.67%	1 6.67%	4 26.67%	2 13.3%	$\chi^2 = 13.4,$ df = 5
They must know how to adapt to certain situations.	17 14.29%	31 26.05%	<b>6</b> <b>5.04%</b>	21 17.65%	20 16.81%	24 20.17%	$\chi^2 = 17.99,$ df = 5
<b>Who do you think is more appropriate for a job in tourism?</b>							
Women	5 7.25%	13 18.84%	10 14.49%	11 15.94%	15 21.74%	15 21.74%	$\chi^2 = 6.21,$ df = 5 (n.s.)
Men	<b>10</b> <b>28.57%</b>	<b>0</b> <b>0.00%</b>	2 5.71%	3 8.57%	<b>12</b> <b>34.29%</b>	8 22.86%	$\chi^2 20.3,$ df = 5
Equal	38 10.98%	73 21.10%	57 16.47%	<b>73</b> <b>21.10%</b>	<b>57</b> <b>16.47%</b>	48 13.87%	$\chi^2=16.50,$ df = 5
Cannot say	7 16.28%	9 20.93%	<b>12</b> <b>27.91%</b>	<b>0</b> <b>0.00%</b>	10 23.26%	5 11.63%	$\chi^2 20.3,$ df = 5

Note: Bolded responses denote statistically significant differences among destinations (at  $p < 0.05$ ); n.s.= not significant.

The results of the  $\chi^2$  test revealed exciting differences in children's perception of tourism. For example, Austrian children believe that tourism work is mostly done in offices, which is probably due to the destination type with Bad Gleichenberg's wellness and spa happening behind closed doors. On the other hand, no significant difference was found in children from Topola in Serbia, although it is a destination primarily offering wellness and spa activities, as is the case with Austria. The most significant discrepancy (according to the

adjusted residual) was found in opinions on whether the work in tourism was being done outside or inside in two winter destinations. Children in Erzurum estimated that most work was done outdoors, in contrast to children in Kranjska Gora who gave a below-average rating to outside work. This difference could be attributed to ski resorts in Kranjska Gora being located in the middle of the town, while those in Erzurum are in the surrounding mountains.

Our results indicated statistically significant differences for children from two sun and sea destinations – Opatija in Croatia and Malaga in Spain. Children believe that employees' knowledge does not need to be very diverse. In contrast, children from Turkish Erzurum and Serbian Topola believe that employees' knowledge needs to be diverse. However, Turkish children do not recognize knowledge of foreign languages as necessary for the industry, which is statistically different from the other children's opinions. Turkey's domestic tourism is by far higher than its international tourism (120 Mio domestic arrivals vs 31 Mio international arrivals, OECD, 2020), hence, knowledge of foreign languages may be perceived as nonessential. Similar observations were made by Leslie and Russell (2006), where UK students expressed that foreign language skills are not essential for tourism.

When it comes to assessing whether industry employees have lots of money, children were almost unanimous in believing that those who work in tourism do not have it. This observation is similar to Canosa et al.'s (2019) study where children from Australia perceived tourism as attractive to migrant workers or temporary residents that are willing to work for low wages or just board. This puts the host-children in a very disadvantageous position when entering adulthood and looking for employment opportunities in the industry. Tourism is, unfortunately, a labour-intensive industry with meagre wages (Dwyer, 2018; Løseth, 2018) and our results show that this has been noticed by children. Additionally, children evaluated if employees need to adapt to certain situations. Except for Croatian children, the others believe that adaptation is necessary. Opatija, on the other hand, is a well-established destination with

a very long history of tourism. With its typical customers knowing precisely what they can expect, but also with businesses seeing success in their *modus operandi*, such as the “*business as usual* paradigm” (Dwyer, 2018, p. 3, *original emphasis*), very few situations are created where employees need to act quickly and adapt to newness. On the topic of gender equality, children in all destinations think that both sexes are equally suitable for work in tourism, while only children in Erzurum and Topola think in statistically higher proportions that tourism is a job for men. In line with this, tourism research shows that gender inequalities in the industry still exist (Xu, 2018) regardless of some studies finding support for the initial hypothesis that tourism can help in improving women’s statuses by providing job opportunities and increasing their income (Gibson, 2011).

### 5.2. Children’s synthesis of tourism and family life

The opinion on the impact of tourism on family life was elicited from children with several different questions. Concerning one of the biggest problems for family life associated with tourism, we pointed out working hours. Hence, we asked children about their opinion on whether people mostly engage in tourism activities in the daytime. Children from all destinations do not differ in perceiving little activity occurring only in the morning or only in the afternoon. Most of them perceive tourism activity taking place both in the mornings and afternoons and even nights. More specifically, 75% of Turkish children saw that tourism requires almost all day and night commitment, with similar observations reported by Kusluvan and Kusluvan (2000) for Turkish undergraduate tourism and hospitality students.

**Table 3.** Differences in children’s perception of tourism in connection to family life

	Erzurum, Turkey	Bad Gleichenberg, Austria	Opatija, Croatia	Malaga, Spain	Topola, Serbia	Kranjska Gora, Slovenia	Chi-square test
<b>What kind of working hours do people who work in tourism have?</b>							

In the morning	2 11.76%	1 5.88%	2 11.76%	5 29.41%	2 11.76%	5 29.41%	$\chi^2 = 5.24$ , df = 5 (n.s.)
In the afternoon	5 22.73%	3 13.64%	2 9.09%	1 4.55%	8 36.36%	3 13.64%	$\chi^2 = 8.55$ , df = 5 (n.s.)
In the morning and afternoon	<b>8</b> <b>3.72%</b>	48 22.33%	41 19.07%	<b>26</b> <b>12.09%</b>	48 22.33%	<b>44</b> <b>20.47%</b>	$\chi^2 = 35.19$ , df = 5
Mornings, afternoons and even nights	<b>45</b> <b>19.15%</b>	41 17.45%	34 14.47%	<b>57</b> <b>24.25%</b>	<b>34</b> <b>14.47%</b>	<b>24</b> <b>10.21%</b>	$\chi^2 = 16.31$ , df = 5
<b>Do you think that working hours like that affect family life negatively?</b>							
Yes	<b>42</b> <b>21.76%</b>	37 19.17%	<b>19</b> <b>9.84%</b>	<b>54</b> <b>27.98%</b>	<b>14</b> <b>7.25%</b>	27 13.99%	$\chi^2 = 35.03$ , df = 5
No	<b>4</b> <b>4.04%</b>	<b>27</b> <b>27.27%</b>	<b>25</b> <b>25.25%</b>	12 12.12%	18 18.18%	13 13.13%	$\chi^2 = 22.63$ , df = 5
I do not know	<b>14</b> <b>7.11%</b>	<b>29</b> <b>14.72%</b>	36 18.27%	<b>22</b> <b>11.17%</b>	<b>60</b> <b>30.46%</b>	36 18.27%	$\chi^2 = 37.91$ , df = 5
<b>Would you like to work in tourism someday?</b>							
Yes	38 34.55%	8 7.27%	17 15.45%	12 10.91%	20 18.18%	15 13.64%	$\chi^2 = 29.96$ , df = 5
No	11 5.24%	55 26.19%	37 17.62%	44 20.95%	31 14.76%	32 15.24%	$\chi^2 = 31.03$ , df = 5
I do not know	11 6.43%	31 18.13%	26 15.20%	32 18.71%	42 24.56%	29 16.96%	$\chi^2 = 18.02$ , df = 5

Note: Bolded responses denote statistically significant differences among destinations (at  $p < 0.05$ ); n.s.= not significant.

When asked whether the rhythm of work affects family life, Turkish, Croatian, Serbian, and Spanish children statistically significantly differed in affirmative responses from children in Austria and Slovenia. Many children believe that tourism negatively affects family life. This corresponds to similar findings in the studies of Chan et al. (2015) and van Schalkwyk et al. (2006), which report tourism impacts families in a way that it intensifies and transforms their schedules. In combination with children's observations that tourism demands significant commitment, the results point to the industry's transformative power over family life.

Most children who would like to work in tourism are from Erzurum, while those with the least ambition to work in the industry are from Bad Gleichenberg. We can speculate that these differences have to do with the economic development of the regions and countries, as well as employment opportunities. Therefore, tourism in Turkey creates three times more jobs than in Austria, with international visitors expected to spend more than in Austria (WTTC,

2019a; WTTC, 2019b). In general, similar to the findings of Canosa et al. (2019), our study also found that children recognize that the tourism and hospitality industry creates employment opportunities, but at the same time these are not viewed through ‘rose colored glasses’. That is, the industry is perceived to demand all-day commitment and to have a negative impact on family life, the two reasons why children are either predominately indecisive or opposed to employment in the industry.

### 5.3. Involvement of children in tourism development

Our results showed that 64% of children were relatively unfamiliar with the tourism industry, with 18% declaring they know virtually nothing about tourism and 18% stating that they are familiar with tourism on a relatively large scale. Also, we asked children to express their involvement in tourism planning and development of communities in which they live.

**Table 4.** Children’s involvement in tourism development

	Erzurum, Turkey	Bad Gleichenberg, Austria	Opatija, Croatia	Malaga, Spain	Topola, Serbia	Kranjska Gora, Slovenia	Chi-square test
<b>Do you know what tourism development plans are in the town you live in?</b>							
Yes	7 8.14%	21 24.42%	<b>23</b> <b>26.74%</b>	<b>9</b> <b>10.47%</b>	<b>8</b> <b>9.30%</b>	18 20.93%	$\chi^2 = 17.81$ , df = 5
A little	<b>13</b> <b>6.34%</b>	41 20.00%	40 19.51%	43 20.98%	35 17.07%	33 16.10%	$\chi^2 = 17.82$ , df = 5
No	<b>40</b> <b>19.90%</b>	32 15.92%	<b>20</b> <b>9.95%</b>	36 17.91%	<b>49</b> <b>24.38%</b>	24 11.94%	$\chi^2 = 16.82$ , df = 5
<b>Have you been invited to state your opinion about tourism development plans?</b>							
Yes	10 10.00%	13 13.00%	25 25.00%	17 17.00%	13 13.00%	22 22.00%	$\chi^2 = 10.16$ df = 5 (n.s.)
No	48 12.47%	81 21.04%	<b>59</b> <b>15.32%</b>	69 17.92%	75 19.48%	<b>53</b> <b>13.77%</b>	$\chi^2 = 13.04$ , df = 5
<b>Would you like to be a part of the discussion about future tourism development?</b>							
Yes, very much	<b>11</b> <b>7.64%</b>	<b>8</b> <b>5.56%</b>	<b>36</b> <b>25.00%</b>	21 14.58%	<b>40</b> <b>27.78%</b>	28 19.44%	$\chi^2 = 35.42$ , df = 5
No, I am not interested	21 15.56%	28 20.74%	<b>16</b> <b>11.85%</b>	27 20.00%	22 16.30%	21 15.56%	$\chi^2 = 4.33$ , df = 5 (n.s.)
I do not know what to say	28 13.80%	<b>58</b> <b>27.10%</b>	32 14.95%	40 18.69%	<b>30</b> <b>14.02%</b>	26 12.15%	$\chi^2 = 20.06$ , df = 5

Note: Bolded responses denote statistically significant differences among destinations (at  $p < 0.05$ ); n.s. = not significant.

As evident in Table 4, children differ in how much they know about the plans for further tourism development. Children from Opatija, Bad Gleichenberg, and Kranjska Gora were shown to know more about tourism development plans for the towns in which they live than children in other destinations. All three former destinations have a common origin and culture, and tourism development has occurred at almost the same time. Similarly, in Opatija and Kranjska Gora, almost 25% of children have been invited by local authorities to state their opinions on future tourism development, while to others the invitation was extended to only 14% or 20%. However, the general conclusion is that children are not generally informed about future tourism development (Koščak et al., 2019). However, similar to Canosa et al.'s (2018) study in Australia, children wish to be part of the tourism discussion. Almost one third expressed their desire to participate in such discussions (29.21%). Moreover, children from Opatija and Topola are statistically significantly different from others in their wish to participate in tourism development. We speculate that these differences are rooted in society and culture, as both destinations were historically endowed with socialism in times of Yugoslavia. At that time, many public interest issues led to wide-ranging public debates, especially in smaller local communities (Tollefson, 2002), a praxis that might have remained important to this day.

Concerning giving their opinions about community planning and development, the children in this study reported that they were not invited to share their thoughts even though they would like to do so. This could be problematic as being discouraged from sharing their thoughts about the future of the community could lead to apathy when they enter adulthood. This creates fertile ground for a community in which the majority of residents are passive observers of the future development of their community and few individuals are orchestrators of the same (Šegota et al., 2017). To avoid this, the literature calls for greater empowerment of residents (Boley & McGehee, 2014; Joo et al., 2020; Mihalič et al., 2016; Palardy, Boley,



& Gaither, 2018), which could be applied to young residents at an early age so that they are listened to and included in the planning of the future of their community.

#### *5.4. Eliciting children's feelings about tourism*

The development of children in environments where the tourism industry plays an important role has been conditioned by many socio-cultural, political, economic, and ideological forces at play (Knežević et al., 2019). Development in such an environment provokes a series of emotional elements in connection to tourists and locals. The host-tourist relationship inevitably leaves a mark on the development of children, as well as their decisions regarding their future professions. To study these emotional elements, we used non-verbal semantic differential scales and asked the children how they felt about tourists and residents. Here, we must remind the reader that, when interpreting data, one should always keep in mind that this experimental technique is a projective type. The drawings are standardized; however, children give their own meaning to the drawings based on their own experiences, thoughts, feelings, and imaginations.

Our results reveal that, in general, children gave tourists much better ratings than residents on all three factors. Residents are perceived as being more passive, evaluated worse than tourists, and seen as weak, whereas tourists are evaluated more positively, but this evaluation is lower than their potency and activity. Moreover, the results reveal that potency is perceived as the most crucial tourist trait, followed by activity and evaluation. This suggests that children recognize the change or disruption tourists bring to communities (Grabun, 1983), which is also consistent with the results from studies by Canosa et al. (2019) and Koščak et al. (2019).

The detailed results of data analysis are presented in Table 5. The data were analyzed using One Way ANOVA, coupled with the Scheffe Post Hock Multiple Comparisons test.

**Table 5.** Children’s feelings towards tourists and residents

Factor and object	Erzurum, Turkey M (SD) R	Bad Gleichenberg, Austria M (SD) R	Opatija, Croatia M (SD) R	Malaga, Spain M (SD) R	Topola, Serbia M (SD) R	Kranjska Gora, Slovenia M (SD) R
Potency of tourists	<b>6.90 (3.59)<sup>bcd</sup></b> 1	2.58 (4.57) <sup>a</sup> 1	1.99 (5.21) <sup>ae</sup> 1	3.20 (4.94) <sup>a</sup> 2	4.44 (3.95) <sup>cf</sup> 2	1.77 (5.79) <sup>ae</sup> 1
Activity of tourists	3.10 (3.10) <sup>e</sup> 2	2.16 (4.82) <sup>e</sup> 2	1.32 (5.76) <sup>e</sup> 2	3.48 (5.08) <sup>f</sup> 1	<b>5.37 (4.37)<sup>abcf</sup></b> 1	0.50 (6.40) <sup>e</sup> 5
Evaluation of tourists	-0.75 (3.26) <sup>e</sup> 3	0.93 (4.22) <sup>e</sup> 3	0.53 (4.38) <sup>e</sup> 3	1.40 (4.69) <sup>e</sup> 3	<b>3.77 (3.99)<sup>abcf</sup></b> 3	0.67 (5.35) <sup>e</sup> 4
Activity of residents	-3.13 (3.12) <sup>cdef</sup> 6	-1.25 (3.76) 9	-0.13 (3.97) <sup>a</sup> 5	<b>0.18 (4.18)<sup>a</sup></b> 4	0.37 (2.91) <sup>a</sup> 5	0.53 (3.62) <sup>a</sup> 5
Potency of residents	<b>-2.45 (3.97)</b> 4	-0.52 (3.81) <sup>f</sup> 6	-0.47 (4.42) <sup>f</sup> 6	-1.09 (3.74) <sup>f</sup> 8	-1.97 (3.81) 9	-3.30 (4.85) <sup>bcd</sup> 9
Evaluation of residents	-4.92 (3.50) <sup>bcd</sup> 9	<b>-0.84 (4.13)<sup>a</sup></b> 7	-1.10 (4.65) <sup>a</sup> 9	-0.84 (6.07) <sup>a</sup> 7	-0.47 (4.33) <sup>a</sup> 7	-0.57 (4.07) <sup>a</sup> 7

Note: M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation, R = overall rating. The subscripts represent statistically significant differences (at  $p = 0.000$ ) between destinations, where subscript a = Erzurum, b = Bad Gleichenberg, c = Opatija, d = Malaga, e = Topola, f = Kranjska Gora. The highest results for factor and object are indicated with bold for each row.

In evaluating tourists, children’s perceptions were very consistent among destinations. The latter is evident from the results of the overall ratings, where tourists were rated in the top three places, with relatively few cross-cutting differences in ratings. Estimates differed in the amount, but it should be emphasized that in the non-verbal semantic differential scales, the ranking of the object is the most important indicator. However, statistically significant differences in grades given by Erzurum children for tourist potency are two to three times higher than in other destinations. This indicates that the strength of the change tourist activity imposes on the local community is more significant. Also, among former Yugoslav countries, there are statistically significant differences in children grading the potency of tourists, with children from Serbia grading potency two times higher than their peers in Slovenia and Croatia. Such results could be attributed to both Opatija and Kranjska Gora being established tourism destinations with a high number of visitors (Grad Opatija, 2019; MGRT, 2017). Hence, children from these two local communities might perceive tourist activity not to be

intense as their communities are established or matured destinations. On the other hand, Topola receives few visitors and its tourism is only developing compared to the other two destinations. This is similar to many studies on resident attitudes towards tourism in which it was reported that residents accept tourist activity as part of the everyday in established and mature destinations, whereas in new destinations residents are much more attentive to the activity impacting daily life (McKercher, Wang, & Park, 2015). Moreover, evaluation of the tourists is low, with the exception of children in Topola, whose evaluation score is statistically different from other destinations, i.e., more positive. What is important to note is that it was evident that children do not have some extremely positive emotions associated with tourists. Apart from the rating 6.9 for potency given to tourists by Erzurum children and the rating 5.75 for the activity given by Topola children, all other ratings are below 50% of the possible estimate (12). The fact that children consider tourists to be strong probably suggests that they perceive tourists to have the power to manage their lives. The result of the correlation coefficient supports these conclusions, as Spearman's rank correlation coefficient between potency and activity factors is  $r_s = 0.511$  (statistically significant at  $p = 0.001$  level).

In evaluating residents, children's most pronounced experience of the local population is the experience of the activity, with an average rank of 5.67. The latter ranked significantly lower than the tourist activity. We would speculate that this is related to the role of the local community in a tourism destination. In our case, as in the case of Canosa et al. (2019) and Koščak et al. (2019), children perceive residents as marginal community groups as opposed to tourists, indicating towards their subordinate role in the resident-tourist exchange process. Moreover, children in most surveyed destinations do not perceive tourism as a desirable life orientation. This has been suggested by the position of the potency and evaluation factors of residents and the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient between evaluation and activity factors ( $r_s = 0.138$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). Interestingly, we found a negative correlation between the

evaluation of residents and the potency of tourists ( $r_s = -0.127, p = 0.001$ ). This suggests that children give a lower rating in the evaluation of residents whenever they rate tourist potency higher.

Such findings suggest that children have internalized the widespread view that tourists disrupt residents' lives with their visits to the community and, moreover, that residents subordinate their daily lives to tourist experiences. Canosa et al. (2018) suggest that for the creation of healthy and socially sustainable host communities, children need to be involved in community planning and development. Not only are they quickly reaching their adulthood, which will officially grant them more power to influence tourism decision-making, but they are also future consumers of community resources and providers of tourist experiences, which puts them in a position of powerful negotiators when it comes to how these resources are used across different groups, including visitors (Seraphin & Green, 2019). Therefore, to make them advocates of tourism in the future, the community needs to see them as equal contributors to decision-making to make their experience of the guest-host relationship as positive as possible.

## **6. Conclusion**

In ten years from now, we will be able to evaluate tourism's contribution to developmental goals set in the Sustainable Tourism Programme and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. More specifically, many goals set in these agendas wish to see young people live in inclusive and developed societies, where sustainable tourism serves as the tool to improve quality of life, promote inclusivity, and advance knowledge (WTO & UNDP, 2017). However, one of the crucial steps towards a more inclusive society is to listen to all voices. This study represents one step toward the latter: we listened to the opinions of children in six diverse European destinations for whom

tourism represents an immanent future as an employment opportunity or/and a force that shapes their quality of life once they reach adulthood. However, it is important to understand that children will enter adult community life with attitudes and feelings they carry from childhood (van Schalkwyk et al., 2006), and the latter are something that we know little about. Moreover, this study is very important as it sets the basis for understanding children's attitudes towards tourism in destinations with three predominant types of tourism development (i.e., sun and sea tourism, winter tourism, and health and wellness tourism).

We designed the study as experimental, one-group posttest-only research with the aim to better understand children's attitudes towards tourism and its impacts on family life, inclusiveness in decision-making, and feelings towards the tourist-host relationship that have been playing out in tourism communities. The results of our research bring to light both positive and negative effects of tourism, which the industry will have to address if it wishes to be considered as contributing to, instead of impeding sustainable development goals. More specifically, our results show that children notice very early on that being employed in the tourism and hospitality industry means one is doing a challenging job, and the higher the economic development of a tourist area, the more tourism is perceived as a difficult job. Moreover, children see tourism as a disruptive power for family life and for the community. The results show that children feel negatively towards tourists. In our case, children perceive residents as a marginal community group as opposed to tourists, indicating their subordinate role in the resident-tourist exchange process (Canosa et al., 2019; Koščak et al., 2019). Moreover, children in most surveyed destinations do not perceive tourism as a desirable life orientation and they feel the strength of the change tourist activity imposes on their local communities. There are two probable reasons for this. One is that children feel part of the local population, which includes their family members, who they also perceive to be subordinated to tourists. Such perception certainly does little to contribute to changing the

perception of tourism becoming a desired life orientation and a force for social change. Another reason may arise from the fact that children are not involved in tourism development and planning. In fact, we can conclude that their involvement in the process has been largely ignored. This approach to children, which excludes them from tourism planning and developmental processes, in no way contributes to sustainability in general or/and to tourism being a tool for an inclusive society in particular (Canosa et al., 2019).

Our study is not without limitations. We see these as being related to our research design, in which we used a non-verbal semantic differential measurement instrument. In the latter, children are exposed to the standardized drawings, to which they give their own meaning based on their experiences. However, we have not explored what the standardized drawings mean to children and what associations they have in relation to their experiences and lived realities. This could be overcome in future studies if qualitative methods would complement the use of non-verbal semantic differential measurement instrument to give children the opportunity to explain why they chose certain images instead of others. Further, some questions posed to children might be viewed as too simplistic. Other researchers are likely to encounter different attitudes of tourism if the study was designed differently (i.e., using standard Likert-type scale answers and measurement scales commonly used in resident attitudes research). However, they should be encouraged to explore a different approach to research that includes children, such as ours. Moreover, our results showed that some children do not know how to answer some questions we asked or were indecisive. We see this as a limitation that could be explored in the future. We did not delve further into understanding children's indecisiveness or where their 'I do not know' answers come from by asking additional questions. However, future work, if it uses similar approach to ours by providing respondents with the indecisive options as answers, may be interested in uncovering the

origins of children's indecisiveness. The latter could provide valuable insights into what kind of information children need to make informed decisions and form attitudes.

As for future tourism research, our study sets the groundwork for understanding children's attitudes towards tourism in three different types of tourism destinations (sun and sea, winter, and health and spa destinations). New research could take the same approach and examine differences across destinations in different stages of the life cycle. It would also be interesting to see whether children's attitudes change if they are involved in tourism planning and how this inclusion varies across different stages of planning and implementation, as well as different ages. Further, it would be interesting to examine how attitudes towards tourism are affected by parent-child relationships and if attitudes are passed on intergenerationally.

In general, the above findings add to the literature on sustainable tourism development, particularly by demonstrating that children have their views and are willing to express themselves given the opportunity. Our study demonstrates that children have a unique insider's perspective, which tourism managers and tourism planning officials should not neglect but instead include in their planning process in order to make tourism development sustainable, empowering, and inclusive.

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