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Responsible Tourism: The 'Why' and 'How' of Empowering Children

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1. Introduction

Sustainability has become a well-established topic and concept in relation to tourism planning and development (Weaver, 2006; Hall et al., 2015). Within the extensive body of literature on sustainable tourism, it is widely suggested that tourism will become more sustainable if all stakeholders participate in the tourism development process (Byrd, 2007; Waligo et al., 2013; Lindberg et al., 2019). Although much tourism research has identified four main stakeholder categories: private businesses, tourists, public sector, and destination communities (Renkert, 2019), there is increased recognition that a more nuanced approach to stakeholder identification is required (Hazra, Fletcher & Wilkes, 2017; Nyanjom, Boxall & Slaven, 2018). Therefore, other stakeholder categories may include, for example, specific sectoral interests such as farmers (Xu & Sun, 2019); employees (Tuan, 2020); academics (Higham & Font, 2020); temporary populations (Hall & Müller, 2018); and students (Hergesell & Dickinger, 2013). Nevertheless, despite widespread interest in stakeholder involvement, sustainability programmes have received growing criticism given their failure to generate the changes needed for tourism to become sustainable (Font, 2017; Hall, 2019).

In response to continued failure to achieve sustainable change that goes beyond business-as-normal, Visser (2015) called for a long-term strategy to unlock changes to achieve the main goals of sustainability through transformational leadership. Against this backdrop, this study therefore aims to tackle the issue by focusing on the “source”, namely children and their education (Madruga & Da Silveira, 2003). It is often argued that promoting sustainable tourism change and development can only be truly achieved by concentrating on the source of an issue (Butcher, 2017; Font, 2017). Indeed, ‘possible ways of increasing environmental consciousness and commitment is to attack the sources in the education of children’ (Madruga & Da Silveira, 2003, p. 520). Nevertheless, it is one of the great ironies of sustainability research, that despite sustainability being inherently concerned with intergenerational equity (Hall et al., 2015; Perry et al., 2018), there has been precious little research on the role and understandings of children with respect to sustainability and tourism. This is somewhat ironic because, as the WHO–UNICEF–*Lancet* Commission on *A future for the world’s children?* noted, ‘we must respond to environmental and existential threats, which jeopardise the future for children on this planet’ (Clark et al., 2020, p. 607). This is all the more challenging for tourism given its substantial contributions to global environmental change, and especially

climate change and biological invasion (Rutty et al., 2015), and that many of the children that have the opportunity to be tourists come from the wealthier elements of the world's wealthiest countries (Hall, 2010). As the WHO–UNICEF–*Lancet* Commission found.

‘The poorest countries have a long way to go towards supporting their children’s ability to live healthy lives, but wealthier countries threaten the future of all children through carbon pollution, on course to cause runaway climate change and environmental disaster. Not a single country performed well on all three measures of child flourishing, sustainability, and equity’ (Clark et al., 2020, p. 607).

The involvement of children in responsible tourism initiatives is therefore urgent and there is a great need for such enquiry in scholarly research on sustainable tourism, especially as only limited research has been devoted to children and sustainable tourism (Madruga & Da Silvera, 2003), with more attention being given to understandings of sustainability by tourism students (Camargo & Gretzel, 2017; Hales & Jennings, 2017). As Cullingford (1995) highlights, children are the tourists of the future and, as per Visser’s (2015) long-term strategy to achieve sustainability, they can act as powerful agents of social change, including playing a pivotal role in achieving sustainable development (Doel-Mackaway, 2018; Schill et al., 2020). As active and competent citizens in schools and communities (Percy-Smith & Burns, 2013), in other words as engaged stakeholders (Howard & Wheeler, 2015; Lundy, 2007; McCafferty, 2017; Restless Development, 2016), children have great potential to make powerful contributions toward reaching the goals set by the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Clark et al., 2020), particularly in relation to SDGs that directly refer to tourism (such as Goal 8 (Target 8.9), Goal 12 (Target 12.b) and Goal 14 (Target 14.7) on the social, economic, and environmental well-being of countries and destinations, especially developing countries. (UN Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform, n.d.).

Yet, children, despite occupying multiple roles as: community members (Dowse, Powell & Weed, 2018), consumers (Dowse et al, 2018; Lugosi et al., 2016), and key influencers of family choice of holiday destinations (Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001; Poria & Timothy, 2014; Ram & Hall, 2015; Thornton, Shaw, & Williams, 1997), have been neglected by academic research on sustainable tourism (S raphin & Yallop, 2019a, 2019b; Schill et al., 2020). Canosa, Wilson, and Graham (2017, p.1) argue that such neglect is because of “the slow engagement and adoption of alternative and critical methodologies which open up new and fresh ways of interpreting reality”. Several reasons can be given for this reason. From a research perspective, conducting research with children as the subjects raises substantial ethical issues and is

therefore more time consuming (Alderson & Morrow, 2011) while, more instrumentally, omission may be due to the children not being regarded as significant enough decision-makers in tourism consumption and with them children not perceiving and understanding the world in the same way most adults do (Rakik & Chambers, 2012). From a societal perspective, in some cultures children's role may be "be seen and not heard" with an overall lack of acceptance or recognition of the rights of the child (Alderson, 2017; Franklin, 2002; Lundy, 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the fact that research involving children is valid and significant (Beazley et al, 2009; Greig et al., 2007).

This study therefore seeks to address the following two knowledge gaps: (a) Why should children be engaged in responsible tourism? (b) How should children be engaged in responsible tourism?

Drawing on a multidisciplinary literature synthesis (Tribe & Liburd, 2016; Jaakkola, 2020) and Kemper's (2019) research on sustainability education typology, the study investigates why and how children should be empowered to become active agents of responsible tourism and contributors to the achievement and implementation of SDGs. Recent literature has focused on the need for more inclusive sustainable tourism (Burrai et al., 2019), long-term strategies such as education of the next generation either in formal (such as business schools and universities; see Kemper et al., 2019) or informal structures (such as guided tours; see Smith et al., 2019, or interpretation, see Stoddard, Metzger, & Harris, 2018), and empowering stakeholders who have been disempowered (Joo et al., 2020). In line with this prior body of work, this study is, thus, not only highlighting children empowerment as an emerging research area in the sustainability literature, but is also indicating that children are neither passive nor powerless (Hutton, 2016; Wong, Zimmermann & Parker, 2010), in making responsible consumption decisions. Also, it is emphasising the view that, with the appropriate pedagogical approach, children can become environmentally aware, change their behaviour and, equally important, can encourage and contribute to changes among their peers, in other words, be sustainability transformers (Kemper et al., 2019; Madruga et al., 2003; Schill et al., 2020).

The paper proceeds as follows: After a detailed discussion of key issues related to empowerment in tourism, particularly children empowerment in tourism and sustainable development goals, the paper conceptualizes children empowerment in responsible tourism. The resulting theoretical framework is then discussed before conclusions and implications are drawn. The framework proposed in this study offers a composite picture, allowing comment

on the interactions between children empowerment and sustainable responsible tourism, and conclusions about the implications of such connections.

2. Literature review

2.1. Empowerment in tourism

Modern use of the term “sustainability” is broad and difficult to define precisely. Nevertheless, a foundational and widely used definition is provided by the UN World Commission on Environment and Development: ‘sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED, 1987). The literature on sustainable tourism clearly suggests that involving present and future generations is integral in order to establish any sustainable tourism development (Hall et al., 2015). It is widely recognised that industry sustainability requires involvement and commitment of multiple stakeholders (Sloan et al., 2013) through regulations or environment standards; market approaches or pricing strategies; and finally, soft tools (or citizenship and education) in order to raise awareness about environmental issues (Tribe, 2012). Nevertheless, a significant and core component of stakeholders, such as children, is overlooked.

“Empowerment” is a group or individual efforts to gain control over their destiny and/or affairs through competency enhancement which happens as the result of a learning process (Joo et al. 2020). Words such as “enabling”; “to make responsible”; “reengineering”; “mastery” and “control” are associated with “empowerment” (Boella & Goss-Turner, 2020; Boley & McGehee, 2014). The concept of empowerment has been widely studied in other contexts such as community development; behavioural change, and psychology, however is a more recent addition to the tourism lexicon (Scheyvens, 1999; Strzelecka et al., 2017). In tourism sustainability, it is argued that empowerment is one of the key requirements for its success as, once achieved by a group or individual, people become more active within the destination community. This is because, according to Rocha’s (1997) notion of a ladder of empowerment, knowledgeable individuals (at the bottom of the ladder) engage more in decision-making and hence manage to get others from the community (at the top of the ladder) involved. Sustainability and empowerment are interconnected given that resident empowerment appears crucial to the long-term sustainability of a destination (Boley & McGehee, 2014) because it

gives locals a sense of ownership and, consequently, they become more supportive of the industry (Joo et al., 2020; Strzelecka et al., 2017).

In tourism, 'empowerment' tends to be understood as the participation of local people in tourism decision-making with sufficient power to bring benefits to a destination community in terms of an improved quality of life (Boley & McGehee, 2014; Scheyvens, 1999). Boley and McGehee (2014) and Strzelecka et al. (2017) identified three types of empowerment in tourism: (a) psychological empowerment (apparent when locals display some pride for their community and neighbourhood); (b) social empowerment (occurs when social capital is developed within the community); and (c), political empowerment (that occurs with the involvement of locals in decision-making). This study focuses on social empowerment, as this form of empowerment involves bringing changes in the community by empowering designated previously disempowered members of the society (Strzelecka et al., 2017). This form of empowerment also helps involve and engaging all members of a community and contributing to a greater sense of cohesion (Boley & McGehee, 2014) as a result of strengthening social capital (Boley et al., 2014). The focus on social empowerment is also significant as this form of empowerment may also generate political action (Joo et al., 2020).

In local communities, empowerment tends to be initiated through awareness campaigns and training programmes (Mosedale & Voll, 2017). Empowerment initiatives aimed at local communities need to, however, be facilitated in particular ways, as prescriptive, informative, confrontational and intervening approaches are considered less empowering (Adams, 2008). According to Adams (2008), the most effective approaches of empowerment are: cathartic and facilitative (enabling people to express their feelings); catalytic (enabling people to engage in self-discovery, self-directed living and problem-solving); supportive and catalytic (enabling people to build self-confidence); and finally, self-advocacy (enabling people to speak for themselves). In this study, all these effective empowerment approaches are considered and employed in the development of the programme of activities suggested to empower children to be future responsible tourists (section 4).

2.2. Children's empowerment and tourism

Child and childhood study has long been neglected in tourism studies, and there is only relatively growing studies on the topic (e.g. Canosa et al., 2016; Canosa, Moyle, & Wray, 2016;

Canosa, Graham, & Wilson, 2019). Canosa et al. (2016) believe that uncovering the deeply embedded issues relating to tourism development for host communities requires the active involvement of children and young people in the research process. Consequentially, such involvement becomes a process of empowerment which leads to ‘a virtuous circle of increased confidence and raised self-esteem, resulting in more active participation by children in other aspects affecting their lives’ (Kellett, 2010, p. 197). Such confidence and self-esteem enables children to feel happy and comfortable with who they are, trying new things and managing their behaviour (Kellett, 2010; Khoo-Lattimore, 2015). Empowerment has been claimed as a key factor in building resilience and one of the important benefits of children’s participation (Kellett, 2010; White & Choudhury, 2010).

Children empowerment in a family environment is a key component of family-centered interventions in promoting child growth and well-being (Dunst, Trivette & Hamby 2007) as well as a key predictor of their future outcomes. Staples (1990) described empowerment as both a multidimensional mechanism (gaining greater influence and control over life) and an outcome (holding power). Such process can be expressed on various levels including economic (personal power and self-efficacy), interpersonal (influencing others) and political (social action or change). Koren, DeChillo, and Friesen (1992) noted that skills, self-perception and actions can be considered as another dimension in the expression of empowerment. They developed the Family Empowerment Scale which incorporates and operationalises these two dimensions.

In the tourism literature, early studies in family tourism have confirmed that children have relatively little power to persuade family holidays decisions (Beatty & Talpade, 1994; Thornton, Shaw, & Williams, 1997). For instance, Wang, Hsieh, Yeh, and Tsai (2004) argue that children are largely neglected in the family tourism decision. Nevertheless, recent studies have different findings. For instance, Khoo-Lattimore, Prayag, and Cheah (2015) noted that children co-create the travel experience with parents. The studies of Gram (2007) also shows that children increasingly influence the family decision-making process with respect to the vacation.

Empowerment of children in a tourism related context may also be approached through competency enhancement of individuals or groups as the result of a learning process (Joo et al., 2020). Empowerment of children towards responsible tourism is at the basis of actions

developed by the Education for Sustainability (EfS) discourse developed by the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC [Online]). For EfS, education for sustainability is based on five pillars: environmental, social, economic, interpreting and understanding sustainability (Kemper et al., 2019). Child empowerment emerges as one of the most pertinent aspects in developing a community-based tourism (Canosa et al., 2016). Magura and Da Silveira (2003) argued that, currently, existing curricula are not particularly innovative as they are mainly based on traditional approaches to sustainability and that a student change of industrial worldview is required. This shift of paradigm is left to the individual academics themselves (Kemper et al., 2019). However, additionally, children may also be educated to be responsible citizens and tourists in informal educational environments, such as nature walks (Honig, 2019; Milne, Rantala & Grimwood, 2019).

Another framework that could be adopted is the sustainability educator typology developed by Kemper, Ballantine and Hall (2019). Based on this framework, the assumption of this study is that children will go through all stages of the typology. First, on short-term, children will turn into sustainability thinkers (individuals with critical thinking and questioning attitude). This could be materialised by children asking more and more questions related to their holidays (e.g., the place they visited, activities they undertook). Then, in the long term, they will turn into sustainability actioners (individuals looking to incite changes in individuals or community). This could be materialised by influencing families' choice of destinations, activities, and mobilities. Finally, in the even longer term, they will turn into sustainability transformers (individuals wanting to unlock changes in the surrounding environment). This could be materialised by praising those who are opting for responsible forms of tourism, and shaming others. This study's assumption is, to some extent, in line with the results of Madruga and Da Silveira's study (2003) aimed at developing children's environmental awareness. Their results revealed that 'a positive approach for environmental classes can result in concrete actions, which lead to improved environmental concern and action among teenagers and school children' (Madruga & Da Silveira, 2003: 525). Furthermore, children empowerment has rarely been discussed from the host community's perspective (Canosa et al., 2017). In their study on empowering young people through participatory film, Canosa et al (2017) explored the potential for participatory film from the perspectives of disadvantaged community groups such as children and young people. Researchers noticed that children and youth felt strongly about their community and show feelings of rage and resentment towards perceived unethical practices of tourists with respect to the community and empowerment.

2.3. The significance of children's contribution to tourism sustainability

There is sufficient reason to believe that children can and should be involved in responsible and sustainable tourism. Séraphin and Yallop (2019a, b) argue that children (the target), via resort-mini clubs (the tools), could play a significant role in the sustainability of the tourism industry. Mini-clubs also called kids' club, provide entertainment to children staying in resorts during their holidays (Seraphin & Yallop, 2019a). Thus, they suggested that resorts should adopt a new approach to the concept of mini-clubs, as well as a new approach to children programmes (the type of fun and activities) that should be delivered in mini-clubs. The proposed new approach would consist in maintaining the mini-clubs' enclave structure whilst embedding them within the wider tourism ecosystem of the destinations. Mini-clubs should consider adopting a local name as 'the specific name given to businesses contributes to integrating them within the local community they operate' (Séraphin & Yallop, 2019a, p.7); local produce (food and drinks) should be served and sourced from local producers, and activities for children involving local contractors and/or suppliers (such as cooking classes for example) should be developed around those products. Finally, the mini-clubs should be opened to local kids, as 'giving locals access to enclaves can foster a stronger link between locals and visitors' (Séraphin & Yallop, 2019a, p.8). As for the new approach of children programmes (type of fun and activities) they should be delivered in mini-clubs with the aim to provide children and their parents an opportunity to participate in family activities. The focus should be on empowering fun, in other words, fun activities that contribute to learning, discovering and feelings of accomplishment (Poris, 2006; Séraphin & Yallop, 2019b). This type of fun activities includes, for instance, learning the local language, cultural workshops, local dancing and singing workshops, and handicraft workshops of local artefacts (Poris, 2006; Séraphin & Yallop, 2019b). Last but not least, events (live or virtual) should be organised by mini-clubs to promote children's achievements as the new generation appreciate having opportunities to parade their experiences and celebrate their achievements. Beyond celebrating children and their achievements, events could also be used to promote the inclusion of mini-clubs in the local environment.

Tourism must transform and recalibrate in order to become more sustainable (cited in Cheer, Milano & Novelli, 2019). Subsequently, considering children as part of a strategy towards tourism sustainability would be evidence of the ability of practitioners and researchers

to promote change by concretely considering future generations. This is all the more important, as mitigating the rate and pace of change is vital to tourism sustainability (Lew, 2014). While sustainable development is the main concern for people of all ages, the youngest members of the society, and more specifically children, may have the most to lose if targets for sustainable living are not achieved in the near future.

Overlooking children and related elements to childhood in responsible tourism is a common mistake because not all stakeholders to be engaged in the process are known, and have been in fact engaged, in the process (Burrai et al., 2019). However, involving children in planning and implementation processes is challenging (Freeman, Henderson, & Kettle, 1999). Engaging with children means unveiling and engaging with a new stakeholder. Recent research conducted by Schill et al. (2020) demonstrated that it would be a mistake to underestimate children's contribution to sustainable and responsible practices. Within the context of recycling, for example, children's knowledge and concern about recycling (i.e. personal determinants), other behavioural determinants (e.g. training at school), self-learning and observational learning that can take place both at school and in their family setting, as well as environmental determinants (e.g. access to bins, their parent's recycling practices) can enhance children's awareness and engagement in responsible practices (Shill et al., 2020).

Furthermore, when they are taken into consideration, children feel respected and empowered (Adam, 2019). Children should also be valued because: they are stakeholders of the community; they are not just mere recipients as they influence their environment; they play a role in the competitive advantage of organisations that can identify and develop products and services that meet their needs (Dowse, Powell & Weed, 2018; Greig, Taylor & MacKay, 2007).

In this line of thoughts, in December 2019, Eastbourne Borough Council, View Hotel, East Sussex College Group, Eastbourne Chamber of Commerce, East Sussex County Council and the University of Brighton developed a pop-up school concept aimed at school pupils to inform them about careers in hospitality. The pop-up school was 'focusing on hospitality skills in a real life setting and including interactive presentations about a career in hospitality' (University of Brighton [Online]). At a wider scale, the Italian government has put sustainability and climate at heart of learning in schools (Guardian, 2019 [Online]). In both cases children are considered an important variable of the long-term sustainability of the planet. The significance of the contribution of children to sustainability (of the tourism industry) could be summarised by figure 1 below.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

2.4. Conceptual Framework

In line with previous research discussed in this paper, the study puts forward the following successive (and linked) propositions: (1) children are disempowered from the tourism industry but can be empowered with the right pedagogical approach; (2) social empowerment could happen through activities that would be empowering fun; cathartic; facilitative; catalytic; supportive and self-advocating (3) children should be turned into sustainability thinkers; actioners; and transformers (4) and finally, the transformation that children experience should continue to adulthood as there is a continuum between childhood and adulthood.

These propositions presented in figure 2 also answer the research questions of this study, namely, why and how should children be empowered to be engaged in responsible tourism.

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

The first stage (proposition 1) has been established and discussed earlier in this paper; the remainder of the study focuses hereafter on the treatment of stages two to four of the framework (propositions 2-4).

3. Research Approach

This study uses a theory adaptation research approach (Jaakkola, 2020) to conceptualize children's empowerment in responsible and sustainable tourism. Within this approach, the study draws upon the framework of Séraphin and Yallop (2019b), which has determined the dimensions of fun within the play activities offered in resort mini-clubs. This framework represents the starting point for this theory-based adaptation paper in which other domain theories were used as tools (Lukka & Vinnari, 2014; Kemper et al., 2019) to offer an alternative frame of reference to expand its conceptual scope (Jaakkola, 2020). Figure 3 represents the methodological framework used in this paper in order to determine (fun) activities to educate children about responsible and sustainable tourism.

[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]

Consequently, this adaptation paper's methodological aim is to revise extant knowledge on sustainability and empowerment in tourism by introducing an alternative frame of reference in order to propose a novel perspective (on children empowerment) on an extant conceptualization (Jaakkola, 2020) (such as dimensions and types of fun activities for children; see Séraphin & Yallop, 2019b; and the sustainability educator typology; see Kemper et al., 2019). Within this theory-based adaptation approach, the study adopts a bricolage strategy, as 'ways in which people would refashion objects for new purposes' (Hammond & Wellington, 2013). The paper is therefore arguing for the refashioning of some activities from children's daily practice in order to educate them about responsible tourism, and aiming to transform them into responsible tourists in their adulthood.

4. Fun pedagogy for the responsible tourism education of children

4.1. Examples of responsible tourism empowering activities for children

As explained earlier in this paper, in order to empower children toward responsible tourism through education it is important to offer fun educational activities. Drawing on Séraphin and Yallop (2019b) framework and other relevant literature (Poris, 2006; Lugosi et al., 2016; Madruga & Da Silveira, 2003) table 1 presents a range (but not exhaustive) of such activities.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

4.2. Rationale

4.2.1. 'Type of fun' and 'Type of activities'

The first two columns in table 2 reflect the type of fun and activities for children. Sport-orientated fun, friend-orientated fun and empowering fun are the most popular types of activities used in resort mini-clubs (Séraphin & Yallop, 2019b). These type of activities are an adaptation of activities provided by Poris (2006) for each type of fun, who suggested that play is an integral part of children's life. Indeed, play contributes to their learning and knowledge development as well as understanding of their surrounding environment, promotes communication with others, and is evidence of their behavioural transformation. Children

between 3 to 14 are concerned with play, with the climax occurring between 7-11 years of age and the decline between 13-14 (Smith, 2010). It is also worth highlighting that 'play is also associated in the literature with concepts and terms such as childhood memory; nostalgia; tradition; communities; and social capital (Frost, 2015). Equally important, fun needs to be an integral part of children play (or other products and services offered to them) as it is the key criteria for the activities to appeal to them and be understood by them (Poris, 2006).

Finally, three main types of fun are normally integrated in activities delivered to children within a holiday context (and more specifically in resort mini-clubs) by importance order, namely sports-orientated fun; friend-orientated fun and finally, empowering fun (S raphin & Yallop, 2019b). More closely related to (environmental) sustainability, Madruga and Da Silva (2003) explained that environmental education of children needs to be achieved in a playful way, hence they suggested the use of music; children's stories; study trips; and games dealing with recycling and life cycles (such as 'box with mirror', 'game with cards' and 'transparent glass box').

4.2.2. 'Context' and 'When'

The third and fourth columns in table 2 explain the context in which these types of fun and activities can occur and the potential timing for these. Empowering learning activities about responsible tourism can take place in different contexts: for example, when (on holiday) at the destinations; during school trips; at resort mini-clubs; after school clubs; and within hotel-schools or travel agencies. In terms of timing, these learning activities may also be delivered at any time: for example, during school holidays; during the academic year; within leisure time; or when purchasing holidays. In Silva's (1997) view, training / education can occur at any time and at any place however it requires flexibility of partners or system.

4.2.3. 'Sustainability children typology'

Next, column five of table 2, identifies the typology of children in the process of educating children toward sustainability. The typology used is an adaptation of the sustainability educator typology developed and proposed by Kemper et al. (2019). Nonetheless, this study is taking a step further by adding a progression dimension to this typology and by connecting the different

types to the various types of fun and activities (see figure 4). As such, children involved in this sustainability empowerment process are progressing through three different stages: first, in stage one, they experience the stage of ‘sustainability thinker’, i.e. they develop critical thinking and a questioning attitude. The second stage of their development process is the ‘sustainability actioner’, in other words, children become involved in sustainability projects, while trying to incite change in people around them (e.g. family, school friends). Finally, stage three of the children development represents the ‘sustainability transformer’. At this stage, children advocate a worldview shift. Lastly, the final column in table 2 (i.e. ‘Sources’) indicates the sources at the origin of the domain theories, literature and information provided in the table.

[INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE]

4.3. Evaluation of the empowering responsible tourism activities for children

Coordinated efforts are being made in the tourism industry to develop and offer sustainably products to customers (Font, English & Gkritzali, 2018). Measures such as the Resident Empowerment through Tourism Scales (RETS) have also been put in place to evaluate the sustainability of these products and services (Boley & McGehee, 2014). Thus, the programme of activities developed in table 1 has been assessed in terms of its effectiveness using two existing frameworks namely, the Dale and Robinson (2001) and the Adams (2008) frameworks. Based on the assessment illustrated in Table 2, the programme of activities for children developed in Table 1 may be suitable for the long-term sustainability of the industry due to its children empowerment potential.

Dale and Robinson (2001) argued that a good tourism education programme in tourism needs to meet the needs of stakeholders (learners; education institutions; industry), and therefore it needs to have four main characteristics, namely to contribute to learners (a) development of interdisciplinary skills; (b) development of expertise in a specific area; (3) ability to respond to a demand from the industry; and (4) to benefit each stakeholder. On the other hand, Adams (2008) argued that the most empowering activities must be cathartic and facilitative (enabling people to express their feelings); catalytic (enabling people to engage in self-discovery, self-directed living; problem-solving); supportive and catalytic (enabling people to build self-confidence); and finally, self-advocacy (enabling people to speak for themselves).

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

Overall, the conceptual framework for sustainability addressed in the questions of ‘why’ and ‘how’ to empower children towards responsible and sustainable tourism is summarised in Figure 5. This resulting framework is an adaptation of the theoretical framework for sustainability in hospitality developed by Sloan et al. (2013: 27).

[INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE]

4.4. Future responsible tourist capital development (FRTCD) and sustainability tourism development

‘Human capital development refers to the process of acquiring and increasing the number of persons who have the skills, education and experience which are critical for the economic growth of the country’ (Harbison, 1962, cited in Johnson, 2011: 30). Arguably, this study has developed a Future Responsible Tourist Capital Development (FRTCD) framework, which is a process of developing and nurturing an increased number of children to have the skills, education and experience which are critical for the responsible and sustainable development of the tourism industry. Within the same line of thought, as it appears that ‘a more educated/skilled workforce makes it easier for an organisation to adopt and implement new technologies’ (Johnson, 2011, p.30). From such a perspective, it may be argued that an educated and skilled pool of children who have adopted sustainability values at an early age as part of their understanding of what the tourism industry should be, would contribute greatly to the long-term and progressive sustainable transformation of the tourism industry and contribute to the attainment of the SDGs.

The strategy and approach suggested in this study is important because education and training contribute not only to the development of human resources in a narrow sense, but also because there is a sense of urgency for implementation of sustainable education and resource strategies such as the one developed in this study, in a broader context (Kemper et al., 2019). More so, the strategic approach developed in this study suggests that the tourism industry, can also reinforce the value of play, and its vital role in children’s learning and their literary, social, emotional and cognitive development (Lewis, 2017). The strategy of empowerment of children suggested in this study may also be extended into their early adulthood, and the promotion of

a sustainable tourism curriculum in their higher education (Flohr, 2001; Visser, 2015). Tourism can therefore benefit from an early empowerment of their customers.

5. Conclusion

The empowerment of children in responsible tourism can be defined as: *A responsible tourism management strategy that enables children to influence current development that meets the needs of the present and the future without compromising the ability to meet the needs of their own generation.* This empowerment strategy can be achieved through competency enhancement using thinker, actioner and transformer sustainability activities. Previous research has overlooked the involvement of children and their role in sustainable tourism development. Nevertheless, Madruga and Da Silveira (2003) suggested that stakeholder engagement in (environmental) sustainability needs to be maximised, including the involvement of children. Séraphin and Yallop (2019a, b) evidenced that neither research nor the industry had put in place strategies to involve children in the sustainable development of the tourism industry. The main theoretical contribution of this study lies in that it extended this line of research by providing a framework to explain why and how children should be involved in responsible and sustainable tourism. This study has reframed the existing limited research and the discourse around children's role in sustainable and responsible tourism actions via a range of fun play activities that involves the contributions of a variety of stakeholders engaged directly or indirectly in the tourism industry. Furthermore, this study contributes to the growing literature on children and (environmental) sustainability and has endeavoured to provide a long overdue answer to the question raised by Madruga and Da Silveira (2003) that asked 'What kind of approach we should adopt to increase environmental concern in order to provoke essential behaviour change'? The answer might lie in the framework proposed in this paper, that advises on a prospective process of developing and nurturing children to have the skills, education and experience, which are deemed critical for the responsible and sustainable development of the tourism industry.

This study has also practical implications. The proposed framework may be useful for a wide range of organisations and practitioners as it allows them to develop an educational empowering programme aiming at children. Such a programme could be implemented alongside other national government initiatives (such as, for instance, the national initiative of

the Italian government that aims to educate all school children about sustainability). A wide range of education institutions may use the framework in the design of sustainability-focused curricula, particularly as an increased focus on responsible and sustainable tourism practices is called for in tourism education. Likewise, tourism organisations may find inspiration from the proposed framework in the design of their offerings of educational activities for children aimed at increasing their awareness and engagement in sustainable and responsible behaviours.

Thus far, the limited existing research on the potential impacts and/or contribution of children on the sustainability of the tourism industry has not been empirically tested since such empirical studies are primarily calling for longitudinal studies. For this reason, future research in this area could focus on experiential studies aimed at developing pilot educational programmes which may be implemented over a period of time in order to evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and barriers to implementation of the strategy developed. Although such strategic longitudinal approaches imply that the outcomes of these educational programmes would take longer to be proven successful, the ultimate predicted outcome is the early empowerment of tourism customers, namely children, and their awareness and engagement in responsible practices.

6. References

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