



The adults' perspectives on the children's influence on travelling decisions

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ABSTRACT: This paper presents deliberations about a survey which aimed to know the adults' perspective on the children's influence regarding the decision to pursuit a holiday trip, the data was collected using online self-filling questionnaires, advertised by the researchers on their own social media profiles. Since it is an exploratory survey, the statistical criteria were not taken into consideration and they were done as a step to approach parents travelling with their children, who will also, if they agree, be part of another step involving interviews. The parents have mentioned positive aspects experienced while travelling with children such as: getting a good treatment because they were with the kids, loyalty to the hotel which offer human resources and good quality activities for the little ones, and an available kitchen to prepare meals for the children; but they also point out some aspects that disturb the adults. This realization indicates that there are some hotels which have difficulties dealing with this public. To sum up, the survey allowed us to notice, from the adults' point of view, the pleasure to travel with children, but also how their presence is still seen as an inconvenience to other guests.

Keywords: Trips;
Tourism;
Children;
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INTRODUCTION

The consumer child: a short contextualization

Before approaching the relationship between children, consuming and tourism/ hospitality, it is important to point out that the conception of childhood was historically built and the changes it has suffered throughout time. Therefore, Philippe Ariès (2006) is an important reference to be seen in order to comprehend the construction of childhood in an historical, social, cultural and economic perspective. Steinberg (1997, p. 99) understands that childhood "is a society creation, which is susceptible to changes every time there are important social transformation".

Pereira (2010) explains that the concept of childhood is not natural, but socio-historically built. Each period constructs its own childhood concept; thus, the child has not been seen the same way by society. Many changes regarding the concept of childhood occur throughout history according to cultural, social, and economic transformations. The author considers that "the childhood must be seen as a social construction; the child creates their identities in relationships established with culture and society".

Esperança (2011; p.3) also points out that "childhood is seen as a variable historical artefact and comprises a social generational category which builds itself from the social practices and the interactions between adults and children and between themselves".

A traditional view and, still reaffirmed in some studies, insists on the simplified idea that a child is a "still to be" human being, which is just a passing condition towards the adult life. As referred by Sarmiento (2000, p. 157) quoted by Fernandes, (2016, p. 762): "the child is considered as not adult, and this adult centric view towards the childhood registers specially the absence, the incompleteness or the denial of the characteristics of a "complete" human being. We corroborate another perspective that understands the children are also creator of knowledge, since the childhood itself must be faced as a social construction.

Castro (1998) already emphasized that children and adolescents left their shadowed place as citizens of a rational and "adult centric" society in favor of a notorious social position defined by the visibility which turn them into targets for the offer of goods and services. The child's social position transition to form their own category in which it is thought and studied for all the needs of each age group and the social recognition evolved to the development of the child consumer and, consequently, into the marketing planning done by tools which set a path to influence the children to meet their parents, who possess the funds to do the shopping. The author's perspective corroborates the idea already shown that children are social actors and distance themselves from the idea of "still to be".

A survey from October 2003 (TNS/InterScience¹) already showed that 80% of the Brazilian children influence their families' shopping decisions, and in return, the consumerism in childhood presents an impact on the children's vulnerability, who are in the development's stage, it is important to emphasize that no one is born consumerist.

The way the children's influence reaches many fronts potentializes their marketing increasing and the different forms which is possible to highlight it in the tourism. The growth of the global tendency of increasing volume of offers and products directed to this segment, the valorization of their consuming potential, their autonomy as consumers, their influence on the parents decisions regarding the family's consume, and on the family's habits change are recognized by Ocke when it is stated that: "although the recognized parents' leadership role in the decision making process, the children's influence may not be ignored (Ocke, 2013, p.508).

Sharing a similar perspective, Sampaio (2000) highlighted the children's importance as consumers and influencers on the family consume. Children have become an attractive target to the media and gained, with this, more public visibility. Therefore, Karsakian (2004, p.235) also recognizes the child's most active role in contemporary society: the children's decision power, nowadays, is not limited to the "toys and candies" universe, it expands itself to other products consumed by the family.

Loyola (2008) is an author who understands that, to low value goods, the children and the adolescents may be buyers, using their own allowance. To high value goods, a negotiation process with the parents starts, which may or may not be well-succeeded. They are eager to their own goods, such as toys and outfits, but they may also influence the family's goods.

To Blackwell, Miniard and Engel (2005) the children market draws more and more attention from the marketing professionals across the world due to the escalating dollars, lire and pounds children spend in products and for the great influence they have on the family's purchasing power. As it is also restated by Götze, Prange and Uhrovska (2009) "children have not only become a big group of consumers, but also gained as much direct and indirectly influence. They act as influencers over their parents regarding the family's purchases" (Götze, Prange and Uhrovska, 2009 as cited in Bertol, 2015, p.40).

As stated by Rossi, the child "from a voiceless subject, became the family and society's spotlight" and as analyzed by the author, the creation of the child consumer is done at the contradiction of a no income consumer, from a voiceless subject. "The child consumer paradox is highly significant, although the parents have the

¹To know more about it see: <https://criancaeconsumo.org.br/consumismo-infantil/>. Accessed on: 16/04/2021.

control over the purchases, the children acquired the condition to make themselves to be heard, and more than that, impose their choice and have the conditions to make their priorities to be met" (Rossi, 2007, p.11). Throughout this process, the child goes from user to consumer.

The children are more and more recognized as influencers on their families' decision process and as important market consumer. Therefore, they have become the focus of the marketing professionals' efforts in directing products and services to this public. Buckingham quotes Dan Cook (2010) who reasons that children are involved in the consumerist culture even before they are born. To this author, learning how to consume is not seen in a one-sided perspective, in other words, as "a matter of a one-way transmission, from parents to children, but, by the contrary, as negotiation process involving several social agents, in which many meaning enter the game".

Child, consume and tourism

Regarding lodging facilities, concerning the services for children, Meira and Kushano, (2012) based on the propositions by Krippendorf on the supply for the public, mentioned that these are, most of the time, conditioned to their parents' decisions over trips, them being touristic ones or for other motivations.

Regarding consume decisions, in general, the families choose holidays to satisfy the children's needs, varying according to their ages, such as, when they are babies, they need to be assured of security and comfort. In this case, parents choose hotels and airlines that offer special amenities, for instance, baby food (Swarbrooke, 2002). However, according to Kushano (2007), the particularities existed in the children universe indicate that products and services, components from a touristic destination, need to be carefully planned and fit to children, to be attractive, safe, and useful. Despite this role has already been socially played, some lodging facilities insist in keep minimal planning for this public, limiting themselves only to adults' needs.

Regarding the relationship Childhood and Tourism, Piola, Andrade and Kushano (2018) quoted by Kushano (2010) pointed that "it was observed that the touristic activity is a mean of leisure, and it contributes to one's learning process and development. Specially children, who may learn the others' culture by experiencing the new, as well as what is familiar".

We emphasize that the tourism must not be seen only by the economic and market perspectives, after all, destinations carry symbols, traditions, and customs and they have a direct relationship with the identity of some individuals. Focusing on this perspective, it is necessary to raise awareness to the use of space and the search for educational processes in the direction of creating a social and critical view of the activity, making

viable for its development to be done in a sustainable way.

Fonseca Filho's thoughts show us the tourism education is still a new area of knowledge and its theme has been developing, mainly, on Professional, Technological and Higher Education, in which professionals are trained to act directly in the market (Fonseca Filho, 2007). In his paper, the author thinks the tourism education to be taught in elementary school as an important resource for the touristic development of a location. In this case, there would be a distinct feature from others, since the education of children and adolescents seeks to broaden their knowledge, culture, and view of the world – and not necessarily an entry to the job market – creating responsible citizens who protect their cultural heritage as hosts and tourists.

The context facing a market that is already thought for the influence of children, which works based on the absence of maturity and considers them as junior consumers and aims their long-time loyalty, should be based on ethic, social and economic responsibility. One reference is the ALANA Institute's "Children and Consume"² program, which is based on raising awareness, creation, and execution of public policies about the theme combined with official complaints done to the public authorities as Public Prosecutor's Office, Public Defender's Office, the Department for Consumer Protection and Defense (PROCON) in the entire country territory, along with the Justice Ministry.

In this way, it is important to point out there are proposals in action that aim to insert financial education in schools, but it must be kept in mind the need of a critical consumer education in the perspective of a citizen consumer formation, which is more than just buying, but reflect on what is consumed and, therefore, we point out the possibility of approaching the touristic consume by the children, linked it to topics such as environmental education and sustainability.

Kushano, 2015, mentions that "in touristic spots, the occurrence of tourism is part of the whole community routine, including the children. There are national and international research about the local population's opinion regarding tourism, but the ones including the children are rare in this process".

Even though our study has been developed by adults, during the pandemic context, we have in mind that it is necessary to take into consideration the children's point of view and not only the adults', considering the experience they bring with them, since they carry meaning. The important is to understand that children build their own culture and may contribute to the adults' world. Reflecting on the school (Delgado & Müller, 2005, p. 257) take important points to be incorporated in different areas, including tourism. They state that: "Probably, children know more than adults

²Translator's note – The program's original name is "Criança e Consumo".

and the institutions, although we still understand little about their ideas regarding pedagogies or concerning what they think of adults and the schools we create pondering them and their needs...”.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this survey has an exploratory and descriptive feature, involving different steps: first, it was done bibliographical surveys in research from the themes: consume, childhood and tourism/hospitality and in studies that also carried matters regarding the consume of touristic services and lodging by children and their influence on the family consume. The second step, which aimed to know the adults’ perspective concerning the children’s influence on the purchase of holidays and notice the locations for children on the hotels’ websites, the data were collected by self-filling online questionnaires, advertised by the researchers on their own social media profiles.

The choice to use an online form is justified by the fact that the research has been developed during the pandemic decreed by WHO (World Health Organization) in March 2020, due to COVID-19, which resulted in social isolation that has affected the entire global economy, and the Brazilian hospitality sector was greatly impacted, leading to the closing of countless units and the changing in the practices of the remaining ones.

The study was approved by the University’s Ethic Committee and due to the exploratory feature, there was no statistical concern, serving as an approach to parents who travel with children and could, if agreed, participate in the interview stage.

As stated by Malhotra (2006) quoted by Vieira, Castro and Schuch Júnior (2010) surveys done with the help of the internet are becoming more and more popular among researchers, especially for delivering their advantages, among them we highlight: lower costs, speed, and the capacity to achieve specific targets, and allow them to answer the most convenient way, time, and place for each of them.

Concerning the use of the internet to do the survey, it is important to bear in mind the warning given by Frago, Recuero and Amaral (2016, p.57) when they state that “along with the immensity and the self-similarity, heterogeneity, and the internet dynamism – and its parts – it is held in check the strategies to select and cut the sample that has already been solidly established both in quantitative and qualitative research”.

RESULTS

Poria e Timotky (2014), highlight the academic research has exploited “new” types of tourists, such as disabled travelers, gay and lesbian tourists, but restat-

ing the children are still absent from the academic discourse. This realization took us to seek other research that have studied children and consume even if they were not directed to the consume of tourism and hospitality.

In this investigation with adults who travel with children, the first aspect to be presented is the sociodemographic profile. The survey had 101 participants, from these, 85,1% were females, and 14,9% males, regarding age group, the distribution is:

Table1 – Distribution by percentage of the responders age group by gender.

	Female	Male	Subtotal
Band 1 - from 21 to	10	2	12%
Band 2 – from 31 to	46	8	53%
Band 3 – from 41 to	26	3	29%
Band 4 – from 51 to	4	--	4%
Band 5 – above 60 years old	--	2	2%

Source: survey data (2020-2021).

Which unveil that the biggest concentration is on band 2 from 31 to 40 years old, followed by band 3 from 41 to 50 years old, and the first band is not significative, this information supports the delayed maternity seeing in the Brazilian and world population, as established on Guedes’ words “The evidence of several studies, (...) is that, in a general view, there is a tendency among the most educated part of the female population to delay the first children. This phenomenon is explained by the priority given to the possibility of qualification and professional development during the beginning of the adult life and the subsequent child having less impact in an already established career. (Guedes, 2009, p. 20)”.

Concerning the marital status, it was seen that 67,3% are married, 11,9% live in a common-law marriage, 9,9% are single, 8,9% are divorced, and 2% are widows. If we add the married ones and the common-law ones, we have a total of 79,2%, most individuals share this marital status.

Regarding educational level, 51,5% have a post-graduation degree, followed by 33,7% with a graduation degree, making it possible to observe a high level of education among the participants impacting on the family budget, which is a positive condition to the trips. The level of parent’s awareness on the locations in which children is seen under a thought and planned view, based on their needs, spreads when thinking about the creation of a future traveler. Children who have access to tourism and cultural attractions may broad their perspectives on the world they live in and

the possibilities to explore it, whenever possible. Unfortunately, not all children have this access, which reiterates the need for public policies to increase tourism and leisure offer for all children.

In what concerns children, it was identified 151 children for 101 respondents, it was verified that most has just 1 child (54%), 41% has 2 children and only 5% has 3 children. The children's age is divided as followed: 46% from 0 to 6 years old, 30% from 7 to 12 years old, 14% from 13 to 18 years e 10% above 18 years old, in which is observed a significative predominance of younger children. To Tinson and Nancarrow (2005) cited by Bertol (2015), the changes on the family structure affects the degree of influence of its members in different stages of the buying process.

Lipovetsky calls our attention that the consume has been used to "buy the peace" in the family, in other words, "a way to make oneself be forgiven for the long absences, while it is also the children's right to happiness, pleasures, and individuality" (Lipovetsky, 2007, p.120)

It is important to highlight that the Statute of Child and Adolescent (ECA) – article 2 considers as "child a person who is until incomplete twelve years old, and as an adolescent the one who is between twelve and eighteen years old" (BRASIL, 1990). Although in the Convention on the Rights of the Children (CDC) "it is considered as a child every human being under the age of eighteen", in this survey, we consider the CDC parameter, since we understand that even the adolescent children may not travel alone. The ones older than 18 were related, because they were part of the family as children in other age groups.

Regarding the trips with children, it was done a series of questions that are following presented: the first one mentioned the frequency of the trips and 47% reported to travel from 2 to 3 times a year, 32% once a year, 10% from 4 to 6 times a year, 3% on holidays, 2% every month and 6% answered other options, which is an answer for each of the following reasons: occasionally; depends on the availability; when it is possible at the moment; not always, almost never; haven't been traveling; and we have only travelled once.

Questioned about having met prohibitions on the presence of children, 32% stated they have seen it and 68% have not due to the fact they have sought for hotels known for serving this public. The ones who have answered yes pointed the following motives for this prohibition: the noise, the couple's segmentation, romantic spots were also emphasized, added to allegation of absence of safety or children's presence. Information that indicates the parents' worries about the offered context while searching.

Concerning the presence of information on the website, in relation with the offer of equipment and space of leisure targeting and/or adequate to children, 15 people have not remembered, 25 have said there was

not, and 61 have stated yes, most of them mentioned playground and children's pool, but it was pointed: children's recreation space, playground, games' room, playroom, zipline and changing room in smaller proportion.

The place of the tourist children: Between the academy and the market

According to a previous study, (Moraes and Freitas, 2020) children has been seen as consumers of the most variable products and services: clothes, footwear, mobile phones, beauty parlors, although, it was also possible to observe the children under the hospitality and tourism context, they do not have their own established space as research subjects, it has been found few studies approaching this connection. Our research unveiled a low rate facing the volume of publications in academic journals and renowned tourism and hospitality events, in which children are seen as research subjects, making it an unexplored field.

The search was done in online journals in the areas of Business, Accounting and Tourism, classified between A2 and B5. The pursuit in the journals revealed by numbers that only 4 from the 10 journals seen have published topics related to children's reality.

On a different research analyzing the websites and social media from lodging facilities in Barra da Tijuca and Recreio dos Bandeirantes neighborhoods, both in Rio de Janeiro (Moraes and Freitas, 2021) we sought the perspective from these services producers by investigating what has been offered and advertised to children, or what type of adequations the touristic and hospitality services and features have suffered to address this public. It was noticed little visibility on the hotels' websites, where we identified formal language and little details regarding the spaces, equipment, services, and human resources to the children. On the social media, there has been a higher views rate through posts about and to the children, it was also found partnerships with influencers on the children's market and the promotion of holiday trips thought to children, such as slumber parties and birthday parties, including VIP presence of child influencers.

Considering this paper's reflections, we may notice the place occupied by children in tourism, either by the academic point of view or by the market. The low visibility of this segment on websites, and in great part, in social media, is also expressed in this activity's theoretical research. Therefore, we suggest the need of discussion regarding this topic in both spaces. In the academic area, it has become essential to include this debate in the specialist's educational curriculum, seeing this niche as if potential to broad the segment. The market has already demonstrated the potential for overcoming the view that children are just "appendixes" of their parents and relatives, considering

them as individuals with subjectivity, needs, and personal wishes. Although this new way to face children and adolescents may and should be more widespread and broaden.

CONCLUSION

Although it has been possible to identify several studies, in which children are recognized as consumers of products and services for themselves, influencer on the families' purchasing decisions, and as future consumer, in our search, we noticed there are little research focusing on the touristic and hospitality consume and when they are, it is from the adults' perspective – who answer for them.

This, in a certain way, demonstrates the importance of new studies that aim to hear what children has to say. Many times, it is believed that certain approaches with children are not appropriate, starting from the idea that they do not know some topics or that they do not have an opinion regarding them. This type of attitude reveals, in some cases, an attempt to preserve them, and in others, an underestimation of their perspectives.

In addition to that, the parents' attention to the way children is seen regarding the offer of goods and services is remarkable during the moments of the survey before the purchasing, in other words, even if there are not any understanding on the part of the child to say something, the parents analyze the context concerning the perspective of the children's needs or what they may demand. Tourism has social and economic role since the beginning of life in society, it needs to go along with the financial education to have conditions to be done. Governmental initiatives must be implemented such as visits to historical spots, provide leisure tourism to public school's students, and envision, along with financial education, ways for the students to seek for and to have conditions to do it.

The financial education approach that recently has been included in some Brazilian schools may, in a long term, represent changes that point to the formation of citizen consumers, who are worried not only to evaluate the economic connection involved in consuming, but also about the consequences of their acts in the social and environmental point of view.

Parents have mentioned positive aspects experienced while traveling with children, such as: have been well served because they were with their children, the loyalty to some hotels that have human resources and quality activities for children and kitchen used to prepare the children's meals. At last, we highlight aspects that disturb adults who travel with children and that indicates that some hotels still face some difficulties to deal with this public: "a disabled child is not considered to be liable to enjoy the tourism benefits" and "the marketing is directed to activities that distance parents

from their children in a get-rid-of-your-child style".

The research has enabled us to comprehend, from the adults' point of view, the pleasure to travel with children, but it has also shown how their presence is still seen as an annoyance to other guests. In this way, we consider important for the hotel to incorporate the children's perspective to the services offered to them, it is desirable to hear them.

The analyses in the studies we have been doing pointed to a need of new research that aim for answers to some questions that have already been part of our concerns, and to new questions created throughout our investigations, such as: what would be the reason for children still be poorly present in the tourism searches and in the lodging facilities social media? Aren't what children have to say important? Would the adults be the most adequate subjects to express what is the children's interest? With this, we emphasize the importance to keep seeking to deep our reflections regarding it, and, whenever possible, with the children consumer of touristic services and hospitality, trying to understand the children's importance for the touristic activities, as well as the importance of tourism for children.

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