



Editorial: Children in tourism

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Editorial on the Research Topic Children in tourism

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as ‘every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child’. Of the world’s population, nearly a third (31%) are aged under 18, of whom the vast majority (87%) inhabit regions of the world that are commonly described as the Global South—the lower- and middle-income countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America (<https://data.unicef.org/>). Children thus represent a significant proportion of the world’s population, not only growing up in the communities affected by tourism but also influencing and participating in holidays with their families and beyond. Traditionally, research has mainly focused on family tourism with data generated from parents/adults. However, in recent years, there has been increasing attention on the tourist experiences of children inclusive of their voices and acknowledging their roles as social agents within their families (e.g., [Gram et al., 2019](#); [Pomfret, 2021](#)). A shift away from Western-centric discourses in the last decade has resulted in increasing family tourism research in Asia (e.g., [Li et al., 2023](#)). Yet, much of the children and family tourism research globally focuses on the wellbeing and benefits of traveling for children to the detriment of more problematic issues.

Children are important stakeholders and residents of tourism destinations, yet there is a dearth of research on host children. Although it is estimated that 19 million children are engaged in the tourism industry, our knowledge of child labor issues is limited ([Yang et al., 2020](#)) as is the role of children in family entrepreneurship ([Canosa and Schänzel, 2021](#)). Only recently has there been tourism research on and with children living and growing up in host communities in the Global North (e.g., [Canosa et al., 2016](#); [Koščak et al., 2023](#)). The paucity of research in this area is surprising given the growing prominence of human rights issues especially in the Global South where children growing up in tourism destinations are often engaged in exploitative activities, such as orphanage tourism.

Whether as “tourists” or “hosts” of tourism destinations, children play important roles in the tourism sector and their inputs are vital to achieving sustainable tourism developments. There is considerable scope to actively involve children in participatory research and planning exercises to create change that can improve their lives as members of host communities and as social agents engaged in more just forms of tourism. For these reasons, it is highly relevant that this topic collection encompasses five articles, four on host children and one on problematic issues affecting tourist children. It is even more encouraging that three of the

studies were conducted with children based in the Global South: Cook Islands, Indonesia, and China, thus making a considerable contribution to knowledge.

The first article in this collection by Zentveld “*Oh, the places you’ll go!*”—*But not for those children trapped by family violence* highlights the dark side of family tourism. With most research focused on the benefits of family holidays, this article is the first to shed light on how child custody and family law issues can affect tourism experiences for children who live with or have lived with family violence. The next is a review article by van Doore and Nhep on *Orphanage tourism and orphanage volunteering: implications for children* based in the Global South. It critically analyses the implications of orphanage tourism for children including impacts on child agency, child rights, child development, child protection, and child trafficking and exploitation. The third article by de Waegh et al. is on the use of *Online photovoice to engage indigenous Cook Islands youth in the exploration of social and ecological wellbeing amidst a global disruption*. Photovoice is a participatory action research method that involves participants as collaborators, in this case, indigenous youth in the small island community of Rarotonga, Cook Islands. The fourth article by Kwong is on *Engaging children’s voices for tourism and marine futures through drawing in Gili Trawangan, Indonesia*. It promotes inter-generational justice through participatory processes of children to achieve sustainable futures. The fifth article by Ju et al., is on *Moving Beyond Western Methods: A Methodological Toolbox for Family Entrepreneurship Research in Tourism by Including Children’s Voices*. It discusses how methods were adopted to ensure child-inclusive research processes by conducting LEGO® Serious Play® workshops at Old Dad Teahouses (or Lao Ba Cha 老爸茶 in Chinese) to create a child-friendly environment in Hainan, China. All articles published in this Research Topic embraced a child-inclusive approach to tourism as part of a broader social justice agenda which is critical in tourism to privileging children’s rights, participation, and wellbeing.

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