

## **The significance of the contribution of children to conceptualising the destination of the future.**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose** – As there is a growing demand of cutting-edge technology as part of the tourism experience from the digital native population and because little is known about this group as tourism consumers despite the fact they will be the core tourism spender of tomorrow, the purpose of this paper is to give children an opportunity to share their vision of the destination of the future.

**Design/methodology/approach** – From a methodological point of view, a qualitative approach is adopted. Children were asked to draw, communicate and display their view on their Winchester of the future. The data collected are used to formulate an innovative, smart-based future-fit management approach for products and services design.

**Findings** – To fully meet the needs and expectation of the coming generation of tourists, Winchester (city located in the South of England, and surrounded by some of the most visited UK destinations, namely London, Oxford and Cambridge) will have to adopt an ambidextrous management approach when developing products and services for customers of the future. This ambidextrous management approach will balance metaphorical thinking and objective thinking in product and service design.

**Originality/value** – There is a scarcity of studies on children in tourism research despite the fact the industry and academics recognise the value and impact of children, and more specifically, their role in purchase decisions. Equally important, this research is also going to contribute to the body of knowledge on smart management of destinations.

**Keywords:** Children, Innovation, Smart destination

### **1.0 Introduction**

The use of cutting-edge technology by destination marketing organisations (DMO) to improve the experience of visitors and gain competitiveness is one of the characteristics of smart destinations (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019). There is a growing demand for cutting-edge technology as part of the tourism experience from the digitised population, namely generation “Y”, also referred to as “millennials” or “digital natives” (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019; Jovicic, 2019). Practically, it means that smart destinations need to cater to smart tourists as they increasingly digital natives. Despite the absence of consensus regarding their birth years, digital natives are more commonly referred to as being born between the early 1980s and early 2000s (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019). Apart from the fact that this group use information, communication technologies (ICT) intensively to plan their trips, and that they are influenced by user-generated content on social media ( Jovicic, 2019), little is known about this group as tourism consumers, even though they will be the core tourism spender of tomorrow (Seraphin and Yallop, 2019). In order to anticipate the needs of the next generation of smart tourists, it is important to look at children.

The results of Seraphin and Yallop’s (2019) research are more recent evidence that children have been overlooked in tourism literature (Gaines et al., 2004; Lugosi et al., 2016). For Poria and Timothy (2014) as well as for Nickerson and Jurowski (2001), there is a scarcity of studies on children in tourism research despite the fact the industry and academics recognise the value and impact of children, and more specifically, their dominant role in choice of activities and purchase decisions (Wang et al., 2016). Giving more importance to children (young consumers) is all the more an issue when it is suggested that children are the tourists of the future (Cullingford, 1995; Schanzel and Yeoman, 2015). One of the challenges for DMOs is to adapt to technological changes and communicate more effectively with this generation of consumers born within the new technology and digital revolution that contributes further

to the globalisation of information (Gowreesunkar et al., 2018). It is therefore very important for DMOs to understand current young consumers, not only to meet the current needs of families, but more importantly, to anticipate what the destination of the future will be and how to conceptualise it for them.

The purpose of this study is to share a smart and innovative approach in terms of a research method that can be applied by destinations in order to collect data from the tourists of the future, namely children (Cullingford, 1995; Schanzel and Yeoman, 2015). Winchester (UK) is going to be used as a case study.

The research question is therefore:

RQ1. What are the perceptions of children regarding the conceptualising of the smart destinations of the future?

The organisation of the paper will be largely but, not exclusively influenced by the following framework:

1. Children are the tourists of the future (Cullingford, 1995, p. 121; Schanzel and Yeoman, 2015, p. 145).
2. "Digital natives" think and behave differently to the previous generation of "digital immigrants".
3. The role of the DMO includes market research, product development and sustainable development of the destination (Gowreesunkar et al., 2018).
4. To gain competitive advantage, tourism organisations have to forecast the future (Richard, 2017).

From a methodological point of view, this research is going to adopt a qualitative approach. Children will be asked to draw their view on how Winchester should be positioned with a focus on the new generation of information communication technology (cloud computing, networking, 3G technology, artificial intelligence, etc.) that should be put in place by Winchester to meet the needs of their generation as tourists of the future. Drawing, as a research approach, is a widely accepted non-verbal communication tool used to collect data (Radic, 2017). The data collected will be used to formulate the strengths and limitations of the research method applied to collect data from children.

The findings of this research may encourage the Winchester DMO (and other DMOs) to adopt similar methods developed in this study in their marketing strategies to attract younger audiences, which has previously been identified as a challenge (Winchester CC Unconference, 2018).

## **2.0 Contextual framework**

"Winchester is a city renowned for having a deep and expansive history and a treasure trove of English heritage" (Visit Winchester, 2018, p. 6). Heritage tourism as a niche market is to be assimilated to special interest tourism (SIT) (Park, 2014). Winchester is therefore a SIT destination (S raphin et al., 2018). SIT occurs when the traveller's motivations and decision making are primarily influenced by a specific activity or setting (Trauer, 2006). SIT appears to accommodate the varied and specialised needs and tastes of tourists and is opposed to mass consumption and non-commercialised individual travel (Park, 2014; Trauer, 2006). SIT is also associated with people's happiness, as this form of tourism is a result of people's desire for quality of life (Trauer, 2006). S raphin et al. (2018) are defining Winchester as a special interest tourism and event destination with a range of events and festivals all year round. The events organised fall under four categories: music and comedy events; art and literature events; children events; and finally food and drink events. From a geographical point of view, Winchester is located in the south of England. As for tourism, in 2015 (the latest data available), Winchester was visited by 5.4 m people, who spent  199.010.00 (Tourism South East, 2015 (Online); DMP, 2015–2020 (Online)). It is also worth mentioning that Winchester is surrounded by some of the most visited destinations in the country namely London, Oxford and Cambridge (Wordatlas (Online)).

## **3.0 Literature review**

3.1 DMOs and destinations competitive advantages.

Part of the role of the DMO is to ensure the competitiveness of the destination (Gowreesunkar et al., 2018). Many factors can contribute to the competitive advantage of a destination. Among these are:

- the image of the destination (Saraniemi and Kylanen, 2011);
- the strategy used to brand the destination (Pike and Mason, 2011; Séraphin Gowreesunkar and Ambaye, 2016);
- the use of heritage in the branding of the destination (Brown and Cave, 2010; Collison and Spears, 2010; Dion and Mazzalovo, 2016; Leask and Rihova, 2010);
- cultural tourism (Cisneros-Martinez and Fernandez-Morales, 2015);
- repositioning strategy (Chacko and Marcell, 2008);
- the use of social media and other online materials as a marketing tool (Hudson and Hudson, 2013; Kim and Ko, 2012; Séraphin Gowreesunkar and Ambaye, 2016; Séraphin, Butcher and Korstanje, 2016; Stankov et al., 2010);
- organisation ambidexterity (Séraphin et al., 2018; Séraphin and Butcher, 2018);
- the aesthetics of the destination (Kirillova et al., 2014);
- the quality of life or happiness of local residents (Croes et al., 2018; Ivlevs, 2017; Uysal et al., 2016); and
- good relationships with local residents and visitors (Mason and Beaumont-Kerridge, 2009; Michel, 2000; Miller and Mctavish, 2013).

To that list could be added using cutting-edge technology to enhance visitors' experience (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019). Indeed, most recently, becoming a smart destination has been identified as a factor that influences destination competitiveness (Femenia-Serra et al., 2019; Jovicic, 2019; Koo et al., 2016).

### 3.2 Smart destinations and competitiveness

A smart destination is a recent concept that has appeared with the digital revolution, and the development of tourism practices. The concept of a smart destination is still in progress (Jovicic, 2019). This new term has been defined by Jovicic (2019, p.278), as "a knowledge-based destination, where ICT is used to provide a technological platform on which information and knowledge relating to tourism could be instantly exchanged". Jovicic (2019, p. 276), also added that in smart destinations "knowledge and information are accessible to all stakeholders, facilitating them to carry out continuous innovation of their activities" (Jovicic, 2019, p. 276). As for Boes et al. (2016), they are arguing the fact that the objective of smart technologies and techniques in smart destinations is to achieve the goal of the destination. They also added the importance of connectedness between the stakeholders as being central. Finally, Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) and Gretzel et al. (2015) argued that the consumer data that are then used by the destination to improve the quality of their experience, and a smart business ecosystem that includes factors such as interconnected stakeholders, the exchange of resources and co-creation, is the backbone of smart destinations (Jovicic, 2019). Other key elements in the concepts of smart destinations are smart technologies such as cloud services, smart devices, big data management, the connection between various platforms (Koo et al., 2016). When discussing smart destinations, it is also important to refer to social media as it plays an important role in the consumer's decision making; in turn playing a significant role in the DMO marketing strategy to reach global audience ( Jovicic, 2019). In the same line of thoughts, Séraphin (2015) and Séraphin, Butcher and Korstanje (2016), also added that in the case of destinations with a negative image the use of social media and visual online learning materials are extremely important in the process of educating and convincing visitors (including visitors from the diaspora) to visit.

The smartness of the destination contributes to its competitiveness, which is its "ability to provide higher quality travel experiences to the visitors than other destinations" (Koo et al., 2016, p. 562). Practically, smart tourism destinations provide a unique and personalised experience to visitors (Koo et al., 2016). The purpose of the smart destination is also to contribute and enhance the quality of life of local residents and other stakeholders (Boes et al., 2016).

In smart tourism destinations, human capital, defined as “the knowledge, skills, competences and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being” (Keeley, 2007, p. 29) is also a key component (Boes et al., 2016). This is reiterated by Meijer and Bolivar (2016, p. 7): “The smartness of a city refers to its ability to attract human capital and to mobilise this human capital in collaborations between the various actors through the use of information and communication technologies”. Buhalis and Amaranggana (2015) added that human capital could drive a city to be smarter as a result city should involve citizens in the co-creation process of products and services.

As a result of the above literature review, the authors of this study have involved children (who are also stakeholders) from Winchester to the co-creation of the future design of their city, as the results of the study could help Winchester to gain some competitive advantages. The children considered for this study are digital natives. As such, they are according to Femenia-Serra et al. (2019), the perfect potential tourists for smart destinations.

### 3.3 Children in the tourism industry

Dowse et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of children in sporting events and more generally in leisure by arguing that they are a stakeholder group with distinct needs and interests that need to be taken into account when planning events. Radic (2017) did the same but for the cruise sector, as he explained that children play a very important role in the choice of Cruise Company. For Lugosi et al. (2016), children are extremely important for the hospitality sector. They even refer to them as sovereign consumers and have to be seen as active decision makers. For Lugosi et al (2016) it seems that children are even more important than adults (parents and carers) as their satisfaction influences the satisfaction of parents and carers. As for Thornton et al. (1997), children are active participants or negotiators when it comes to the choice of holidays. They also explained that the children’s influence lies in the fact that the satisfaction of parents is largely influenced by the satisfaction of children. The influence of children on family holiday choice is not something new, in other words, it is a well-established fact. With reference to the importance of this segment, Lugosi et al. (2016) are explicitly claiming that it is extremely important to identify, acknowledge and meet their needs, as doing so contribute to create a positive emotion that encourages and increases loyalty and positive-word-of-mouth. Customers’ satisfaction is a result of the products and services offered to them (Albayrak and Caber, 2015). Indeed, Cullingford (1995) explained that children have a limited knowledge of the world and their knowledge of the world is built by comparing other destinations with their country of residence. Their choice of destination is based more on the ability of the destination and resort to entertain them, on the image they have of the destination, and on what is done to make things pleasant for them (Cullingford, 1995). By acknowledging the importance for the industry to consider the needs of children, Lugosi et al (2016) agree with Cullingford (1995) who claimed that the tourism industry is still not targeting children directly. Thornton et al. (1997, p. 287) shared the same thought as they also added that “the role of children has been under-researched and under-valued”. That said, some sectors of the hospitality industry are doing well in terms of meeting the needs of children. Among these are food service chains (restaurants, café, pubs and bars) and theme parks (such as Legoland) which are providing family friendly servicescapes by adapting the design of the venue (colour of the venue; type of food; staff attitude; facilities for children to play) to meet the needs of this segment ( Johns and Gyimothy, 2002; Lugosi et al., 2016; Nickerson and Jurowski, 2001).

The children in Winchester, who are digital natives, can play a significant role on the future competitiveness of Winchester as a smart destination. In order to achieve this, it is important to understand now, how they are envisioning the destination in the future with regards to ICT.

## 4.0 Methodology

### 4.1 Qualitative research with children

Greig et al. (2007) are arguing that qualitative approaches are particularly suitable for doing research with children. They also added that this approach should be prioritised by people working with children.

Equally interesting, Greig et al (2007, p. 138) added: “children represent an excellent source of the kind of data that are at the heart of qualitative research – rich descriptions in words and pictures that capture children’s experience”. Finally, Greig et al (2007) also added that for this type of research it is important to recognise the limitations.

#### 4.2 Doing research with children: the importance of drawing

Visual methods are becoming very popular in tourism research (Rakic and Chambers (2012). Visual methods covers the study of materials such as, images in tourism brochures; postcards; postage stamps; online materials; landscape photographs (Jokela and Raento, 2012); video (Pocock et al., 2012); drawing (Cannon Hunter, 2012); etc. Incorporating visual methods in tourism research is important because a key feature in tourism is image; allowing access to knowledge that is not accessible using non-visual methods like texts, numbers, graphs; this enables academics to share knowledge beyond academia; etc. (Rakic and Chambers, 2012).

As for drawing methodology in tourism research, it is used to understand people’s impressions; perceptions towards places, things or persons (Rakic and Chambers, 2012). Additionally, when analysing and/or interpreting drawing, it is important to bear in mind that some participants are attempting to draw things as they appear (in their memory). In that case it is an “objective” drawing. Other participants are not attempting to draw things as they appear but more a concept. In that case it is a “metaphorical” drawing (Rakic and Chambers, 2012). It is also notable that “the age, gender, cultural background, socio-economic conditions, education, nationality and other characteristics of respondents will have an effect on how they draw. The skill and level of detail in the drawing is related to education or training, attentiveness to the environment or the level of involvement with the research questions” (Rakic and Chambers 2012, p. 134).

The type of activities, i.e. drawing used in this study, to collect data could be assimilated to what Poris (2006) calls “Empowering fun”. In other words, activities that enable children to get other people to listen to their ideas, build things or put things together, exploring and discovering new things or creating something they are proud of. Such activities used to collect the data could also be assimilated to “creative fun”. Among others these include activities like drawing, colouring or painting (Poris, 2006). Whitebread and O’Sullivan (2012, p. 197) would have referred to this activity as “pretend play”, that is to say “a play in which children begin to communicate their transformations and collectively transform objects, people and situations in order to create non-literal ‘as if’ situations”. This paper is subsequently supporting the fact that data on children perception of a destination can be collected using empowering, creative fun activities and pretend play. This paper is also subsequently arguing that the voice of children is important and should be taken into consideration in destination planning. Dowse et al. (2018) are also arguing that children should be taken into consideration when planning mega-sport events, because they are a specific stakeholder group with distinct needs and interests. That said, they are also acknowledging the fact that their status in the society excludes them from the decision-making processes, despite the fact that the decisions taken by adults might affect their rights and interests. In this research study, children were given an opportunity to share their views on the environment they live in. This approach could be considered as innovative because currently children are invisible in the decision-making process (Dowse et al., 2018). Additionally, Visser (2015) is arguing that change and innovation will come from stakeholders’ engagement.

#### 4.3 Research design

Children were asked to draw, to communicate and display their views. This method was used because it is the best way to have children to convey their opinions fully and accurately (Radic, 2017). Natural environments (classroom, playground, etc.) are ideal areas for research for children. It is also ideal that the person collecting the data has extensive experience of working with children (Greig et al., 2007). The data were collected at “Birdhouse Design Club”, the after school club for children, founded and owned by the co-author of this paper.

This research was also designed in the context of a win-win approach in which: “Marketing partners win because they can get their brand, products or services closer to kids and their families; children win

because they have fun and educational place to play, learn and have a good time and parents win because they see their kids having fun and also learning important life lessons” (Lonsway, 2016, p. 246). In this research study, children were actually given opportunity to voice their opinions about how their city should be in the future and how marketers should communicate with them. In nutshell, during the time of the activity used to collect the data, the kids were the decision makers.

As for the basis of contemporary ethics in research with children, it is important that children have the right to participate in research, just as they have a right to refuse. The children as well as their parents must be aware of the implications of the research (Greig et al., 2007). Anonymity, confidentiality, assessment of risk of harms and ethics were taken into consideration when conducting this study, as a specific approach is necessary when dealing with children when conducting research (Nickerson and Jurowski, 2001; Poria and Timothy, 2014). It is also important to mention that this project, and more specifically the activities carried out with the children to collect data, was submitted and approved by the ethics committee of the University of Winchester (England).

#### 4.4 Sampling

For Rakic and Chambers (2012), a sample in a drawing methodology is considered as valid if participants for the study: have some connection with the research problem; have been specifically recruited to draw; are willing and able to draw; are able to provide intelligence concerning their drawings; are at least thirty (the sample does not necessarily have to be large); and can respond verbally to researchers’ questions. Long (2018) also added that for research on children and play, sample could be small in scale. For instance, Radic (2017) collected data on children’s cruise experience using a sample of 12 children.

The sample selected for this study meets the above criteria. Initially there were 120 children aged between 5 and 11 years, both boys and girls (primary key stages one and two). They all attend schools in the Winchester area and have done so for at least two years. All live in or around the city. They have English as their first language, although up to five of the children have one parent originating from another country which was unspecified. Whilst a statement of socio-economic background of these children was not a requirement, it can be deduced that, as these particular parents pay for subscription to this club (and these children are not funded by the school for this), they come from potentially financially comfortable households.

From previous lessons with the children it appears most have travelled both within the UK and abroad (e.g. on ski holidays or city tours) and they all had access to tablets, parents phones or laptop computers so were fairly tech-savvy (this again was not a requirement for this study). These children attend the “Birdhouse Design Club” regularly and therefore have some artistic or creative interests and are familiar with ideas generation and being encouraged to think openly in a pressure-free environment.

Before working with these children, parents were asked to review an information sheet outlining the scope of the study and in particular the intended use of any data generated – this ensured that parents understood that all data would be anonymous. Parents were asked to confirm on the accompanying consent form that they were happy for their children to take part, that they understood the child’s participation was voluntary and that the child could withdraw at any time, as well as the fact that the child’s personal details such as name, age and school would not be revealed to persons outside of this project. Parents then returned these consent forms to the author.

After reviewing the approach, it was decided that a smaller sample group of 30 children was more useful; these children were from the older sections of the group and were therefore able to articulate their ideas more effectively visually and verbally. Table I offers an overall view of the sample selected for the study.

The data were collected during a period of one hour during a relaxed classroom session after usual school hours. The children drew individually but sat on tables of their choice in order for informal dialogue between them to take place. It is from this smaller sample that the key themes below were formed.

#### 4.5 Instructions given to the sample

This working session was led by the second author of this paper who is also the founding director of “Birdhouse Design Club”. The following paragraphs are going to: first, provide the exact verbatim used to prompt the children; second, provide a list of material given to the children; and third, the context and set up of the activity (timing, individual task, etc.).

Using a child friendly language, the participants were asked to provide two main drawings/ sketches. However, before this it was important that all children had a basic understanding of the concept of a networked or smart city, and concepts such as the use of WIFI. An “unbiased” sheet was provided with a brief introduction from the investigator to outline the city concept.

The brief introduction speech given was the following:

Do you know what a Smart City is? It is where cities use technology to help us do things better, for example using a card to store information (or money) on our library books, bus tickets and other transport journeys’. Perhaps smart cities can tell you all about a city if you are a visitor, or let you ‘play’ with the city on your phones or tablets [...]. What do you think the smart city of the future might be like, and how would you use technology to visit Winchester?

Data were not formerly collected from this initial sheet as it was designed introduce the concept as a “warm-up” activity rather than for them to visualise their ideas. Most children did appear to understand the essence of a connected city to some extent.

In the first activity of 20 min duration, the children were asked to show ideas on a pre-printed sheet, without any verbal prompt, for, first, how tablet technology might be used prior to a visit to help decision making and visit planning and, second. how mobile technology might be utilised on arrival. This was gently introduced on the sheet by the creation of two fictional characters, Shani and Luke who were planning their visit.

In the second activity of 25 min duration the children were introduced to the concept of augmented reality. Grier et al. (2012) described augmented reality on mobile as “apps that overlay information such as restaurant choices, maps, etc. directly on the user’s phone”, though they were quick to point out that one might look like a “proverbial” tourist whilst pointing their

Gender	Number	Age	National statistics socio-economic classification (NS-SEC)
Boys	12	6 years old ¼ 4	Employers in large establishments
		7 years old ¼ 4	Higher managerial and administrative occupations
		9 years old ¼ 3	Higher professional occupations
		10 years old ¼ 1	
Girls	18	6 years old ¼ 6	Employers in large establishments
		7 years old ¼ 2	Higher managerial and administrative occupations
		8 years old ¼ 4	Higher professional occupations
		9 years old ¼ 5	
		10 years old ¼ 1	

Source: The authors

smartphone down the street – perhaps less of a concern for children than adults. Children were free to create their own imaginings such as mystery characters within the city space and the proceeding conversation was facilitated by asking the children to describe how they might see the technology coming to life.

The familiar and highly successful game Pokemon Go which was launched in 1995 (Weinberger, 2016) was shown to the children as an easy-to-grasp starting point for this concept. The children could then take these ideas forward into their own thinking and they were encouraged not to feel limited by the devices shown or the gameplay featured.

The methodology used to collect the data could be summarised as follow (Figure 1).

## 5.0 Thematic analysis

### 5.1 Theory and application

A thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected from children. This method is defined as “a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns in the data set” (Brunt et al., 2017, p. 242). To do so, in this study, a four stage framework was used. It is an adaptation of Brunt et al. (2017) framework model to for thematic analysis:

- Stage 1: familiarisation – this stage was used to become familiar with the data collected and make notes about themes coming from the data.
- Stage 2: identifying a thematic framework – notes are organised into recurring themes.
- Stage 3: indexing – the thematic framework (where specific features of drawings are indexed using headings) is applied to the data collected in a systematic way.
- Stage 4: interpretation of data – this stage involves the evaluation and discussion of the data collected.

### 5.2 Findings

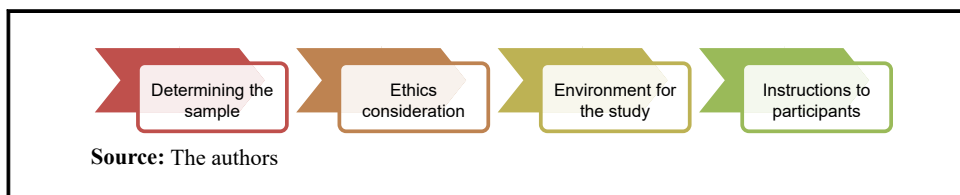
In reviewing the sketches created (some examples are included in Table II), several key themes became apparent.

These can be classified under the following headings with various levels of gameplay considered:

- mapping, navigation and plotting;
- fictional recreation/reimagining of the city;
- topical information – factual data;
- characterisation; and
- collecting/leagues





Mapping, navigation and plotting. Many of the children liked the idea of being able to find their way around in a fun way, this included using a shared map on which they might spot virtual sightings of named objects (King Alfred or a ghost for example), place them on a map and compare with other sightings by previous or current visitors.

Figure 1 Methodology to follow when collecting data from children





**Table II** Themes visualised by the children.

 <p>Monster destruction</p>	 <p>Pop-up characters in popular venues</p>
 <p>Special sightings</p>	 <p>Contemporary graphic characters</p>

Source: The authors

Fictional recreation/reimagining of the city. This was the most popular theme and the children had many ideas concerning reimagining the city space. Some excitement was generated when discussing the prior fictional destruction of the city by monsters or other dinosaurs, which could be visualised on the mobile devices, before visiting the supposedly now rebuilt city and trying to find such characters hiding behind buildings or in doorways using augmented reality animations popping up over real views when walking around.

Another popular idea was “tweaking” popular destinations such as the cathedral by enabling pop-up characters or features appearing when approaching, using augmented reality. Examples were seen of the cathedral with animals and other characters appearing in windows as well as other historic venues and even shops as points for activation.

Broader imaginings such as the addition of rainbows and mythical flying unicorns were popular contemporary motifs sparking the children’s imagination and pinpointing the city as a “special” place to spot things.

Topical information – factual data. Some children conceptualised the idea of holding the camera on their mobile device over a venue and seeing useful facts and figures appear before them. This was a smaller number of children than the fictional reimagining children and was voiced rather than visualised.

Characterisation. The integration of historical landmarks with cartoon characters was popular and these included contemporary graphic motifs such as unicorns and rainbows, but also abstract shapes and other fun characters. These ideas primarily came from the female children.

Collecting/leagues. Collecting was broadly discussed and the children liked the idea of visiting places and building up a virtual collection – museum artefacts and more abstract objects were mentioned. The competition side of collecting and comparing seemed to appeal. The children found it harder to visualise this but articulated it fairly commonly and with enthusiasm.

## 6.0 Discussion

### 6.1 Representation of the subject matter by children and interpretation

The general agreement is that research involving children is totally valid and also has the benefit of giving a voice to them (Greig et al., 2007, p. 187). That said, it is also important to highlight the fact that they do not always understand or describe the world as we know it; children have their own perspectives; results of research with children are only probable; children are subjective by nature (Greig et al., 2007). Therefore, doing research based on children means working on assumptions (Greig et al., 2007). Using a cognitive approach, this paper is giving more importance to the potential of children who took part to the study as subjects of research rather than their performance in drawing. Despite the fact that Greig et al. (2007) are acknowledging that interpreting children's responses are related to social and cognitive factors, they also acknowledge that drawing is a good tool to use to collect information from them because it is fun and children enjoy drawing. That said, they also highlighted that "drawings are particularly susceptible to false interpretations [...]. It is important to operate in an open, exploratory manner with children and their drawings" (Greig et al., 2007, p. 95).

Winchester of the future was drawn by children mainly in a metaphorical manner (Table II), as they were not always attempting to draw things as they would appear in the real life (Rakic and Chambers, 2012). Their approach could be assimilated to a model of creative destruction. This destruction consists in the rebranding of the destination; the development of interactive material that enables the understanding of current artefact and heritage whilst integrating modern artefacts or popular characters with this new generation. This strategy of creative destruction is subsequently calling for DMO to adopt an ambidextrous management approach, in other words the addressing of two apparently antithetical goals simultaneously (S raphin and Butcher, 2018). In the case of this study, the apparent antithetical goals are the metaphorical thinking and objective thinking in product and service design; but also about meeting the needs of current customers (parents) and customers of the future (children). The ambidextrous approach introduced in this paper is a more inclusive approach to defining and involving stakeholders in the design and planning process of the destination.

### 6.2 Reliability and replication

At this point, it is legitimate to discuss the value and limitations of the results of this study. The value added could be:

1. Children are stakeholders and as such, their view should be taken into consideration (Dowse et al., 2018).
2. The activities used by the authors to collect the data were presented to the children as play. Chick (2017), explained that play can be compared to simulations or models of the real world cultural activities.
3. Play also indicates how children perceive their position and role within a specific environment (Willet, 2015).
4. In the same way, pictorial user-generated content could be considered as a reflection of users' perception of a destination (Stepchenkova and Zhan, 2013), the data collected from children as part of this research paper could therefore be considered as a representative of their view on their place of residence.

5. "Children are not mere recipients of their environment, but they influence what goes on within their worlds and are active in making the environment what it is: (Greig et al., 2007: 187).
6. Many companies are collecting and implementing ideas collecting from children using "empowering fun" activities in order to demonstrate that they are listening them and are valuing their opinions. Kellogg's, MandM's, Lego, etc. are among the companies that have implemented children's ideas (Poria, 2006).

That said, the results of this study also have some limitations:

1. "Today's children are born into a reality that is filtered through the media" (Wood, 2018).
2. In play, children often emulate some characters that are not often real or that are long gone. In other words, the forms that plays are taking do not always reflect the current reality (Frost, 2015).
3. Children do not always describe the world as we know it (Greig et al., 2007).

Looking at the results of this study, the data collected shows that children's view of Winchester is not reflecting the reality of life but filtered by characters seen on TV (mystical creatures, etc.). Notwithstanding this specific case, children's points of view has some value and can be fully or partly implemented by organisations.

This study offered a method (that can be applied to other context) to follow. That said, it is also worth adding that, the results of this study are specific to Winchester and cannot be simply applied to a different destination without consideration, as with a group of children from a different country the results of the study would have been different. Indeed, "children do not represent a homogeneous group. Within the overarching phase of childhood there exist a multitude of differences, differences which can be as a result of age, gender, ethnicity and culture, education, social class, upbringing and so on" (Greig et al., 2007, p. 183). Their perception of the world is therefore very different (Greig et al., 2007; Kerr and Moore, 2015). Radic (2017), who conducted some research on children's cruise experiences using Western children, argued that his results could be generalised if non-Western children were also used. Long (2018) also added that results on children and their play cannot be generalised or replicated.

Beyond collecting data for this study, the activity put in place to collect the data could be argued to have contributed to make the children more aware of their surrounding environment and attached to their environment, as pretend play contributes to both the self-regulation development of children that includes monitoring and control of emotional aspects of human functioning (Whitebread and O'Sullivan, 2012), but also their ability to think, as playing is essentially about how to think and learn (Lewis, 2017).

## **7.0 Conclusion**

### **7.1 Summary of findings and implications**

To fully meet the needs and expectation of the coming generation of tourists, Winchester will have to adopt an ambidextrous management approach when developing products and services for customers of the future. This ambidextrous management approach will balance metaphorical thinking and objective thinking in product and service design. The approach adopted in this paper is aiming at revolutionising children's experiences and giving Winchester an edge by adopting an innovative approach in the development of tourism products for children, by asking them directly instead of interpreting their needs through their parents' feedback. As at the moment the tourism industry is only perceived, developed and understood from the adults' prism, this paper subsequently offers an alternative and subsequently fill a gap in literature. Because children are neither passive nor powerless, the tourism industry should not overlook their contribution in the development and management of destinations. Children are the best informants about themselves (Poria and Timothy, 2014). Because their parents are the customers of the present and the children customers of the future, destinations should adopt an ambidextrous management approach geared at meeting the needs of current and future customers.

Some members of the society such as economically disadvantaged women, ethnic minorities, children, homeless, the elderly, disabled people, etc. have been recognised and designated as disempowered

(Hutton, 2016). The tourism and hospitality industry has done the same with some stakeholders. They are invisible and undermined, whereas they should be considered as equally important stakeholders (Cullingford, 1995; Dowse et al., 2018; Seraphin and Yallop, 2019; Thornton et al., 1997). The methodology adopted in this study could be applied to other disempowered stakeholder groups, such as immigrants or people with disabilities who might have problems articulating themselves and having a representation in regular planning meetings. This paper is making an important contribution to smart destination literature as it is adding the fact that smart destinations should strive for accessibility and inclusiveness and develop tools needed to achieve this from the very beginning of the process, namely design.

## 7.2 Future research

As social media has been identified as having a strong potential to engage consumers (Hudson and Hudson, 2013), it would be a logical move for DMOs to develop a platform where children could share their view on the development of their place of residence. At the moment only adults are surveyed (directly or indirectly). For instance, platforms like TripAdvisor are geared towards adults. As for research aiming at user-generated content or online reviews it is only based on adults (Kladou and Mavragani, 2015; Sparks et al., 2013).

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