Children in Tourism: a fresh perspective?
The experience in Italy, from summer camps to the Seninter project

Fiorella Dallari and Alessia Mariotti
Translator: Université Bretagne Occidentale
Children in Tourism: a fresh perspective?

The experience in Italy, from summer camps to the Seninter project

Fiorella Dallari and Alessia Mariotti

Translation: Université Bretagne Occidentale

EDITOR’S NOTE

Although the research was conducted collaboratively, F. Dallari was responsible for sections 1 and 2 and the conclusion, while paragraphs 3 and 4 were the work of A. Mariotti.

Tourist experiences and life trajectories: the past and present of children’s holidays

In contemporary society, tourism represents an increasingly important experience in the life of a growing number of people (UNWTO Annual Report 2015), based on relationships involving repeated stays in the same place (Alegre, Pou, 2006) or “travelling and journeying” (Dickinson, Lumsdon, 2010) in unknown areas to gain experiences and to learn to live in new environments. Indeed, being a tourist means changing location and forging new ties with a region and local community with a lifestyle that potentially ranges from slightly dissimilar to wildly different from one’s everyday home life. This leads people to experiment with practices and situations that are different and unexpected to varying degrees (Edensor, 2001). In this context, the term “experience” is used to mean knowledge acquired from practice, and therefore has a different meaning (Bachimon 2014) to its use in the tourism literature from the English-speaking world (Volo, 2009; Smith, 2005; Cohen 1988), where the concept of “experiential tourism” means gaining pre-determined experiences based on a product constructed by the tourism
industry. An experience, enjoyed spontaneously and directly as per its Romance meaning of “transitional object” (Amirou, Bachimon, 2000), has an unforgettable and enduring educational and cultural value, which can influence the life trajectories of the subject (Elder, 1995; Robette, 2011). Childhood activities are therefore of great significance, if children are able to choose them spontaneously, freely and consciously, because they are directly responsible for forming a rich wealth of experiences that affect the potential of the infant cohort. As a result, tourism for children is a strategically important and stimulating topic in the field of tourism studies. Investigating the role of these practices in developing a sustainable lifestyle, an experience connected to life stage with a wider temporal perspective (Zambianchi, Bitti Ricci, 2012) and a significant capacity to combine innovation and persistence (Atthowe, 1973; Zambianchi, 2015) is of fundamental importance.

2 The proportion of tourists that are children and teenagers, and their autonomy and awareness of their choices are topics that have not been studied much in the literature, and the same applies to the history of tourism for children (Graburn, 1983). However, this phenomenon has accompanied the history of tourism in industrial societies from the beginning; indeed, learning by taking cultural trips has been a part of human history since Ancient Greek and Roman times, in particular for young people aged between 15 and 20 (Adler, 1985). The tourism practised in industrial and post-industrial society (Deli-Gray, Z., Laszlo, À., 2015) pays less attention to childhood and adolescence than it did in the first half of the twentieth century (Istituto per i Beni Culturali della Regione Emilia-Romagna, 1986).

3 The lack of focus on children was noted in research on tourism back in the 1980s (Graburn, 1983; Poria and Timothy, 2014), a sign of culture that was not overly interested in childhood, even in an industrial Europe where tourism and increasing wellbeing were taking root, albeit still only for a minority (Battilani, 2001; Dallari, 2007). In western middle-class families, childhood tourism experiences are connected to holidays in the countryside, as well as trips to new destinations in the mountains or on the coast (Bardelli, 2004).

4 Tourism for children emerged in Italy around the end of the nineteenth century, when population growth led to an increase in the poor urban classes throughout Europe, with numerous children in very poor health. This inspired the foundation of private associations that sought to tackle the problem, such as the Bologna Medical and Surgical Society, founded in 1802; from 1874, it started to rent buildings in Rimini to house and treat ill children from the region, through the religious charity Opera Pia (Istituto per i Beni Culturali della Regione Emilia-Romagna, 1986). During the inter-war years (1915-1940), holiday camps for children aged between 6 and 14 were launched, and spread throughout Italy, with the aim of preventing illnesses, increasing wellbeing and shaping the new generations both socially and politically (Micelli, 2009). This allowed many thousands of children from working-class/low income families to be sent to the seaside or to the mountains: the Riviera Romagnola, used here as a case study, along with Versilia and the Riviera di Levante in Liguria, led the way in this national phenomenon. After the war, when the country was being rebuilt for the second time (Orioli, 2008), tourism began to grow again; between 1946 and 1972, children’s holidays continued, with stays both in summer camps and in the places of origin of families whose older generations had stayed put, while the rest had migrated to the city from the country. This phenomenon continues today, in a variety of locations, some of which have developed their own tourist
industry. The new lifestyle that emerged in Italian society during the economic boom led to the birth of family holidays, a practice that would later become widespread. As society moved towards sustainability (1973-1992) the camps underwent a crisis as they were gradually replaced by holidays with the traditional and extended family (Saraceno and Naldini 1998). Schools also entered the picture, with the introduction of cultural trips for teenagers and children. At the start of the twenty-first century, changes in the family and in lifestyles (Di Nicola, 2008) have given rise to new situations: tourism with relatives, grandparents and aunts (JFG, 2014), from traditional holidays to cultural trips, study trips abroad and ski trips, attending events and practising hobbies, as well as new camps with a wider and more diverse outlook, attended both with and without relatives. New tourism products are also being designed with sustainability and intangible intergenerational heritage in mind.

Studies with a scientific approach to the phenomenon of tourism for children remain marginal in the literature. Factors including the number of children involved and how long they stay, what they do and what type of experience they request, are still neglected compared to other age categories, as is analysis of their life trajectories, an emerging topic in contemporary society due to longer life expectancies and the complexity of people’s lifestyles (Florida, 2003).

The academic literature: where are the children?

As Poria and Timothy (2014: 93) state, “children in tourism research” still represent “a critical gap [...] an additional tourist cohort” all but absent in academic literature, reinforcing the criticism made by Graburn (1983). This persistent gap is at its greatest when it comes to “their tourist experiences based on their own perspectives” (Poria and Timothy, 2014: 93). While recent research has focused on new types of tourist, such as disabled travellers (in particular families with disabled children, a topic tackled by Songee K., Xinran Y. Lehto, 2013), homosexual tourists (Prat Forga & Cànoves, 2015) and senior citizens, the brief study by Poria and Timothy (2014) highlighted that, in the last 40 years, only eight pieces of research have been published in the journal Annals of Tourism Research with the word “children” in the abstract. The same search carried out in Tourism Management, the Journal of Vacation Marketing, the Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism, Leisure/Loisir and the Journal of Leisure Research produces an almost identical result (five or six articles): almost no information on child tourists. The same applies to Children’s Geographies, a publication founded 15 years ago and which continues to expand, with a growing number of excellent special issues; the issue of tourism is still marginal in the context of the global and multisectorial topic of childhood and adolescence. Moreover, it is almost always adults’ points of view that are examined, providing an indirect perspective in which the main players still play a passive role. On the other hand, only since the 2000s have studies dedicated to experiential practices taken age as a discriminating factor into consideration, an important social dimension which is still too frequently seen within a positivist paradigm. This limitation led to the use of descriptive analysis rather than social and regional interpretation, while theoretical and applied geographical approaches were being developed. Certain age groups dominate: young adult tourists, aged over 18, and older people; children are often obliged to follow the family’s choices, perhaps even against their will (Small, 2008).
The age question: methodology and research

Children’s development throughout childhood and adolescence, i.e. from birth to coming-of-age (18 years old), is not homogeneous; instead, it is divided into several different periods, a factor that must be taken into consideration to ensure both correct methodology and appropriate research. As confirmed by Poria and Timothy (2014, p. 94), amongst others, the well-known and established stages are:

1. infancy (aged 2 and under)
2. early childhood (aged 3-6)
3. middle childhood (aged 7-10)
4. adolescence (aged 11-18)

In Italy, the stages are tied to educational practices, while the final stage is influenced by the hotel industry, which offers discounts for families with children up to 17 years old. The stages are divided according to cognitive abilities relating to literacy and to interpersonal relationships:

1. early childhood (aged 2 and under)
2. middle childhood (aged 3-5)
3. late childhood (aged 6-10)
4. early adolescence (aged 11-13)
5. late adolescence (aged 14-17)

This means that one must take into account the child’s capacity to, for example, provide specific information or fill in a questionnaire due to their age: on no account should a questionnaire be given out at a preschool stage, even if it is read out loud by an adult (Measelle et al., 1998). However, an interview could be suitable if carried out in certain conditions using visual tools and techniques to facilitate interviews with groups of specific ages. One of the key issues when managing this work is the question of whether children can be considered tourists in research practice, and the extent of their level of capacity and opportunity to choose the destinations and act as tourists.

Children in Tourism

As the limited literature shows, it is adults, especially in the role of relatives and family members, who take the decision of where to go and what to do in their spare time, although they have been shown to be increasingly influenced by the presence of children (Fodness, 1992; Wang, Hsieh, Yeh, Tsai, 2004). In relation to the family life cycle (Cullingford, 1995), for example, families connected to the first two childhood categories (up to age 5) prefer holidays at the seaside and in the mountains, showing psychocentric behaviour (Plog, 1973), while the same families with children in older groups tackle journeys and choose foreign destinations with a more allocentric approach. It is also true that the experiences of adult tourists (Thornton, Shaw, William, 1997) have changed notably in the last two decades due to growing attention paid to children's holidays, a phenomenon that has emerged as a result of policies enacted by the tourism industry rather than scientific studies.

As well as seaside holidays and trips with the extended family (Ryan, 1992), cultural trips with school, summer and winter camps and experiences tied to contemporary society
such as “television-induced tourism” (Connell, 2005) are also becoming more widespread. A study by G. Cullingford (1995) on trips abroad using a sample of 160 children aged between 7-11 highlighted a preference for developed regions, where the culture is seen as more familiar. The research, based on semi-structured interviews, sought to discover the “geographical” attitude to the experience of travelling and the perception of various tourist destinations; the sample demonstrated a strong expectation of a “clearly demarcated holiday” (Cullingford, 1995:125), meant in terms of sun, sand and good food rather than cultural experiences, with the awareness of being outside one’s own country, in the sense of that which is defined as culturally close (the same) and that which is defined as being distant (the elsewhere or the other) (Amirou, 1994, p. 150). Simply put, being children does not prevent them from being aware of the differences they encounter as part of their experience! Other studies cited by J. Small (2008) highlight how the preferred experiences are “activities, sensory experiences and play, where they are active and absorbed – preferably with other children (Gram, 2005: 11) and that “the active activities will be the ones children remember most fondly”, along with “the experiences of shopping” (Nickerson, Juroski, 2001: 28). In other words, their preference is for the memorable experiences that have been shown by the scientific literature to have a strategic role in encouraging tourists to visit. Adolescents (10-17 years) are “generally more pleased with the destination than the adults” (Nickerson, Juroski, 2001: 28) and school trips and cultural holidays for adolescents aged 14-15 form an important opportunity for social interaction among peers (Larsen, Jenssen, 2004). A series of contemporary activities involving children in late childhood (age 6-10) and older are adapting to post-modern experiences: grape harvesting, trekking in the mountains, archaeological placements, camps at the seaside and in the mountains with creative workshops and events (such as the Giffoni Children’s Film Festival). Early and middle childhood categories are still virtually unexplored, because the methodology and implications have not yet been fully worked out.

Along with the well-established importance of school trips, especially for students aged between 13-17, experiences that could be defined as ‘edutainment’ also take place during school time, to the extent that these childhood experiences could be defined as informal learning or, better still, learning in situ (Brougère, 2012, 62). However, the tourism industry is proving to be much more attentive to childhood experiences, with a proactive approach to the family, integrating various activities, such as sea, culture and sport, producing a creative and smart range of products, based around memorable (Tung et alii, 2011) and authentic (Cohen et alii, 2012) experiences. Child-friendly services and dedicated hotel accommodation are now available in many destinations and regions, bearing witness to the financial significance of this market segment, whose strategic, cultural, social, political and above all civic value is clear from its history.

**Childhood experiences and camps: the emergence of mass tourism in the Rimini area, a uniquely Italian district**

When a child starts to find their way in the world and have experiences, this can be seen as the beginning of their acquisition of knowledge. This is the basis for this investigation into tourism for children in the Riviera Romagnola, today the most important seaside tourist district both in Italy and in Europe, in particular due to its systemic character,
which it took on in the period following the Second World War (Mariotti, 2010). The first convalescent homes for ill and malnourished children were located in Rimini itself, the historic capital of tourism and the capital of the district, and a destination chosen for its health properties since 1874. Almost 30 years after the first seaside resort was built in 1843, Rimini Marina began to attract an elite group of tourists, a phenomenon that went hand-in-hand (Farina, 2003; Battilani, 2003) with the opening of the Kursaal – a large wellbeing centre that fused health (through a hydrotherapy facility) and entertainment (through games rooms and ballrooms) – in Rimini in 1873. Added to this was the arrival of the first groups of ill (with tuberculosis and scrofulous) and poor children the following year, which initiated the phenomenon of “permanent camps”, which provided treatment, and “temporary summer camps”, with a preventative function. This was connected to early seaside tourism, which was based on medical science, in other words the maintenance or improvement of the health of well individuals, and curing many illnesses. The same phenomenon had already occurred elsewhere in Italy: in Viareggio, on the Tuscan coast, with the very first seaside camp for street children in 1822, enabled by the support of Lucca Hospital. These geographical locations can be considered an important catalyst for the touristification of the Italian seaside tourist resort: in the mid-nineteenth century there were 50 convalescent homes and seaside camps in Tuscany (Viareggio and Forte dei Marmi) and Emilia-Romagna (Rimini), and these regions still house the two largest seaside tourism areas in Italy (Colonie Apuano, www.museogalileo.it; Figure 1).

Figure 1. Historic districts of tourism in Italy

The location of these facilities, which would later contribute to the strengthening of the role of these destinations in mass seaside tourism both from an urban planning and a socio-political viewpoint, was mostly chosen due to the salubrious climate. They were veritable child towns, which parents and relatives would come to visit. The camps were private, religious and public structures that took care of children between the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, helping to prevent illness and promoting
wellbeing and civic education with fun and games. In the Fascist era (1922-1945), these seaside experiences developed more rapidly, with an intentionally political approach. Over 150 children’s camps, with a total estimated capacity of 60,000, appeared on the Italian coasts, with 36 on the Emilia-Romagna coastline alone (Istituto per i Beni Culturali della Regione Emilia-Romagna, 1986), which hosted “masses” of guests for the era. This included enormous facilities such as the Colonia Marina Bolognese (2,000 beds, built in 1934; figures 2 and 3) and the Novarese (900 beds, built in 1933) in Rimini. It can be estimated that approximately 400,000 children visited the coast of Emilia-Romagna in 1935. As mentioned above, parents would visit their children every weekend, which had a significant effect on the spread of the image of the Riviera Romagnola. This stage also saw the formation of new experiences: taking part in physical activity, sports, games, sunbathing and swimming in the sea became part of modern life.

Figure 2. Bolognese camps in the Fascist era

Figure 3. Bolognese camp dismantled
After the Second World War, the world of seaside camps in Italy continued to expand, and they were frequented until the 1970s by all social classes. By the mid-1960s, there were approximately 1,000 facilities, of which 207 were in Romagna out of a total of 246 in the Emilia-Romagna region (Istituto per i Beni Culturali della Regione Emilia-Romagna, 1986; figure 5). The year 1970 can be considered a watershed moment, after which family holidays began to take precedence over children’s camps, a phenomenon that undoubtedly had a strategic role from both a social and regional point of view. The camps, which were situated in key locations along the coast, often featuring high-quality architecture and are still a symbol of modern seaside destinations, such as the Novarese (1934; figure 4) in Miramare di Rimini, began to be dismantled. Some of those which were salvaged maintained an educational function, such as the “Forlivese Fascist Camp dedicated to the Duce” in Marebello di Rimini, now home to the Marco Polo Rimini Technical Institute for Tourism (figure 6). A few others are still in operation, mostly with a limited capacity, like the Colonia 12 Stelle in Cesenatico, managed by the charity Caritas and several dioceses from Alto Adige, which can host 1,000 children and teenagers (age 6-15) throughout the season (200 guests at a time) with experiences for the most part similar to those enjoyed in the past: having fun, playing, taking part in sport and relaxing on the beach or in the swimming pool. Society’s move towards a sustainable lifestyle and the socio-economic crisis have meant that the child cohort in developed countries – a shrinking demographic – has begun to experience new forms of tourism and ways of spending its free time.

Figure 4. Colonia Novarese in attesa di essere recuperata

Rimini, Microsoft Corporation, 2009.
16 Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, changes to the traditional family have altered childhood experiences somewhat, introducing new aspects of social life: as well as holidays with parents and grandparents, other relationships also come into play, such as those with other family members, like 'Professional Aunts No Kids' (PANKs), working female adults with no children and a medium-high income, who offer to take their nieces and nephews (aged between 9-12) on holiday. Research carried out in Italy (JFC, 2014) showed that over 690,000 'aunts' with a total income of € 1.44 million are willing to look after their nieces and nephews, in ways that vary depending on the age group: holidays and trips are most common for the 8-12 group, with holidays at Italian seaside resorts in first place (25.9%, with an additional 10.1% going to seaside destinations abroad), compared to 18.7% for mountain locations (mostly in the winter season, which is responsible for 11.4%), followed by cultural trips to Italian art cities (16.15%) and European capitals (13.3%), overall showing that cultural trips are nearing equivalence with seaside holidays (Figure 7).

17 Alongside this data, which highlights the transformation in holidays taken by the child cohort, since 2013, the statistics body for the Province of Rimini has collected data on the numbers of children and adolescents and the availability of dedicated hotel facilities, of which the Rimini area has some of the highest levels within the European Union, with almost 2,250 facilities and 173,000 beds, out of a regional total of 9,219 facilities and 453,495 beds (2014 data).
In this context, families in their various forms still represent the enduring core of Rimini’s tourism, accounting for approximately 3/5 of visitors. Indeed, out of a total of almost 3.2 million hotel guests and 10.3 million nights stayed, the research carried out in 2013 found that children and adolescents (up to 17) represented approximately 1/5 of all tourists (640,000 people), 22% of whom were not Italian (140,800 people). Breaking this down into age groups reveals increased percentages (28%) for late childhood (aged 6-10) and late adolescence (aged 14-17), with early and middle childhood (aged 5 and under) and early adolescence (aged 11-13) less prominent (Figure 8). Regional 2016 data (A.P.T. Servizi, 2017) confirms further growth, with a 2.4% increase in the Riviera Romagnola compared to 2015, which in turn was up on 2014, with a current figure of 3.32 million arrivals, and the percentage of overseas visitors increasing, now standing at 20% of the total. With regard to the number and type of children’s services present in the 2,243 facilities with 172,900 beds (as of 1.1.2014), 63.6% of hotels offer at least one service specifically for children, most frequently a play area with equipment for children (41.1%) followed a long way behind by a babysitting service (13.7%), a children’s swimming pool (5.4%), a kid’s club (3.1%) and, in only 0.3% of cases, a nursery.

In 2016, a trial was launched to create a new tourist product specifically for grandparents, encouraging them to take their grandchildren on holiday in Europe at off-peak times of the year. The initiative formed part of the European project SENINTER (SENIors enhancing intangible and INTERgenerational heritage in Europe during the low and medium season), part of the COSME programme; the Emilia-Romagna region took part as a partner, in collaboration with the regional body for tourism promotion and marketing.
This new “experiential” tourist option has been created collaboratively by a network of public and private bodies (businesses, institutions and local associations), and aims to offer a product that combines natural, cultural, artistic and architectural resources, as well as manufacturing excellence, traditions and customs from the destination region. The SENINTER project aims to develop and strengthen the range of social tourism offered, with novel and creative tourist packages, reducing the seasonal effect and encouraging tourists to visit in periods when visitor numbers are lower. The pilot phase of the project saw 15 senior citizens from Slovenia bring their preschool grandchildren to the Rimini area for a six-day holiday (26-31 March 2017). The grandparents and young tourists took part in various experiences, from listening to stories told by Italian senior citizens in social centres, with recreational activities for the children, and workshops at the City Museum (Rimini), the International Museum of Ceramics in Faenza, and the Cervia National Park, to a cooking demonstration dedicated to traditional cuisine from the Rimini hinterland (Sant’Arcangelo) and folk music. The idea was to create an experience with older family members that would pass the intangible European heritage of the older generations on to children, in tourist facilities accessible to a wide range of social groups.
Concluding remarks

Tourism for children and adolescents continues to be a field where it is difficult to obtain reliable and trustworthy data, as evidenced by the closure of the statistics body for the Province of Rimini, despite the Rimini area being a destination chosen by families with children, which have always been its most important target audience. The same can be said for research dedicated to various experiential practices still found today in many European tourist settings. This study maintains that the limited analyses of tourism for children is the first obstacle that should be overcome by both researchers and tour operators. Undoubtedly, much still needs to be done to produce a valid and universal methodology to tackle this phenomenon: if we accept the importance of the child and adolescent age groups and tourist experiences up to the age of 17/18, a multidisciplinary approach is essential. Furthermore, specific expertise (Poria, Timothy, 2014:94) and techniques for researchers are also required: doll play, storytelling, pictorial questions and the Berkeley Puppet Interview (Maeselle et alii, 1998), in support of an inductive approach based on descriptive and qualitative methodologies, using questionnaires and interviews with the family and children, as well as psychometric analysis.

Looking again at the history of children’s tourism helps to put this target group back in the spotlight in an approach based on sustainability, from mass seaside destinations through to cultural sites and school trips. The case study of the Rimini area indicates that, at least in Italy, tourism for children owes a lot to the old camps from the first half of the 20th century, and therefore the children’s experiences of almost a century ago, linked to wellbeing, socialisation and civic education. Is it possible to state, slightly provocatively, that mass seaside tourism (at least in Italy’s tourist districts) stems from convalescent homes and summer camps? The statistics from the Rimini area confirm that the family still has the biggest impact, a fact which is well-known but not supported in the policies of public bodies, compared to the commitment shown, for example, in the Italian region of Alto Adige. From being a city of children (città di bambini) between the two wars, a name used to publicise the city in the 1960s as well as a civilized city (città gentile), Rimini established itself as the capital of family tourism. This was followed by years in which
Rimini was the capital of young people and excessive ‘partying’. However, children, along with the family, continue to enjoy experiences connected to the beach, play and parks both large and small, while, as a result of lifestyle changes, cultural trips, ski holidays, shopping and motivations also found amongst adults (such as “television-induced tourism”) are more widespread. Moreover, in recent years, sustainable children’s policies have given rise to responsible tourism practices, which aim to introduce intangible and intergenerational heritage to children, as shown by the Seninter project: an example of learning in situ, sometimes abroad, in the company of senior citizens.

In answer to the question of whether children’s voices should be included in research into tourism, the authors of this paper, based in part on their experience in the tourism sector, believe that they should, so that we can gain a general and universal idea of which trips and holidays or tourism experiences fulfil their desires and expectations. This knowledge, if supported by a range of tourist products that meet the expectations of children and adolescents and satisfy their needs, would greatly increase our understanding, and would enable social and civic development in both developed and developing countries, contributing to a sustainable future society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Elder G. H., 1995, Life trajectories in changing societies, Self-efficacy in changing societies: 46-68.


Robette N., 2011, Explorer et décrire les parcours de vie: les typologies de trajectoires. New York: CEPED.


**NOTES**

1. The reference to industrial society means that the research did not consider the phenomenon in developing countries, something which would need to be addressed for a socially sustainable view of the entire population
2. The Italy Family Hotels (http://www.italyfamilyhotels.it/) chain, with over 100 hotels, assessed on the basis of services for children and the family, was founded in the Riviera Romagnola.
3. Due to the regional restructuring enacted in Italy from 2015 onwards, the provincial organisation was wound up and the entire system was transferred to the Emilia-Romagna Tourism Monitoring Centre, part of the Regional Union of Chambers of Commerce, which has not yet drawn a subsequent sample. Surveying for the regional database is currently entrusted to hotel owners, who have agreed to provide the number of visitors and length of stays at their facilities with a range of information, including age groups.
4. This research stems from the long-standing and expert experience of Rossella Salvi, head of the Province of Rimini Statistics Service, whom we thank for providing the data and for her willingness to share her ideas and observations.
ABSTRACTS

Tourism for children and adolescents is a neglected topic in tourism research, despite the importance of a child’s life trajectory up to the age of 17/18 in terms of the psychological and social impact it has on their formation of subjectivity. This paper aims to shed light on the topic, starting with an analysis of the scientific literature on childhood, including the thoughts of this cohort, which, as a review of the leading publications shows, has been neglected in the literature. There are various critical issues to consider, beginning with the way the age groups are classified; they must be divided into childhood and adolescence to reflect minors’ cognitive ability and level of perception and interpretation. The existing literature is based on indirect information, collected from the family responsible for the minor. Using major, long-standing tourist destinations as case studies can reveal the marked importance of this age group, which has been neglected compared to the various adult and senior citizen tourist target groups and for whom innovative tourism options have not been provided. The case study presented focuses on the Riviera Romagnola, the largest Italian seaside tourist destination, responsible for Emilia-Romagna’s place in the top five European regions for hotel accommodation. It was a major coastal tourist destination for children between the two wars, welcoming an estimated 400,000 visitors in 1935; in recent years, public bodies, hotelier associations and private associations in the area have directed renewed energy towards this target group, due to growing awareness of new sustainable lifestyles. A survey in the Province of Rimini showed that tourists aged 17 and under still represent a very large target group (accounting for 640,000 visitors in 2013, equivalent to 1/5 of the total) and therefore a strategically important one; new forms of holiday aimed at this group are now emerging, and innovative practices are being tested. Indeed, the authors highlight how this region, historically shaped by mass tourism, is being strengthened through new cultural projects and products aimed at children, involving best practices related to intangible and intergenerational heritage, as part of a vision of social and cultural sustainability.

INDEX

Keywords: tourism for children, coastal tourism, intangible and intergenerational heritage, Rimini

AUTHORS

FIORELLA DALLARI
Professore associato di Geografia politica ed economica

ALESSIA MARIOTTI
PhD professore associato di Geografia del Turismo, Centre for Advanced Studies in Tourism (CAST), Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna (Italia)