



## Current Overview of Tourism Governance: A Systematic Literature Review

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**Abstract:** This article aims to offer a comprehensive theoretical approach to tourism governance and its current state by conducting a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis. The study seeks to understand how governance aligns the interests of governments, businesses, and local communities in order to promote sustainable and competitive development in a globalized environment. Based on the SALSA framework, the research analyzed a sample of 84 scientific studies extracted from the Web of Science and Scopus databases. Quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques were employed using statistical and content analysis tools to identify trends, regions, stakeholders, and key governance attributes. Findings reveal a significant increase in tourism governance research since 2016, particularly after the pandemic. The most studied area is tourism planning, followed by community-based tourism and smart destinations. Geographically, Asia and Europe dominate scientific production, with the public and private sectors being the main actors. The study identifies three fundamental models or "clusters": community-oriented governance, data-driven smart governance, and network-based governance. Business management approaches tend to focus on efficiency and planning, leaving critical political dimensions such as power, trust, and distributive justice in the background. Although governance has evolved toward more collaborative forms, a technocratic logic appears to be emerging that could replace democratic deliberation. The effectiveness of these models depends on their adaptation to the local context and the balance between economic competitiveness and the empowerment of local actors.

**Keywords:** governance; tourism; literature review; managerial approach; power relations; stakeholders.

**JEL classification:** A14; D62; D74; D82.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The transformations resulting from globalization and digitalization have profoundly impacted the structure and dynamics of tourism destinations. These transformations have promoted the decentralization of power and the emergence of non-state actors, such as companies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local communities, in decision-making processes related to tourism planning and management at multiple levels (Timothy, 2019; Bock *et al.*, 2021). While these actors can have positive impacts, they can also create tensions within local economies and with regard to sustainability. According to Codina *et al.* (2022b), tourism reconfigures power relations by turning spaces into disputed resources where objective and subjective aspects, such as identities and economic benefits, are negotiated. Local actors use different forms of capital (economic, social, and cultural) to exert power and exclude others. This translates into different aspects generated by the dispute and integration of tourism in a destination. New technologies, such as social networks used by tourism companies for communication and dissemination, can create asymmetries of power and information between consumers and different stakeholders (Gutiérrez-Barroso *et al.*, 2021). Other authors, such as del Hoyo *et al.* (2019), argue that patrimonializing cultural events and local festivities for their tourism potential – events that are manifestations of local traditions and identity – can generate positive externalities, such as an increase in cultural and real estate value. However, it also entails negative effects, such as visitor saturation and the commodification of heritage. These phenomena have led to the need for alternative management, governance, and mitigation strategies. Governance is the result of a long historical process of social and institutional adaptation in which power administration and social coordination have evolved from centralized, hierarchical models to complex, collaborative dynamics among multiple actors, scales, and sectors (van Assche *et al.*, 2014; Ansell and Torfing, 2022). The authors explain that there is no single theory of governance. Rather, there are multiple, overlapping theoretical discussions that offer a set of conceptual tools to address a wide range of problems in political science, public administration, sociology, economics, law, and so on. In this sense, the current concept of governance encompasses the capacity to direct diverse groups and the existence of formal and informal institutions that interact within a globalized, dynamic system. Thus, contemporary governance is inseparable from historical processes such as social differentiation, market expansion, diversification of actors, and the crisis of the state model. It consolidates itself as an analytical framework for managing complex, transnational societies.

The objective of this work is to show and understand the various forms of research aimed at studying tourism governance, collaboration, coordination, and the participation of local actors in different tourism areas. To achieve this objective, we will conduct a systematic bibliographic review, apply search criteria to specific databases, analyze these documents with statistical tools (both qualitative and quantitative), and synthesize the results. This will help us explore the main approaches, trends, and directions carried out in the field of tourism governance thus far.

## 2. UNDERSTANDING GOVERNANCE

Multiple governance research articles offer a key insight: the concept of governance has emerged and evolved alongside the dynamics of contemporary capitalism (Eagleton-

Pierce, 2014). Governance is understood as the manner in which institutions and individuals collaborate to achieve specific goals. It has been influenced by the changes in global capitalism. Governance not only refers to the management of institutions but is also influenced by the logics and values of capitalism. The capacity of states to govern in the traditional way is declining, and the importance of non-state actors in policy formulation and implementation is increasing due to the growing influence of international markets and supranational organizations. Due to capitalist dynamics, governance has been approached from different perspectives, which has affected the design of institutions and policies. These institutions and policies are characterized by a focus on efficiency, competitiveness, and self-regulation (Peters and Pierre, 1998; Rhodes, 2007; Ruhanen *et al.*, 2010; Eagleton-Pierce, 2014). Another prevailing idea is that governance provides an opportunity to create self-organizing networks that supplement markets and hierarchies in allocating resources. These networks are characterized by trust, which fosters innovation and reciprocity, especially in initiatives requiring collective action (Rhodes, 1996; Ruhanen *et al.*, 2010; Clegg, 2019). According to Ruhanen *et al.* (2010), from a political science point of view, governance has emerged as a response to public sector reforms in the US and the UK in the 1980s, where privatization and cross-sector collaboration were promoted. Authors as Rose-Ackerman and Palifka (2016), and Bauhr and Grimes (2014) analyze and emphasize the importance of transparency and accountability as mechanisms for combating corruption and enhancing development. From the point of view of corporate governance, Aguilera and Jackson (2003), or Stoelhorst and Vishwanathan (2024) argue that it is a system of rules, practices and processes through which a company is directed and controlled, seeking to balance the interests of the various stakeholders (shareholders, managers, employees, customers). It has shifted to a more inclusive approach that considers multi-stakeholder relationships. As previously discussed, there is no clear consensus on the definition of governance because the term is used broadly and from different perspectives. Several scholars have defined governance as the sum of the ways in which individuals and institutions, public and private, manage social, economic, and political processes that provide for them and allow for the coordination of individual actions to achieve collective outcomes (Rhodes, 1996; Colebatch, 2014; Scott and Marzano, 2015; Clegg, 2019). It also refers to the processes and structures used to direct and manage organizations and societies. This approach suggests that social actors have become more influential in policy and administration. This challenges the traditional concept of government as a central controlling entity, as well as traditional models of public administration. This is due to the reduced ability of national governments to insulate their economies and societies from global trends. This has overtaken the well-known nation-state (Rhodes, 1996; Peters and Pierre, 1998; Rhodes, 2007). Thus, the rise of networks has become a predominant feature of governance, complementing markets and hierarchies in the allocation and control of resources (Rhodes, 1996; Peters and Pierre, 1998; Tomba, 2004). This concept is paralleled by the idea of the "hollowing out of the state" (Rhodes, 1996; Peters and Pierre, 1998), which refers to the reduction of central government's role and sovereignty. This shift transfers more responsibilities to private actors and networks at multiple territorial levels. Stoker (1998) presents five propositions regarding the meaning and representation of governance. First, governance involves institutions and actors, both governmental and non-governmental, in service provision and decision-making. Second, it acknowledges the absence of clear boundaries in responsibilities for addressing social and economic issues as

the lines between the public and private sectors have become blurred. Third, it identifies the dependence of power among the involved actors, where no single organization has absolute control. Institutions depend on each other to achieve their objectives, which requires the exchange of resources, negotiation, and agreements. These are autonomous networks of interconnected, yet independent, actors. Finally, governance depends not only on government power in the form of orders, but also on new tools and techniques for directing and guiding. In summary, governance is a complex concept that encompasses a variety of approaches and practices. Some trends that reflect a shift towards more decentralized and collaborative forms of administration are networks and stakeholders (Freeman, 1984; Jamal and Getz, 1995; Rhodes, 1997; Dredge, 2006; Klijn and Koppenjan, 2012); multilevel coordination and decision-making (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Dredge and Jamal, 2015); resilience and adaptability (Dietz *et al.*, 2003); sustainable development (Bramwell and Lane, 1993; Dredge and Jenkins, 2007); joint or collective action (Ostrom, 1990; Hall, 2011); and "governance without government" (Rhodes, 1996; Peters and Pierre, 1998). This shift has weakened states' traditional capacity to control and direct policy, highlighting the importance of non-state actors and the influence of international markets.

In the context of tourism, the pandemic significantly and temporarily disrupted global tourism dynamics. It exposed the sector's structural weaknesses and provided an opportunity to restructure it into a more sustainable, resilient, and secure model (Rivera *et al.*, 2024). Consequently, tourism governance encompasses collective decision-making processes involving multiple public and private stakeholders in the management of tourism resources and the resolution of conflicts of interest arising from the impact of tourism. Action mechanisms, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to tourism, seek to integrate economic prosperity, social inclusion, and environmental protection in order to achieve a sustainable future. These goals promote responsible consumption practices because tourism depends on natural resources. Tourism can serve as an economic engine that helps reduce poverty by generating productive and decent employment in local communities (Carius and Job, 2019; Moyle *et al.*, 2021). These ideas about sustainable tourism from social, environmental, and economic perspectives are reflected in the European context within the transition pathway for tourism (European Commission, 2022). Through a process of joint creation with various stakeholders from European Union member countries, a set of measures is designed to combat the challenges facing the tourism sector. Governance is established as a fundamental axis for achieving these objectives. However, there is criticism about how tourism growth can perpetuate inequalities. Its relationship with sustainable development is also ambiguous due to its dependence on international tourists and foreign investment (Trupp and Dolezal, 2020; Bianchi and De Man, 2021; Moyle *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, Rasoolimanesh *et al.* (2020) demonstrate in their recent studies that residents are the most involved stakeholder group, while tourists are the least engaged compared to governments and businesses. These studies emphasize objective indicators over subjective ones. According to Ruhanen (2013) local governments are responsible for land use planning, development application regulation, and local infrastructure provision. This positions them as key players in sustainable tourism development. Their proximity to issues associated with tourism, ability to implement sustainability plans, and representation of the local community give them a central role. They can address negative impacts on communities and the environment. Hall (2011) presents governance archetypes for tourism based on characteristics and elements to provide

a general understanding through models. These archetypes include hierarchies (centralized and vertical governance structures), markets (governance based on market mechanisms and competition), networks (governance through networks of interdependent actors), and communities (governance based on cooperation and the self-organization of communities). Each archetype defines its own success criteria, implementation formulas, and policy instruments, with protagonists focusing on different actors.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Several literature review techniques can be used to develop a theoretical approach, conceptual understanding, or state-of-the-art analysis. These techniques include critical analysis (Arksey and O'Malley, 2005) and mixed approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies (Creswell and Creswell, 2019). This study applies a systematic literature review accompanied by a bibliometric analysis. Although a systematized literature review does not follow all the principles of a systematic review typically associated with the health sciences, it does adopt an approach.

This type of review is commonly found in scientific articles within the human and social sciences (Codina, 2020). A bibliometric analysis is a systematic, quantitative research method used to analyze scientific production within a specific field of study. The main purposes are to discover and examine research trends, map the intellectual context of an area, and provide an overview of existing literature (Khraiwish and Alsharif, 2024). In this case, the review process is based on the SALSA framework (Search, Appraise, Synthesis, Analysis), which, according to Grant and Booth (2009) and Codina *et al.* (2022a, p. 71), is "a framework that uses four critical phases to guide and evaluate a systematic review."

1. *Search*: Design search commands tailored to the research objectives. Use relevant academic databases such as Web of Science and Scopus.

*WOS search commands*: ("tourism" and "governance" and "citizen participation" and "policy" and "network") or ("tourism" and "governance" and "participation" and "policy" and "local" and "community" and "network") or ("tourism" and "governance" and "participation" and "collaboration" and "local" and "community" and "network" or "policy") or ("tourism" and "governance" and "smart tourism").

*Scopus search commands*: ("tourism" and "governance" and "participation" and "collaboration" or "citizen participation") or ("tourism" and "governance" and "smart tourism") or ("tourism" and "governance" and "collaboration" and "network" or "local") or ("tourism" and "governance" and "participation" or "policy" and "local" and "community" or "planning" or "network"). The search parameters in Scopus were modified because of the null or scarce results extracted from some search commands used for WOS.

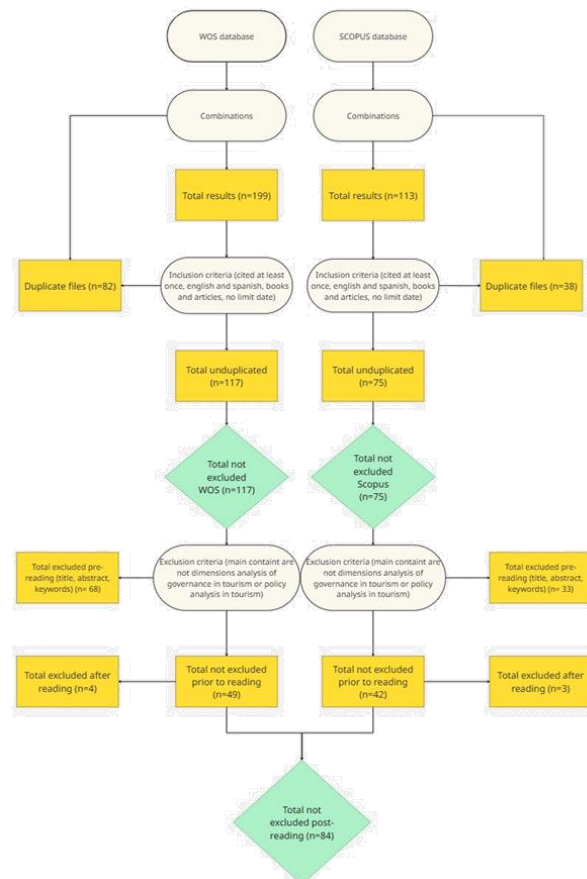
2. *Appraise*: Apply inclusion and exclusion criteria to filter the collected documents. Geographical, theoretical or methodological parameters are taken into consideration according to the objectives of the study.

*WOS inclusion criteria*: That they have been cited at least once in any database or journal, English and Spanish, books and articles without date or year limit, areas of social science sociology, anthropology, urban studies, history, economy and business, public administration, geography, government law, global geographic scope, and applied theoretical and empirical studies.

*SCOPUS inclusion criteria:* that have been cited at least once in any database or journal, English and Spanish, books and articles without date or year limit, areas of Social Sciences, Business, Management and Accounting, Environmental Science, Economics, Econometrics and Finance, Decision Sciences, global geographic scope, and applied theoretical and empirical studies.

*Exclusion criteria:* book, articles, documents not found (unable to access content, 17 content not found excluded) or not related to studies on tourism governance, excluded prior to reading (title, abstract, subject, keywords). Studies were excluded if, both prior to and after reading, their main objectives were not the analysis of governance in tourism (with its main dimensions as stakeholders, participation, partnership, cooperation and so on) or policies implemented in tourism.

These steps are represented through a PRISMA flow chart shown in [Figure no. 1](#), a graphic tool used to clearly and transparently represent the study selection process ([Ghesh et al., 2024](#); [Gupta et al., 2024](#)), which took place between December 2024 and February 2025.



Source: own elaboration

**Figure no. 1 – Flow chart**

3. *Analysis*: A procedure has been implemented to review the selected documents. The inclusion criteria focus on including documents related to tourism governance models or tourism decision-making processes. Then, analysis sheets are created for each document, covering aspects such as methodology, object of study, contributions, and main results.

In this case, we conducted a post-reading analysis of the selected studies in a comparative table. We used specific coding to measure the frequency of the following attributes:

Study authors, tourism field of study (coded as tourism planning, tourism policy, or tourism marketing), smart tourism destinations, agritourism, ecotourism, community tourism, events, sports, nature, rural tourism, urban tourism, cultural tourism, and coastal and marine tourism. Then, the year of publication of the study, the region in which it was carried out, and the stakeholders involved were coded as follows: local/resident community; civil society (NGOs, social groups, students, visitors, religious organizations, trade unions, etc.); public sector (town halls, governments, administrations, authorities, DMOs, etc.); private sector (companies, industry, local businesses, lobbies); academia; and/or experts. The methodology is coded as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed. The measures or analysis techniques are coded as qualitative (DELPHI method, interviews, participatory workshops, observation, focus groups, documentary analysis, literature review, and conceptual framework) or quantitative (network analysis, surveys, secondary data analysis, and case study review). Finally, the type of study is coded as theoretical, practical, or both.

Finally, we created frequency matrices using the R statistical program, version 4.3.2, for the variables Year, Regions, Tourism Areas, and Stakeholders Involved. Are there more stakeholders involved in studies of a specific tourism area? Are there more stakeholders involved in studies in a specific region or continent? Have more studies on a specific tourism area been carried out in a specific year? Have more studies on a specific tourism area been carried out in a specific region or country? We analyzed pre-selected attributes of tourism governance with the content analysis software Atlas.ti and examined their frequencies in English and Spanish articles. The attributes were accountability, alliance, social capital, collaboration, competitiveness, cooperation, coordination, effectiveness, efficacy, efficiency, empowerment, influence, management, participation, partnership, planning, power, resilience, sustainability, transparency, and trust.

4. *Synthesis*: Generate a new product that combines the analyses performed to produce descriptive and critical results. This synthesis can take the form of a narrative supported by tables and diagrams to identify trends, patterns, and research gaps. In some cases, explanations can be generated to support theories or hypotheses for future research.

#### 4. RESULTS

As shown in [Table no. 1](#), studies on tourism governance increased beginning in 2016, especially in the years following the pandemic. Within the field of tourism, the most studied topic is tourism planning, i.e., management, policies, and planning related to the tourism sector itself. Thus, tourism governance is primarily studied in the tourism planning area, followed by community tourism and smart destinations. Most studies on tourism governance have been conducted in Asia, mainly in China, the Philippines, Malaysia, India, and Indonesia, followed by Europe, well ahead of America and Africa. The stakeholders with the greatest presence and participation in these studies are from the public and private sectors. The academic sector has a stronger presence than local communities or civil society in the studies.

**Table no. 1 – Frequencies according to year, tourism activity, continent and stakeholders**

Year	N	%	Tourism types	N	%	Continent	N	%	Stakeholders involved	N	%
2005	1	1.19	Tourism planning	27	22.50	Asia	36	42,35	Public sector	65	25.79
2007	1	1.19	Smart tourism destination	13	10.83	Europe	26	30,59	Private sector	58	23.02
2008	1	1.19	Agrotourism	1	0.83	North America	3	3,53	Local community	45	17.86
2010	2	2.38	Ecotourism	9	7.50	South America	3	3,53	Civil society	37	14.68
2011	1	1.19	community-based tourism	19	15.83	Africa	4	4,71	Academia and/or experts	47	18.65
2012	3	3.57	event tourism	2	1.67	Oceania	2	2,35			
2013	3	3.57	sports tourism	2	1.67	General	11	12,94			
2014	3	3.57	nature tourism	10	8.33						
2015	3	3.57	rural tourism	9	7.50						
2016	6	7.14	urban tourism	11	9.17						
2017	6	7.14	coastal and/or marine tourism	9	7.50						
2018	8	9.52	cultural tourism	2	1.67						
2019	9	10.71	heritage tourism	6	5.00						
2020	3	3.57									
2021	11	13.10									
2022	4	4,76									
2023	12	14,29									
2024	7	8.33									

Source: own elaboration

In terms of methodology, qualitative studies predominate (see [Table no. 2](#)), employing techniques such as interviews, documentary analysis, literature reviews, and focus groups. Regarding the typology of studies, the vast majority focus on case studies, i.e., practical research applied to a specific context.

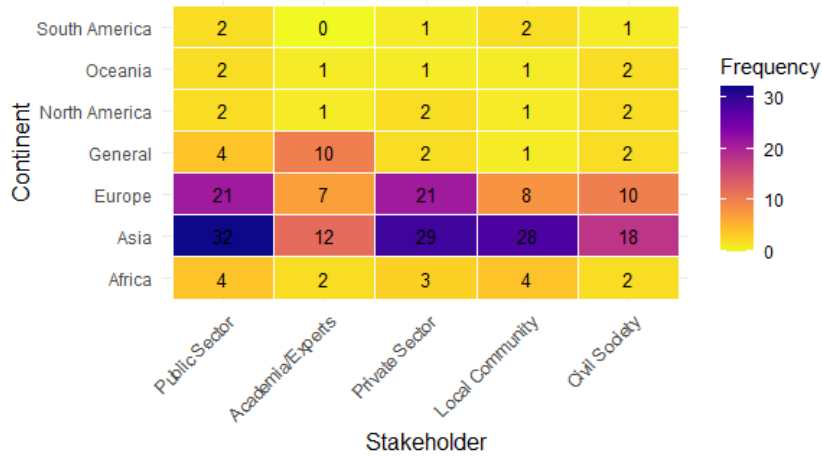
**Table no. 2 – Frequencies by methodology applied and type of study**

Methodology	N	%	Type of study	N	%
Qualitative	62	73.81	Theoretical	13	15.48
Quantitative	3	3.57	Practical	63	75.00
Mixed	19	22.62	Both	8	9.52

Source: own elaboration

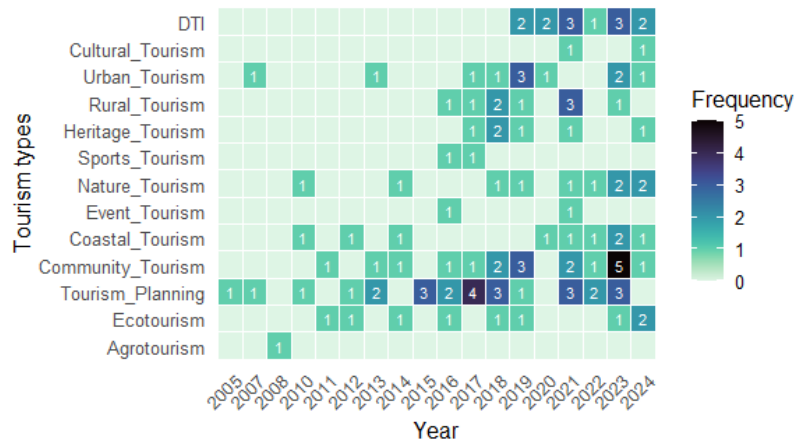
Looking at the frequency matrix of stakeholders involved in studies by region (see [Figure no. 2](#)), we see that in Europe, the public and private sectors have the greatest presence, with the local community involved in only 30% of tourism governance studies. In Asia, Africa, and South America, however, the local community shares a comparable presence and level of participation with the public and private sectors, representing 78% of the total number of studies on tourism governance carried out in Asia.

Examining the frequency matrix of publications by year and tourism field ([Figure no. 3](#)), we see that, from 2014 to 2018, tourism planning, management, and policies were the most studied area of tourism governance. Of the six publications in 2017, almost 70% were in tourism planning. Starting in 2019, community-based tourism and smart tourism destinations (from now on DTI) gained relevance in tourism governance studies. Studies on governance are also beginning to be applied to rural, urban, and nature tourism. Of the 12 publications on tourism governance in 2023, nearly half focused on community-based tourism.



Source: own elaboration

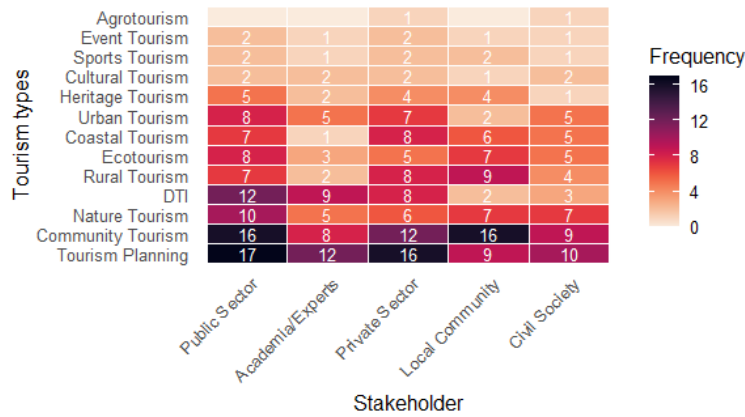
Figure no. 2 – Stakeholder frequency matrix - studies by continent



Source: own elaboration

Figure no. 3 – Matrix of frequencies in the tourism field - year of publication

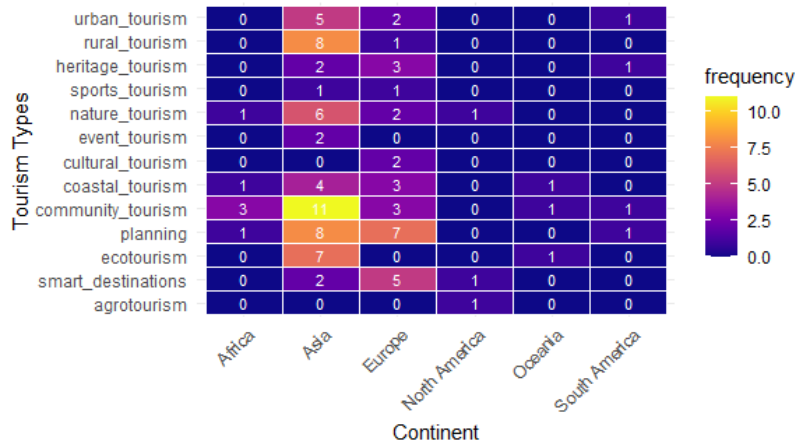
Figure no. 4 shows the frequency matrix of the stakeholders involved in the tourism studies. As can be seen, civil society has the greatest preponderance in the governance of nature and ecotourism. Academics and experts are more prevalent in smart tourism destinations and tourism planning, while local communities have a stronger presence in ecotourism, community-based tourism, nature tourism, and rural tourism. The private sector is more prevalent in coastal and marine tourism, sports tourism, events, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, urban tourism, and tourism planning. Of the total presence and participation of local communities in tourism governance studies, 35% is concentrated in community tourism. Conversely, almost 30% of the total presence and participation of the private sector is in tourism planning.



Source: own elaboration

Figure no. 4 – Matrix of frequencies in the tourism field - Stakeholders involved

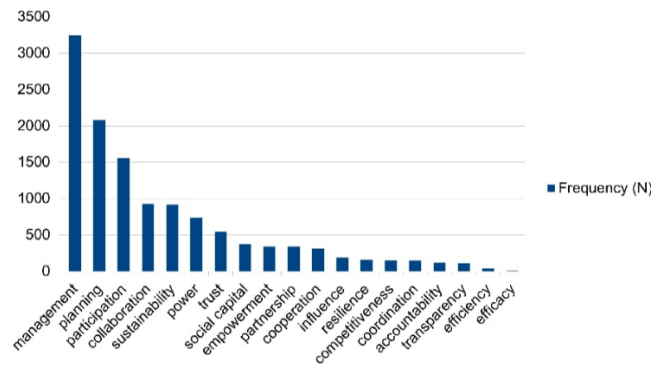
As shown in Figure no. 5, when we calculate the matrix between the field of tourism studies and the continent where they are conducted, we clearly observe that Asia has a tourism governance approach that is more oriented towards community-based tourism, while Europe focuses its studies more on smart destinations and tourism management.



Source: own elaboration

Figure no. 5 – Frequency matrix - tourism field – continent

Figure no. 6 shows the results of analyzing the selected variables through the frequency of words in the total number of scientific studies (84). The figure shows that the most frequently used variables in English and Spanish studies are "management," "planning," and "participation," followed by "collaboration" and "sustainability." However, words such as "power," "trust," "social capital," and "empowerment" are not far behind and are more prominent tourism governance variables than "resilience," "efficiency," "transparency," "competitiveness," and "accountability."



Source: own elaboration

Figure no. 6 – Frequency of governance attribute words

Depending on the field of tourism, the actors involved, the regions studied, and the object of study in each context, we could group the forms of governance into three main clusters, as shown in Table no. 3 below.

Table no. 3 – Main models of tourism governance

Governance Model	Governance oriented to community participation	Data-driven smart governance	Network-based governance
<b>Primary Focus</b>	Participation and empowerment of local stakeholders, equitable distribution of benefits	Digital innovation, use of technologies for management, evaluation and participation.	Collaborative networks, inter-agency coordination and critical policy reflection
<b>Key Actors</b>	Residents and local community	Destination Management Organizations (DMO's)	Multi-actors in collaborative networks
<b>Role of the Public Sector</b>	Facilitator of public participation, communication and dissemination of information	Main support to correct digital divides, centralization of information	Meta-governance in decentralization system, network capacity building support
<b>Role of the Private Sector</b>	Assistance in planning, promotion and implementation of events, product co-creation	Technology companies as relevant actors, development of digital platforms	Participation in multi-stakeholder collaborative networks
<b>Role of the Local Community</b>	Active participation in planning and decision making, local control of resources	Involvement in innovation processes, key quality of life measurement indicator	Integration in collaborative networks
<b>Role of Academics/Experts</b>	Neutral role, support in information analysis and collective action processes	Support to OGD, definition of indicators and provision of theoretical models	Contribution of analytical frameworks and methodologies
<b>Implementation Mechanisms</b>	Bottom-up participatory processes, decentralization policies	Collaborative platforms, Living Lab models, big data and indicators	Indicator systems, consultative processes, dialogue and conflict management

Source: own elaboration

## 5. DISCUSSION

This leads us to ask a key question about understanding the complexity of measuring and assessing the impact of tourism governance, as well as the sectorization of stakeholders. This study brings us closer to synthesizing tourism governance from a holistic perspective. The three "clusters" shown in [Table no. 3](#) above are the result of [Hall \(2011\)](#)'s four standardized models of tourism governance. However, we understand that these pure models do not exist in reality, but rather are combinations of them. Similarly, there are no models from a purely managerial or political perspective; rather, both are mixed. Management and policy perspectives ("how" and "why") explain governance models ("what"). Tourism governance is an inherently hybrid and complex field involving human actors, such as governments, businesses, communities, and tourists, as well as non-human actors, such as natural resources, infrastructure, technologies, cultural heritage, and animal species. The first step is recognizing that tourism is an inherently hybrid phenomenon. Therefore, it cannot be rigidly separated from society or discourse in the analysis, technique, or science of tourism, as [Latour and Goldstein \(2012\)](#) explained in their premise of the three misunderstandings. Agencies and institutions can "speak" in governance processes. Climate data, endemic species, digital platforms, and infrastructures are not passive resources; they influence decisions and the exercise of power.

However, these governance models have their own intentions and configurations. Their strategy, technique, and methodology cannot be considered "neutral," but rather are conditioned by various factors:

- The technical and political profiles of decision-makers and coordinators. Which dimensions are relevant and prevailing based on their worldview? Professional profiles in law may emphasize accountability, while political science emphasizes trust and transparency. Social science focuses more on participation and equity, and economics focuses more on efficiency and planning. When a few professions dominate public administration, views of reality that are not represented emerge.

- The agenda and power: The geographical concentration of most tourism governance studies and scientific production in Asia and Europe can influence the theoretical and methodological approaches to researching this topic. The presence of certain stakeholders in the studies analyzed does not necessarily imply their effective participation in actual governance processes. This distinction between what is studied and what actually happens raises a key question about understanding the complexity of measuring the impact of tourism governance and the sectorization of stakeholders. Does greater involvement, collaboration, and participation by a particular stakeholder imply greater influence or decision-making power over public issues? In a tourism context, does greater participation and involvement in alliances or decision-making processes offer greater power over implemented policies? Redefining governance as a form of state deregulation to the detriment of self-regulation changes the power dynamics between the government, businesses, and civil society. This shapes the concept of "smart" management, which comes from the organizational and business sphere and refers to tourism or tourist destinations. Inaction is also interpreted as an exercise of power in governance. Power struggles in local contexts hinder the adoption of sustainable policies and are reflected in symbolic public consultations whose decisions are predetermined.

Despite the creation of new forms of participation, such as citizen participation bodies, assemblies, and consultations, governance approaches have moved away from democratic deliberation and toward technocratic and economic management logic. The involvement of certain actors in decision-making processes is often insufficient. This can be seen from the need to incorporate more participatory methodologies, integrating socio-analysis or participatory action research in a complementary manner with quantitative governance indicators. It can also be seen from the perspective that governance (and its methodological study) is also influenced by social power relations, which are often asymmetrical. Failing to consider these asymmetrical power relations between social groups and actors in tourism governance studies can result in conceptualizing governance as purely technoscientific and overlooking the political elements of power, social capital, and the (dis)empowerment of actors. This can lead to a biased interpretation of decision-making in tourism matters, which would undoubtedly cause complications in achieving sustainability goals and objectives for the sector.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The conceptual framework of governance seems to stem mainly from two perspectives: corporate management and political science. This is reflected in the attributes analyzed most frequently, where "management," "planning," and "collaboration" predominate over attributes such as "power," "trust," "social capital," and "empowerment." The overwhelming focus of studies on tourism planning and management is seen as reflecting the dominance of a managerial approach. This dominance comes at the expense of perspectives that focus on power, legitimacy, trust, and distributive justice.

Since the boom in tourism governance studies between 2015 and 2017, most studies have been developed from a corporate and institutional perspective of management, planning, and public policies. However, these approaches diversified in two stages: the pre-pandemic period, during which tourism governance began to be applied to urban areas, communities, and the concept of smart destinations, and the post-pandemic period, during which rural and natural areas were also included. Tourism governance practices vary significantly across regions and sectors. The level of stakeholder relevance and participation is sectorized according to the tourism field. Europe and the West tend to focus on the role of networks and place greater emphasis on public-private partnerships. Their approach is geared toward planning and managing smart tourist destinations. Civil society and local communities in Asia and Africa, particularly in China, have a level of participation that is comparable to that of the private sector. The private sector appears to play a larger role in rural and urban areas, as well as in coastal and marine areas and smart destination management. Conversely, local communities are also relevant in rural areas but are more prevalent in ecological, nature, and community areas. The least studied areas of tourism in terms of governance are mainly cultural tourism, agritourism, and sports tourism. The predominance of qualitative methodologies in case studies suggests that a greater understanding of tourism governance can be achieved in specific, subjective contexts, making it difficult to standardize quantitative indicators or forms of measurement applicable to all cases. Finally, most of the research focuses on practical case studies, each of which is studied and analyzed based on its particular dimensions and characteristics.

The dominant dimensions of each model are closely linked to its objectives and the leading actors. Community governance emphasizes participation, empowerment, trust, and

equitable distribution of benefits. This model aims to grant the local community more control over resources. In data-driven smart governance, the dominant dimensions are efficiency, competitiveness, and decision-making planning. It focuses on modernizing management through digital platforms and big data. Meanwhile, network-based governance emphasizes collaboration, cooperation, transparency, and resilience. This model emphasizes creating strategic alliances and managing conflicts between multiple actors.

## 7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The typology proposed in this study provides the necessary structure to organize a field of study that has, until now, been characterized by significant conceptual and methodological fragmentation. By synthesizing the literature into three clear models, the study enables the integration of tourism governance approaches, which are often focused on corporate efficiency, with political science approaches, which emphasize power, legitimacy, and transparency.

The importance of meta-governance is emphasized. According to [Meuleman \(2010\)](#), the state should not abandon its function but rather adopt the role of facilitator and designer of frameworks. This approach warns against the risks of overly technocratic methods, which can transform governance into a purely technical matter. These methods prioritize certain dimensions over others depending on the context and time, overlooking the asymmetries of power and the social capital necessary for effective cooperation, collaboration, and coordination between multiple actors, especially when it comes to achieving sustainable development goals.

Although the community model promotes citizen participation and equity, the shift toward "smart" or managerial approaches to governance requires monitoring to prevent democratic deliberation from being replaced by symbolic consultations with predetermined outcomes. This shift can generate conflicts between sustainability and well-being, on the one hand, and competitiveness, efficiency, and tourism growth, on the other. National political and administrative traditions influence which combinations of the models presented in this study are viable. Good practices cannot be transferred between countries without profound adaptation to the local context. Metagovernance can play a key role as a post-dogmatic tool that prioritizes flexibility over rigid doctrines based on cultural preferences to solve complex social problems. The legitimacy of the system depends on governance being a tool not only for market self-regulation but also for empowering local actors.

## 8. STUDY LIMITATIONS

The review was limited to the Web of Science and Scopus databases. While these databases are considered benchmarks in the academic field, excluding others may have resulted in the omission of relevant studies in specific local contexts. Additionally, the Scopus search commands had to be modified due to the initial scarcity of results, which suggests that the search terms may be too specific. The inclusion criteria were restricted to documents in English and Spanish. This limits our understanding of governance in regions where scientific output is predominantly published in other languages. Furthermore, the majority of studies are concentrated in Asia and Europe, leaving the dynamics of America and Africa underrepresented. This leads us to conclude that there may be dynamics and

concepts that are less explored outside the anglo-hispanic axis. This could make the idea of governance in tourism even more complex, while also providing a more holistic view.

The creation of a comprehensive analytical framework and the development of standardized dimensions for two cross-cutting, multidimensional concepts such as governance and tourism can be complicated by conceptual ambiguity and the fact that almost 74% of the analyzed studies are qualitative in nature and 75% are specific case studies. This makes it a highly fragmented field of study that could fall into excessive relativism.

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