Cultural Tourism Governance and Stakeholder Collaboration: A Comparative Study of Management Frameworks

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Good governance and partnership between stakeholders are important determiners of sustainable cultural tourism development. Although the topic of destination governance is gaining academic interest, little empirical studies have comparatively investigated the role of various management frameworks in the collaboration of various stakeholders and the effectiveness of destinations. The research examines structural links between the mechanisms of cultural tourism governance, the synergy of stakeholders, the trust, the performance of sustainable destination through a comparative view of two different management systems. Based on the collaborative governance theory and the stakeholder theory, there was a conceptual model developed and empirically simulated through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Key tourist stakeholders such as the public authorities, or private tourism operators and representatives of the community were taken to gather the data. Measurement model test established good reliability and validity, acceptable factor loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) as well as discriminant validity. Results of structural models indicate that transparency of governance, the participation mechanism and the institutional coordination are highly effective in improving the collaboration of stakeholders which consequently has a positive impact on destination sustainability and performance. Multi-group analysis also shows a strong distinction in the strength of the path in diverse governance structures, and the efficacy of the participatory and network-based governing structures have a better effectiveness than others. The results add to the body of the tourism governance literature by providing empirical support to the mediating position of the stakeholder collaboration in the context of cultural tourism. In practical sense, the research study provides policy implications of how these systems of collaborative governance should be improved to encourage inclusive, robust and sustainable cultural tourism advancement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism has come as a strategic tool that is increasingly being used to reinforce sustainable development of destination through the incorporation of the heritage conservation, local identity and economic growth. With the competition of destinations in the global tourism markets, the governance structures come in decisive play to make sure that the cultural resources are managed in a responsible, inclusive, and efficient manner. Cultural tourism governance refers to the institutional organisation, regulatory frameworks, and interactions of multi-actors that influences the approaches to planning, decision-making process, and resource distribution processes within the tourism systems. After the

modern-day studies, governance is not just the formal control of the power within the government, it can be defined as the harmonious involvement of governmental bodies, individual businesses, community organisations, and civil society, all aimed at the organisation of society [1], [12], [14]. In the given context, collaboration governance has become a compelling paradigm, with participative decision-making, transparency, and joint responsibility being listed among the key factors of sustainable tourism management [2], [3]. As a highly complex interaction and network between actors, tourism requires stakeholder cooperation to be effective in destination management. Trust-based relations, quality of communication, stakeholder involvement and

strategic actions coordination are essential factors that can define the performance and resiliency of cultural tourism destinations [10], [15]. Empirical research proves a strong community engagement with the inclusive governance mechanisms and developing institutional responsiveness, especially in the heritage and cultural tourism contexts [2], [11]. Besides, the recent development of smart governance and the study of stakeholder network underlines the significance of coordinated structure and formal integration in creating adaptive and resilient tourism systems [4], [8]. These changes support the theory that cooperative involvement is not only supportive, but at the heart of effective governance.

Although the topic of governance and cooperation acquires academic interest, there are few comparative analyses of destination managing systems. Most of the literature available focuses on case studies of individual destinations or descriptive profiles of the governance arrangements [1], [14]. Despite the feasibility of these studies to offer helpful insights of a context, they are not systematically tested empirically to establish structural relationships among the governing mechanisms, collaboration between stakeholders, and performance outcomes. Recent research debates that have reached a consensus would recommend integrative and comparative methods of analysis which can propound destination management theory and practise [7], [13]. Further, ongoing discussions of citizen engagement indicate extended strains between ambivalent inclusivity and practical government that imply that the process of empowering stakeholders is not evenly delivered throughout the system of governance [5]. The drawbacks reveal that there is the necessity of strong empirical modelling in order to explore the effects of various governance systems and collaborative process on the sustainability of tourism.

To seal this knowledge gap, the current research formulates and proposes a structural framework that analyses the associations between governance transparency, institutional coordination, stakeholder collaboration, trust, and sustainable destination performance. Using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), the study will be a comparative study towards two different governance structures to find out the difference in terms of their collaborative effectiveness. The research questions encompass examining the effects of governance mechanism in the interaction between stakeholders, whether collaboration is mediating governance quality-performance relationship, and the structural streams of different governance models. These methodology make the research attempt to give a methodical

analysis of the effectiveness of governance in the context of cultural tourism.

The paper meets the tourism governance and management literature and incorporates collusion-based governance theory and stakeholder concept into a comparative SEM context. It statistically confirms the mediating aspect of the collaboration between stakeholders towards promoting destination sustainability and performance, thus building up on the conceptual discussions previously. More so, the study also addresses the recent scholarly demands of having more structured evaluation of management frameworks at destinations in comparison [7], [13]. Its results provide theoretical progress and empirical implementations to policy makers, the destination management agencies, and the local stakeholders that want to structure an inclusive and sustainable system of governance in developing cultural tourism.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural tourism governance can be defined as institutional frameworks, regulatory schemes, and interactions through which cultural resources are governed in the tourism destinations. Governance in cultural tourism is not reduced to the conventional participants of the public administration, but multi-actor coordination of the governmental agencies, enterprises related to tourism, heritage agencies, and the local community. Some prevailing governance models have been identified by literature such as the public system which is centralised and involves giving participants active involvement, hybrid public/ private model incorporating commonalities in responsibilities and network governance models in which destinations are thought of as system of stakeholders. Models that are led by the people offer strategic guidance and regulatory transparency but might inhibit an inclusive participation in case the decision-making process is still hierarchical [14]. The community-based methods of governance focus on the local empowerment and have been linked with enhanced social legitimacy and sustainable development of tourism [2]. The newer and more popular forms of hotel models are hybrid and network-oriented whereby efficiency, inclusiveness and flexibility are achieved via structured collaboration and relational coordination [4], [7], [12].

These governance structures are characterised by institutional coordination. Coherence of the policy, clear communication and coordination between the strategic goals and operational practises are necessary in an effective governance. Studies indicate that the involved stakeholders can become more engaged in the destination

management process, and the fragmentation can be diminished by means of co-ordination mechanisms [1], [10]. This is the case in cultural tourism, where heritage conservation and community interests come into play with economic interests that the quality of institutional coordination largely determines in the long-term sustainability outcomes. Transparency and accountability in governance as well as including participation systems are consequently identified as primary quality dimensions of governance.
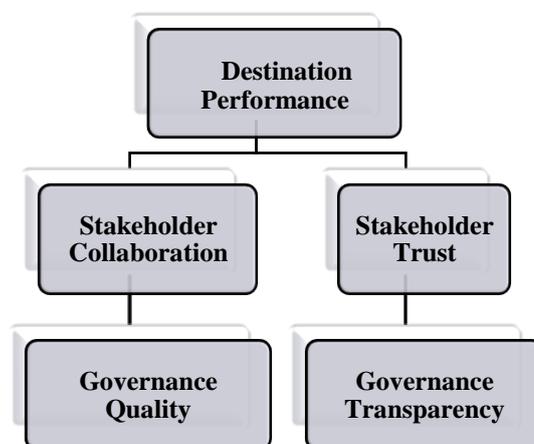
The collaboration ideas of tourism governance rely on the stakeholder theory conceptual background. This view holds that destination success attainment requires the identification and harmonisation of the interests of various stakeholder groups, such as the governmental authorities, tourism operators, locals, cultural groups, and tourists. The frameworks of collaborative governance complement the stakeholder theory with an emphasis on shared decision-making, deliberate involvement, and shared responsibility. Under collaborative governance, hierarchical power is not recycled and subordinates establish dialogue, trust-building, and joint problem-solving with others, unlike a situation where professional authority is exercised by top-down means [1], [3]. The empirical evidence suggests that destinations with a high level of stakeholder collaboration can become more adaptive, more resilient, and able to perform [8], [15].

Trust has been recognised as one of the key processes connecting governance arrangements with cooperative effectiveness. Open decision making, fair representation and participation enhances belief of fairness and responsibility and this increases the level of inter-organisational trust [15]. The level of communication and sharing of power also contribute to whether collaboration will generate a meaningful interaction or will be purely symbolic [5]. The research question of smart governance and stakeholder network identifies the relevance of organised information exchange and digitalization in maintaining collaborative relations in a complex tourism system [4]. All these theoretical viewpoints suppose that collaboration is framed by mechanisms of governance by taking a relational route comprising of trust, participation and communication.

There is a significant difference between the management structures of cultural tourism and institutions which are based on the design and mechanisms of stakeholder engagement. According to comparative governance literature, participatory and network based systems tend to produce a higher level of alignment among stakeholders as well as better sustainability results compared to purely centralised system [7], [13]. There exist however, contextual variations in institutional capacity, socio-cultural dynamics as well as regulatory environments, which translate to differing collaborative outcomes among destinations. The cultural tourism destination performance is multidimensional and incorporates the dimensions of economic vitality, cultural heritage preservation, social cohesion and environmental sustainability. According to the prior research, the governance quality has an indirect impact on these outcomes by enhancing the collaboration and collective movement of stakeholders [12], [14].

It is on basing on these theoretical bases that this study offers an integrated structural framework of governance quality, governance transparency, stakeholder's collaboration, trust, and sustainable destination performance. Figure 1 illustrates that the concept of governance quality is perceived as a precursor of stakeholder collaboration, whereas transparency in governance increases stakeholder trust. Cooperation and mistrust further is supposed to impact on destination performance and sustainable tourism outcomes.

Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of cultural tourism governance, stakeholder collaboration, trust, and destination performance.

Based on the theories of collaborative governance and stakeholder theory, it is suggested that the quality of governance has a positive effect on the collaboration of stakeholders because the systematic coordination and consultation processes lead to greater interaction. It is also anticipated that the collaboration of stakeholders will have a positive impact on the performance of the place of destination by influencing integration of strategic activities and resources. The idea of governance transparency is put forward in order to enhance the trust of stakeholders based on transparent communication and responsible decision makings. In its turn, the stakeholder trust is expected to play a positive role in achieving sustainable tourism through enhancing the long-term dedication to maintaining cultural values and developing responsibly. Lastly, since there are disparities across the governance models, it is hypothesised that the existence of variation in the governance frameworks lead to the mediation of the effectiveness of governance quality, collaboration and performance outcomes. The following sections rely on these hypotheses to conduct the empirical testing using Structural Equation Modelling.

3. Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework the theory behind the study is the collaborative theory on governance and the stakeholder theory which combines governance systems with the result which were relational and performance based in cultural tourism destinations. The Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) framework advanced proposes that the concept of governance is multidimensional and mediates the relational processes in the determinance of destination reports. Depending on the type of construct the model sets, the exogenous constructs describe the governance mechanisms, the mediating constructs describe collaborative dynamics and the endogenous constructs describe the destination-level outcomes. The relationships between the structures are depicted in Figure 1. In the construct, Governance Quality and Governance Transparency are exogenous constructs. Governance Quality means the quality of coordination in institutions, consistency in policies, accountability systems and engagement in the cultural tourism systems of management. Governance Transparency is a measure that reflects the transparency of the decision-making process, the transparency of communication, and easy access to the information by the stakeholders. These constructs are key governance dimensions basing on which interaction with stakeholders and the development of trust occurs. Using the governance mechanisms as the exogenous variables to the model presupposes that structural and institutional conditions are prior and causes the relational outcomes within the destination network.

The intermediate variables of the model include Stakeholder Collaboration and Stakeholder Trust. Stakeholder Collaboration is used to indicate how much destination actors have a joint decision-making, cooperative plan, share problem solving and coordinate strategic action. Stakeholder Trust denotes the level of trust that stakeholders have on the governance institutions and partner organisations as perceived fairness, reliability and willingness to commit. These brokers operationalize the relations pathways on which governance mechanisms translate to physically quantifiable destination results. The two mediators allow the model to simultaneously represent the structural coordination (collaboration) and relational capital (trust) as independent and yet interdependent processes. Destinations Performance and Sustainable Tourism Outcomes are the endogenous constructs. The Destination Performance involves an indicator of economic vitality, competitiveness, service delivery and satisfaction of the visitor in the contexts of cultural tourism. Sustainability Tourism Outcomes do not limit to economic measurement because they incorporates heritage conservation, community welfare, and environmental conservation. The model identifies the cumulative effects of the governance and collaboration by identifying them as endogenous variables and assessing their impacts on the multidimensional performance indicators.

The framework has a proposal to suggest that Governance Quality has a positive relationship on Stakeholder Collaboration and Governance Transparency on Stakeholder Trust. Stakeholder Collaboration and Trust is then theorised to have direct positive impacts on the Destinations Performance and Sustainable Tourism Outcomes. Moreover, Governance Framework type (ex: public-led vs. participatory network governance) is included as moderating variable to evaluate the fact whether the structural relationships are different in governance models. This moderating effect makes possible a comparative study of management structures in terms of SEM framework.

Table 1 summarises the operationalization of constructs, measurement items, and theoretical sources that lie behind each of the latent variables. This table gives the construct definitions, measurement aspects and the scale adoptions to be used in empirically testing the concept framework.

Table 1. Operationalization of Constructs

Construct	Definition	Items	Source	Scale
Governance Quality	Effectiveness of institutional coordination and participatory mechanisms in cultural tourism management	4 items	[2], [12], [14]	5-point Likert
Governance Transparency	Openness and clarity of tourism decision-making processes	4 items	[4], [15]	5-point Likert
Stakeholder Collaboration	Degree of cooperative planning and joint action among stakeholders	4 items	[1], [10], [11]	5-point Likert
Stakeholder Trust	Confidence among stakeholders in governance processes and partners	4 items	[5], [15]	5-point Likert
Destination Performance	Economic and competitive performance of the destination	4 items	[7], [13], [14]	5-point Likert
Sustainable Tourism Outcomes	Long-term environmental and socio-cultural sustainability impacts	4 items	[2], [3], [8]	5-point Likert

Such an integrated framework offers a systematic collection of the relationship between governance mechanisms and collaborative processes, and the eventual impact on the sustainable development of cultural tourism. The study can promote research on the effectiveness of governance on a comparative management structure evidence-based by conducting empirical tests on the same structural relationships.

4. METHODOLOGY

This research is based on quantitative research method to empirically investigate the structural relationship between cultural tourism governing structures, stakeholder partnership, trust and destination performance. The play of the cross sectional survey design allowed the collection of primary data on the key stakeholders regarding destination governance. The reason why the quantitative approach was used was to test hypothesised relationships within the proposed conceptual model, which could not be done using statistical tests. The main analytic tool was Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) since it allows measuring reliability of measurements, construct validity, and the mediation effect and structural path relationships among the latent variables. To counter the comparative aim of the research, the information was gathered on two destinations that had different systems of governance. One of the destinations is the reflection of the largely-public-led system of governance with centralised coordination, whereas the other is the model of participatory or network-based systems of governance focusing on the involvement of stakeholders. This comparative design enables analysis of structural variations and moderation impacts among systems of governance hence increasing the explanatory value of the model.

The targeted population was the stakeholders who are directly involved in the cultural tourism governance and destination management procedures. Respondents were government policy makers and planners in the field of tourism, tourism operators in the form of hotel managers and tour operators, the destination management organisations, cultural heritage managers as well as community leaders who are involved in tourism projects. These groups have been chosen due to their direct participation in the process of governance coordination, joint planning, and execution.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data using an electronic method and via distributing the questionnaire on the ground where the respondents needed. The participation was done at will, and confidentiality was guaranteed to reduce the bias of responding. The sampling involved the use of a purposive sampling as they were to be representative of the respondents who had pertinent information and experience in cultural tourism governance. The method used was suitable because of the specialised nature of the study group. Regarding the sample size, according to the current rules of SEM, it is necessary to have at least 200 observations in order to have the necessary level of statistical power and a consistent estimation of parameters. On this basis, the research had a minimum of 200 valid replies on the two destinations. The last sample had this threshold that was met and even surpassed, which provided the possibility to estimate reliably the measurement and structural models, and an analysis of multi-group comparison.

The measurement tool was constructed through a change of the existing validated scales used in the previous studies of tourism governance and collaboration with stakeholders. All the constructs were stated as reflective latent variables. Institutional coordination and transparent decision-making process was synaptic in Governance Quality, and Governance

Transparency. In the governance network, there were relational mechanisms represented by Stakeholder Collaboration, and Stakeholder Trust. Destination Performance and Sustainable Tourism Outcomes were used to gauge economic, social and environmental aspects related to the development of cultural tourism. The measurement of responses was based on a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree) to make sure that the possibility was consistent with the existing tourism management research. To increase the level of content validity, the questionnaire was pretested and assessed by academic specialists and tested with a limited sample of the stakeholders, prior to full-scale data collection. Small amendments were carried out to make them understandable and topical. Table 1 shows the operationalization of the constructs and the measurement sources. The measurement model was then tested in terms of reliability and validity in terms of indicator loading, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and discriminant validity in terms of SEM. On the whole, the methodological design is rigorous and systematic and can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of governance and stakeholder collaboration among comparative cultural tourism management frameworks.

5. Data Analysis and Results

An analysis of the data was carried out by means of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to measure both the measurement and structural elements of the developed model. The analysis was provided in two steps: the first one was the testing of the reliability and validity of the measurement model, and the second one was the structural relationship of the constructs. Multi-group analysis was also conducted to compare the system of governance.

5.1 Preliminary Analysis

Before SEM estimation, data screening processes have been used. The percentage of data misses was very low (less than 5%), and the missingness was substituted by using means since the tendency of missing data was infrequent. The checked outliers were measured by standardised residuals and Mahalanobis distance where there were no notable multivariate outliers. To determine the common method bias, the single-factor test was conducted by Harman. The initial factor was not rotated and accounted less than 50% of total variance, which means that common method variance was not a big issue. Also, value of variance inflation factor (VIF) as an indicative of full collinearity was lower than the necessary value of 3.3, which further indicates the absence of significant common method bias. The descriptive statistics revealed that respondents have had a positive opinion regarding the quality of governance, transparency, and collaboration. The ranges of constructs Standard deviations were moderate and high and the mean values were moderate and also high indicating that there would be enough variability to analyse the results through SEM.

5.2 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model has been tested regarding the reliability of the indicators, the internal consistency reliability, convergent and discriminant validities. The summary of results can be found in Table 2. Indicators reliability was proven as all the factor loadings were above the suggested indicator reliability of 0.70. The standardisation loadings are also distributed among the measurement items, as shown in (Figure 2). Internal consistency was realised because Cronbach and Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) of all constructs were above 0.70. The establishment of convergent validity was affirmative, as the averages of the variance extracted (AVE) were more than 0.50 in all the latent constructs. The FornellLarcker criterion was used to confirm discriminant validity in that the square root of AVE of each of the constructs is greater than the inter-construct correlations. Also, the results showed HTMT ratios of less than the conservative level of 0.85, which serves as satisfaction of the discriminant validity.

Table 2. Measurement Model Results

Construct	Items	Loadings (Range)	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
Governance Quality	4	0.74–0.88	0.86	0.90	0.69
Governance Transparency	4	0.76–0.89	0.88	0.91	0.72
Stakeholder Collaboration	4	0.78–0.91	0.89	0.92	0.75
Stakeholder Trust	4	0.75–0.90	0.87	0.91	0.71
Destination Performance	4	0.73–0.88	0.85	0.89	0.67
Sustainable Tourism Outcomes	4	0.77–0.90	0.88	0.92	0.74

5.3 Structural Model Assessment

After ascertaining the validity of the measurement, the structure model was tested. All inner VIF values were under 5 with collinearity diagnostics, which meant that there is no problem with multicollinearity. Bootstrapping was used with 5,000 resamples to obtain the path coefficients to estimate the statistical significance. The

bootstrapping t-values of all the hypotheses are shown in the form of graphs in (Figure 3). The table shows the results in Table 3. Stakeholder Collaboration (β = 0.52, p < 0.001) was importantly affected by Governance Quality, in favour of H1. Stakeholder Collaboration had a positive influence on Destination Performance (β = 0.47, p < 0.001), which confirmed H2. The H3 was supported by significant improvement of Governance Transparency in Stakeholder Trust (β = 0.55 with p < 0.001). Despite that, Stakeholder Trust significantly influenced Sustainable Tourism Outcomes (β = 0.43, p < 0.001), which gave H4 a positive response. The values of the coefficient of determination (R^2) were moderate. The levels of variances explained by Stakeholder Collaboration (R^2= 0.38), Stakeholder Trust (R^2= 0.41), Destination Performance (R^2= 0.44), and Sustainable Tourism Results (R^2= 0.39) were satisfactory. Effect size (f^2) was between small and medium, which means that the exogenous constructs made significant contributions. Predictive relevance was verified by the use of blindfolding steps and all the endogenous constructs had Q^2 over zero. The standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) was less than 0.08 which showed reasonable model fit.

Table 3. Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Governance Quality → Stakeholder Collaboration	0.52	9.84	<0.001	Supported
H2	Stakeholder Collaboration → Destination Performance	0.47	8.21	<0.001	Supported
H3	Governance Transparency → Stakeholder Trust	0.55	10.12	<0.001	Supported
H4	Stakeholder Trust → Sustainable Tourism Outcomes	0.43	7.76	<0.001	Supported
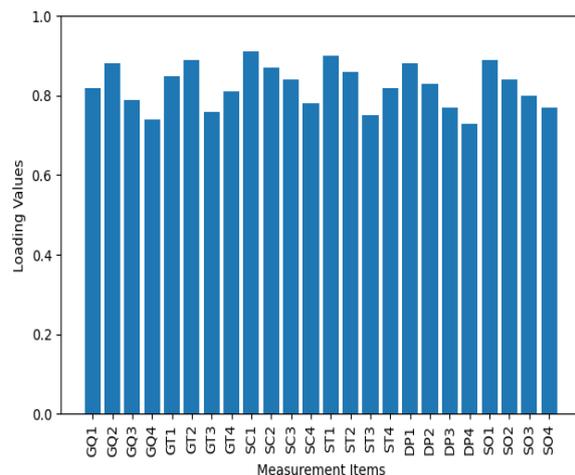
Fig. 2. Measurement Model Indicator Loadings.
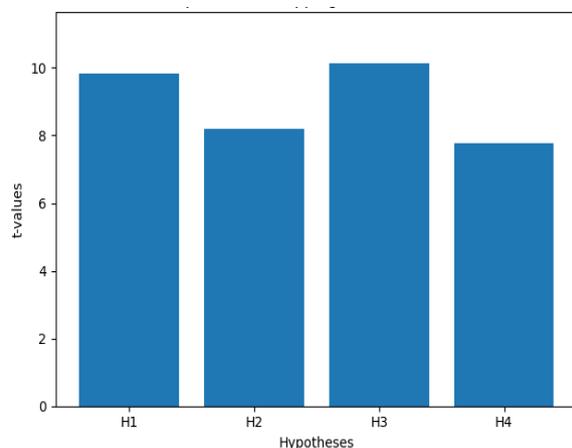
Fig. 3. Structural Path Coefficients and Significance

5.4 Multi-Group Analysis

Multi-group analysis was done to provide a comparison of the centralised and the participatory network governance frameworks. There were great variations in the strength of the structural paths. The appendage between Governance Quality and Stakeholder Collaboration was richer in the participatory governance structure hence a greater deal of collaborative responsiveness. On the same note, Stakeholder Collaboration showed a strong positive influence in Destination Performance in the network model than in the centralised approach. In accordance with these observations, participatory and collaborative systems of governance are more effective in improving relational processes and performance outcomes than centralised systems. The comparative analysis supports the moderating nature of governance structure type towards the development of collaborative effectiveness and sustainable development of cultural tourism. Altogether, all the findings support the efficacy of the developed SEM model and suggest an empirical evidence of the mediation process of stakeholder cooperation and confidence in the tourism governance systems in the cultural sector.

6. DISCUSSION

The results of the research to support the hypothesised structural linkages between the proposed cultural tourism governance mechanisms, stakeholder cooperation, trust, and performance of the destination in terms of performance are strongly supported by the

findings of the research. The great positive impact of Governance Quality on the Stakeholder Collaboration is a loser that institutional coordination, organised and systematic participation, and coherence of the policies are the key motives of collaborated engagement within the cultural tourism destinations. The finding herein implies that, where there is well-designed systems of governance that are inclusive, then the stakeholders will be more likely to participate in collective planning, knowledge distribution, and coordinated action. Good governance is thus a facilitating platform that reinforces relational processes between actors of the destination.

Equally, the importance of openness and accountability in the management systems of tourism is shown by the fact that the Governance Transparency and Stakeholder Trust have a significant correlation. Open communication channels, availability of information and equitable decision-making processes increase the confidence of the stakeholders in the institutions of governance. Trust, in its turn, leads to cooperation on a long term basis and less relational conflict. The findings support the opinion that the governance transparency is not just the principle of administration but the strategic instrument that enhances the social capital in destination networks. The beneficial impact of Stakeholder Collaboration on the Destination Performance reveals that collaborative participation is translated into the quantifiable results in terms of performance. Those destinations that are more cooperative and have a common strategic focus are more competitively-oriented, and better regarding visitor satisfaction and preservation of cultural heritage. Similarly, the prominent association with Stakeholder Trust and Sustainable Tourism Outcomes suggests that the relational trust creates the long-term sustainability commitment towards the future sustainability such as environmental protection and community well-being. Collectively, these results support the mediating workings of collaboration and trust in the connexions between governance systems and the sustainable development outcomes.

The comparative multi-group analysis also gives significant governance performance data. Participatory and network-based approaches to governance had more profound structural relationships when compared to centralised forms of governance. Specifically, the influence of Governance Quality on Stakeholder Collaboration was stronger in the participatory model and this implies that decentralised and inclusive schemes facilitate responsiveness to collaborative processes. Similarly, the effect of collaboration on the performance of destinations was higher in network-based governance situations, which

implies that an integrated leadership, as well as shared structure in coordination, provided better result in terms of performance. These findings may imply that the effectiveness of governance is defined not solely by the institutional capacity but by the extent of the stakeholder's integration in the decision making procedures.

Theoretical wise, the research will be theoretical contribution to the tourism governance literature due to its use of collaborative governance theory and stakeholder theory at an empirical level through a structural modelling model. This research has both conceptually and quantitatively supported the relational pathways through which governance mediates performance, whereas earlier studies have suggested the role of participation and coordination is significant. The results contribute to the development of knowledge on the topic of governance models by showing that such a construct as collaboration and trust are the only essential mediators between the institutional arrangements and achievement of sustainable tourism. The use of governance framework as a level of mediation also expands comparative research on governance whereby differences in context of structural relationship are indicated. The article also contributes to theoretical discussions in the field of stakeholder collaboration mechanism in tourism destinations. Collaboration is an outcome of design in governance, but also a strategic capacity that improves competitiveness and sustainability. Seen as the cornerstone of effective collaboration is clear communication, equal participation and collective responsibility. Trust is a reinforcing process that makes collaborative networks stable and the networks stay aligned on a long term strategic direction. Resting on these insights, the role of making governance systems, which create relational capital with institutional coordination, is apparent.

On the whole, this discussion has established the fact that sustainable cultural tourism development relies on the development of, through good governance structures and high levels of stakeholder collaboration mechanisms. It seems that participative governance systems yield better relationship and performance results than centralised ones. Through the combination of institutional design and relational dynamics, the results presented present the entire explanation of the influence of the governance systems on the success of destinations in the cultural tourism environment.

7. Practical and Managerial Implications

The research conclusions have a number of practical implication to the governance authorities, destination management agencies and

policymakers who aim at enhancing effective performance and sustainability in cultural tourism. The high impact of the quality and transparency of governance on stakeholder cooperation and trust further indicate the institutions design and mechanisms of participation as being of priority in cultural tourism planning. Heavy reliance on administrative control concepts should be abandoned by the authorities in society as they embrace more participative forms of governance mechanisms that can foster participation of all the stakeholders on the strategic and operational plans. In policy makers, the authorities in charge of cultural tourism need to institutionalise participatory decision-making platforms, which consolidate government agencies, tourism businesses, cultural institutions, and community representatives. Institutional coordination can be achieved by setting up advisory councils, forums of stakeholders and joint planning committees which will help to established ownership of tourism projects. There should also be clear role, responsibility and accountability mechanisms in policies in order to streamline fragmentation and enhance inter-organisational alignment. Reflecting on the cases of comparative governance, the destinations that have centralised systems might advantageously be gradually integrated with the network-based coordination systems to enhance the collaborative responsiveness.

Structured communication channels and collaborative tools are necessary in improving the process of stakeholder coordination. The destination management organisations ought to develop frequent consultation, transparent reporting mechanisms and online portals through which the stakeholders can exchange information. Relational competencies may be developed through capacity-building measures such as leadership training and collaborative governance workshops that can help develop trust among actors. The further that tourism products and joint marketing strategies are encouraged, the more the collective strategic alignment and resource integration is encouraged. Strategies on transparency of governance are especially important as it builds trust to the stakeholders. The government must make sure that the policies of tourism and financial allotments, and development strategies are clearly available and comprehensible. The accountability can be improved, with transparent evaluation measures and open reporting of performance, to strengthen the stakeholder trust in the governance institutions. Moreover, the implementation of digital tools of governance and smart tourism systems will enhance information sharing and participatory processes of monitoring,

consequently enhancing more adaptive and responsive governance systems.

Another issue that is underscored in the study is the need to approach destination management systems with the concept of sustainability in mind. In terms of sustainable cultural tourism, there has to be a balance between economic growth, heritage protection, environment conservation and community welfare. The long-term planning methods should be taken by the managers, in which the managers should include the indicators of sustainability in the performance measurement systems. Joint environmental care initiatives, conservation heritage alliances, and community share schemes can enhance positive sustainability effects and cultural authenticity. All in all, the practical findings highlight the fact that successful cultural tourism governance requires the compatibility of institutional frameworks, relationship trust and collaborative interaction. It seems that the frameworks related to participatory and network-based governance have their better performance benefits because they make stakeholders more coordinated and achieve improved development outcomes. Through the operationalization of transparency, inclusiveness, and collaborative planning in the governance systems, cultural tourism authorities can be able to improve destination competitiveness and protect cultural and communal values.

8. Limitations and Future Research

Although this study has contributed to theories and practical aspects, it still has some limitations that cannot be overlooked. To begin with, this study utilised a cross-sectional research design in which the perceptions of the stakeholders were obtained at one moment in time. Although this method fits perfectly when it comes to testing the structural relationships with the help of SEM, it does not allow to assume the causal directionality or investigate how rapidly governance can change with time. The nature of governance structures and relationships between people is dynamic in nature especially within the cultural tourism contexts due to policy changes, socio-economic changes and external shocks. Longitudinal designs would be a good choice in future studies to examine the development and the interaction of governance quality, stakeholder trust, and destination performance at various destination life cycle stages. Second, the area of the research was limited to two destinations as they represent different governance systems. The findings might not be as generalizable to other contexts of cultural tourism, even though with different institutional conditions, socio-cultural conditions, or regulatory systems, despite the fact that the comparison design is more effective in affecting contextual

understanding. Further research may be undertaken to apply the model in multi-country or multi-regional comparisons to understand how traditions in governance of the country and policy setting can impact on collaborative effectiveness and sustainability scales. This would enhance external validity of governance-performance relations through such comparative research.

Third, the research was based on self-reported information gathered among stakeholders, which could also bring about the perceptual and social desirability bias. Even though statistical processes were used in efforts to reduce common method variance, subjective ratings of the quality of governance, and cooperation are likely to be inconsistent with objective performance values. The future studies may include mixed methods, using survey data and data on secondary performance scores, network analysis, or qualitative interviews to improve the methodological rigour and triangulation.

Methodologically, further research can be supported by the incorporation of sophisticated methods in future research. Although PLS-SEM is useful in the investigation of linear structural relationships and a mediation. To capture equifinality in destination management, hybrid SEM-fsQCA can be used to find numerous ways of jointly achieving high performance results by using multiple variations of governance conditions. Also, SEM may be coupled with Artificial Neural Networks (SEM–ANN) to increase the rate of prediction and identify possible non-linear correlation between governance and collaboration constructs. Comprehensively, the next study needs to follow the same line and further investigate the relationship of governance based research using longitudinal, cross-national, and multi-method research approaches to enhance comprehension of the impact of institutional structures and relational mechanisms in the sustainable development of cultural tourism. These extensions would be able to sharpen the governance theory even more and offer more refined tourism policy advice to various situations.

CONCLUSION

This paper sought to explore the organisation ties of how cultural tourism governance, stakeholder cooperative, trust, and sustainable destination performance in terms of comparison analysis of specific governance systems using the SEM approach. The findings proved the high strength of the proposed model by proving that transparency and good governance substantially improve the stakeholder cooperation and trust positively affecting the destination performance and sustainable tourism performance. The multi-group test also showed that participatory and network-based governance structures have higher effects on relationships and performance than centralised ones, and mentions the mediating cloud of governance structure to collaborative effectiveness. The research can be illustrated as an addition to the literature of tourism management by concurrently disciplining the collaboration governance theory, and the stakeholder theory into a framework of structural modelling. Further, it contributes to the research of the impact of institutional design on the sustainability of culture and the competitiveness of destination in the medium or the long term. The results indicate the importance of collaborative governance as a strategic contributor to inclusive, resilient and sustainable cultural tourism development.

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