



Aligning Tourism with Sustainable Development Goals: A Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Framework

Lamin Drammeh¹ & Sarwar Azhar²

¹PhD Scholar, University of Lahore, Lahore Business School, Pakistan & University of the Gambia, Email: ldrammeh@utg.edu.gm

²Lecturer, University of Lahore, Lahore Business School, Pakistan, Email: sarwar.azhar@lbs.uol.edu.pk

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Corresponding Author:

Sarwar Azhar

Email:

sarwar.azhar@lbs.uol.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

Studies reveal that a multi-stakeholder collaboration framework (MSCF) exists in tourism governance, but in a fragmented, mandated regime and a structure of power and commitment to policy issues that perpetuates inequality. To strengthen procedural aspects of governance, participation is largely consultative, with limited influence for community and civil society actors. Therefore, partnership and dialogue legitimize pre-defined policy priorities and track a path that validates transformative governance outcomes. As a social phenomenon, stakeholders can institutionalize the rules and priorities that shape a destination's development, and rather than being purely technical arrangements, these frameworks reflect relational processes, with actors' interests, benefits, and burdens being well allocated. This paper provides a critical discourse on the extent to which MSCF promotes sustainability, going beyond conventional presumptions related to collaboration. Using a qualitative case study approach, it draws on semi-structured interviews and policy document analysis to assess collaborative processes. In terms of outcomes, MSCFs pursue economic ends more effectively than social or environmental growth-oriented development priorities. Efficacy is more dependent on the intensity of cooperation, institutionalization of power sharing, accountability, and learning. This study contributes to the literature on collaboration for governance and sustainability by identifying the conditions under which MSCFs can deliver transformative sustainability outcomes.



Introduction

The multistakeholder collaboration framework generates significant support and encouragement towards its integration into tourism governance as a key player towards effective sustainable

development (Azwar et al., 2025). However, how this framework can ensure effective, socially, economically, and environmentally significant outcomes towards development has yet to receive adequate exploration. While existing literature, grounded in stakeholder theory and participatory governance, largely presents collaboration as a normative ideal, much of it remains conceptual or process-oriented, offering limited empirical insight into whether inclusive governance arrangements translate into meaningful development impacts (Moussa et al., 2026).

The emerging body of critical studies in stakeholder theory and collaborative governance has also followed this route by focusing on issues that restricted multistakeholder collaboration efforts. This question attempts to break away from the rhetoric and emotion surrounding the concept and effectively investigate the 'performative' nature of the multistakeholder collaboration framework with reference to tourism. The absence of this exploration risks promoting a system of governance that effectively marginalizes and ignores stakeholder interests, forces environmental degradation, misguides policy-making, and ultimately weakens tourism's contribution to sustainable development goals.

Tourism governance, in terms of multistakeholder engagement and collaboration, is viewed as a social process by which stakeholders interactively create, contest, or institutionalize frameworks that guide the improvement of a destination. The relevance of tourism in relation to the SDGs is clearly identified as a cross-sectoral issue with the potential to contribute to all 17 SDGs; however, its mainstreaming within the SDG context remains fragmented. The specific relevance of tourism is linked to SDGs 8 and 9, emphasizing employment and the promotion of local culture and products. This has mainly been indirect and often implicit.

Highlighting a few examples, the relevance of tourism to SDG 1 (No Poverty) has mainly been through income and livelihood in a local context, SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), in relation to destination planning, SDG 16 for stable and well-governed destinations with strong institutions, SDG 17 for partnership support shared planning to achieve long-term development outcomes, SDG 12 promotes sustainable practices, and SDG 13 contributes to climate change through transport emissions and energy-intensive services. However, these dimensions are less explored in tourism research (Silva et al., 2024).

The integration of sustainable practices and methodologies within the tourism sector plays a crucial role in supporting advocacy for economic, social, and environmental growth. Such integration and implicated awareness are subject to an evaluation through bibliometric analysis and toolkits. This helps to elucidate the opportunities and challenges for the Sustainable Development Goals in tourism-based initiatives. Despite tourism's potential to aid the achievement of the SDGs, the current emphasis in the academic community surrounding the topic is disproportionate for some of the aforementioned themes.

Recent systematic reviews show a conspicuous gap within the literature: whereas sustainability is rated as a focal issue for tourism literature, direct alignment with specific targets is arbitrary and follows rather general, rhetorical approaches towards linking SDG targets with tourism activity by embedding them within quantitative frameworks to signify specific contributions towards SDG targets through tourism activity (Jung et al., 2024). This has undermined tourism's credibility in signifying responsibility for these targets, thereby reducing the relevance of such literature related to policy approaches towards tourism activity.

This manuscript examines the multistakeholder and governance aspects, which are particularly prominent in the existing scholarly discourse. The significant advancements towards the SDGs in the tourism sector fundamentally rely on cooperative efforts among governmental entities, private

enterprises, and local populations, reflecting an agenda closely tied to SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Nonetheless, empirical data concerning the operationalization of such partnerships in practice, as well as their conversion into concrete developmental outcomes, remains insufficient. Current literature seldom offers a comprehensive framework that examines efficacy, power relations, and sustainability of multistakeholder collaborations within tourism governance, particularly at the destination level.

In this context, international organizations such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) have established strategic frameworks, including "Tourism and the SDGs: Journey to 2030," that aim to guide policymakers and industry stakeholders (UNWTO, 2021). Although these initiatives provide significant normative direction and are informed by country-specific analyses and commitments from the private sector, their efficacy ultimately hinges on contextually tailored implementation and thorough empirical assessment, a domain where scholarly inquiry remains deficient (Bhuiyan et al., 2024). . Consequently, the research seeks to address the following inquiry:

RQ: To what extent are multistakeholder collaboration frameworks in tourism governance effective in promoting sustainable development outcomes?

Literature

Tourism Governance and Participation

Best governance practices would ensure a stakeholder perspective in participation, such as seeking to encourage a wider level of engagement with governmental and other types of stakeholders, such as tourists, to gain from a collaborative sharing of assets which could be beneficial in information-based decisions, especially in a process which could permit a type of "democratization" in tourism, where tourism could have a sustainable governance outcome, as a result of a "participatory governance perspective in a scenario of shared decisions in governance

Collaborative Governance Models

Collaborative governance is a useful approach for analysing tourism governance, and a structured process in which government officials participate in consensus-oriented decision-making with stakeholders of particular kinds. Notably, prominent theoretical work conducted by Gash (2022) has been largely applied to tourism to examine how institution-based cross-sector collaboration can shape public policy participation. Indeed, available information indicates that collaborative governance improves communication and planning, although coordination and community capability can hinder sustainability achievements.

Studies that examine the design of explicit multistakeholder frameworks provide important insights into the structural and procedural conditions under which collaboration can become effective. In the context of sustainable tourism development in small island destinations (Pham et al., 2025). For example, conceptualize a framework that integrates diverse stakeholders across sequential phases of attraction, engagement, and continuous management. Similarly, the (MSCF) emphasizes the role of leadership in managing stakeholder relationships and establishing monitoring mechanisms to align collaborative processes with sustainability outcomes. Supporting this perspective, a systematic review identifies intermediation capacity, institutionalized learning, inclusivity mechanisms, and contextual adaptation as core components of effective multistakeholder frameworks, highlighting their potential to enhance the performance of collaborative tourism governance across diverse destination contexts.

Effectiveness and Sustainability Outcomes

Research indicates that well-organized collaborations involving multiple stakeholders can facilitate these perspectives into decision-making processes, mitigate conflicts, and harmonize tourism development with environmental and socio-economic objectives. Mechanisms for collaborative engagement have been linked to legitimacy in governance processes and improved resource allocation for sustainable development outcomes.

For example, partnerships between public and private sectors in destination management have been demonstrated to foster activities aimed at environmental preservation, community empowerment, and responsible tourism practices, all of which align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Additional case studies highlight the potential for stakeholders to synchronize tourism planning with conservation and priorities, thereby reinforcing sustainability through shared objectives and coordinated efforts.

Research reveals that the efficacy of collaborative frameworks is significantly contingent upon contextual factors, capacities, and power dynamics. Numerous frameworks exhibit optimal performance in environments with robust institutional capacity, trust, equitable stakeholder participation, and coordination mechanisms. For instance, inadequate stakeholder connections, insufficient community empowerment, and fragmentation have been identified as barriers that undermine the prospective sustainability benefits of multi-actor processes.

Critical Themes:

Power Dynamics

While stakeholder prioritization is a fundamental concept in the tourism governance model, studies have also indicated that power asymmetries can significantly distort this process (Han et al 2025). Dominant actors, such as state authorities or multinational tourism corporations, often exert disproportionate influence, marginalizing local communities and small-scale operators. This imbalance undermines inclusive governance and constrains the sector's capacity to deliver sustainable development outcomes aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDGs 11, 12, 16, and 17. Consequently, effective tourism governance requires a shift from symbolic participation to meaningful stakeholder engagement, with diverse actors possessing genuine decision-making power (Timothy, 2025). Ensuring equitable participation is therefore critical to achieving socially inclusive, environmentally responsible, and institutionally robust tourism development.

Institutional and Contextual Barriers

According to Jennings (2024), collaboration must include a set of conditions at the context layer, including institutional coherence, regulatory alignment, and culture. A lack of infrastructure in governance structure, a mismatch in policy, or a lack of a culture of collaboration in a given area wouldn't necessarily unleash a superb set of principles.

Gaps and Emerging Directions

Despite the body of literature on collaborative governance frameworks in the tourism sector, it lacks empirical support in two key areas. First, there have been no significant attempts to link collaborative approaches and outcomes to sustainable development within one integrated framework. For example, Gonçalves de Almeida et al. (2020), conducted a systematic review and proposed an integrative framework of collaborative capabilities for sustainability precisely because existing work lacked such integration. Furthermore, recent literature reviews indicate a persistent

gap in understanding how cultural and economic contexts shape sustainable development pathways, with many studies concentrated in certain regions and overlooking local socio-cultural dynamics (Marra, 2025).

In light of the discussions, the literature suggests that multi-stakeholder collaborative approaches can enhance sustainable tourism governance. These approaches include collaborative governance and stakeholder engagement, which introduce structured means to realize the above. Furthermore, such approaches can only guarantee effectiveness in power, trust, and institutional capacity, towards the attainment of sustainable development, but not nominal engagement and piecemeal implementation.

Methodology

This paper assesses the performance of multistakeholder collaboration frameworks in tourism governance and the implementation of SDGs. This is regarded as perceived effectiveness by stakeholders and the incorporation of SDG imperatives into tourism policies. The study aims to review stakeholder perceptions of multistakeholder collaboration frameworks in tourism governance, assess the level of integration of SDGs within the policy documents of tourism governance, investigate alignment or divergence between policy intentions and stakeholder experiences, and establish enabling factors and barriers that influence outcomes for SDG-oriented governance.

Research Paradigm and Approach

The underlying paradigm for this study is the interpretivist paradigm, which recognises that the effectiveness and sustainability of governance are socially mediated by context, power, and perception (Ahmad et al., 2025). The methodological triangulation approach, which includes individual and group discussions as well as documentary analysis, was applied (Creswell et al, 2018). The approach enables validity for this research study.

Research Design

The research employs a qualitative methodology to facilitate the in-depth examination of multistakeholder frameworks of tourism governance in their real-life context. The principal unit of analysis for the study was multistakeholder frameworks of tourism governance. The additional units of analysis include the respective stakeholders who participate in tourism governance activities, the processes and mechanisms in governance activities, and the policies and strategic plans associated with tourism (Hall, 2021; Razaqat et al., 2026).

Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured interviews enabled the collection of perceptions on effectiveness, governance, and outcomes linked with the SDGs in multistakeholder collaboration settings (Knott et al., 2022). Purposive sampling, with maximum variation sampling, allows stakeholder involvement. The list of stakeholders comprises government representatives (tourism, environment, and planning), business stakeholders such as hotel and tour operators/investors, civil society and non-governmental organizations, and development partners or international organizations, whenever appropriate

Sample Size

The number of interviews for each case was approximately 20-30 or until theoretical saturation was reached, lasting between 30 and 55 minutes per interview, in person or through online platforms. The use of an interview guide ensures greater consistency and flexibility. The key

themes in the interviews include stakeholder roles and their respective influence levels, effectiveness of the collaborative approach, awareness and use of the SDGs in transparency in decision-making, and the challenges and factors in incorporating SDGs.

Focus groups provide an avenue for exploring community perceptions, interaction processes, and power balances among stakeholders, especially the interests of the community and other stakeholders that might be excluded through governance structures. Focus groups were homogeneous to facilitate discussions among the community and smaller- and mid-scale businesses. There are three focus groups, each consisting of six participants. Some relevant issues discussed revolved around inclusion, equity, and legitimacy in governance partnerships, as well as sustainable processes and trade-offs and gaps between policy and ground conditions. The reason for conducting focus groups was to discover collective stories, contested views, and social dynamics that may not be vocalized in individual interviews.

Policy Document Analysis

Policy documents assessed how and to what extent SDGs are integrated into tourism governance frameworks and identified the mechanisms through which sustainability objectives are operationalized (Howlett, 2023). Documents were selected based on relevance, authority, and recency (typically from the past 5–10 years). These include national and regional tourism policies, destination management plans, sustainable tourism strategies, environmental and development policies, partnership agreements, and memoranda of understanding.

Data Analysis

To analyse findings, thematic analysis was applied using a six-step analytical approach as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2021). These include familiarization with the data, coding of the theme, theme condensation, theme review, theme definition and naming, and interpretation and synthesis. NVivo software was incorporated to aid in coding and managing qualitative findings. Using a convergence coding method, deductive coding was derived from SDG and governance theory, while inductive coding was incorporated using stakeholder narratives and SDG texts (Liasun, 2025). Interviews, FGD, and SDG files were triangulated to juxtapose findings and determine discrepancies and cohesion in SDG governance. The credibility of the study, as claimed by Lim (2025) was achieved through triangulation, member checks, thick description for transferability, and peer-reflexive briefing. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, confidentiality and anonymity assured, and ethical approval obtained from relevant institutional review boards

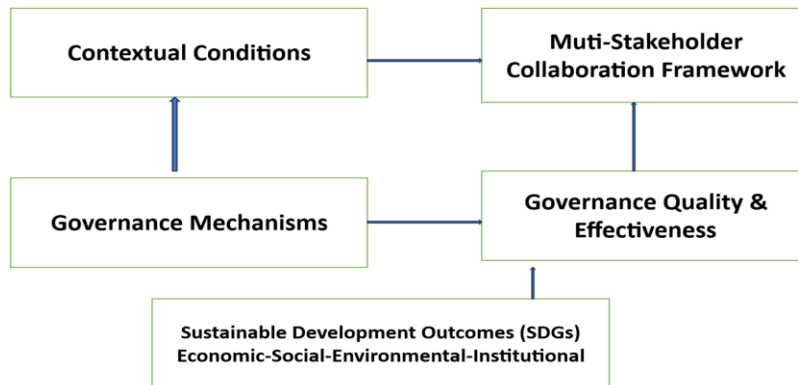
Table 1.1 SDG–Policy Coding

SDG Dimension	Coding Category	Description	Indicators
SDG 1: No Poverty	Supporting Marginalized Groups	Localizing Supply Chain	Pro-Poor Tourism
SDG 8: Decent Work & Economic Growth	Local economic inclusion	Support for SMEs & Local Employment	Target local sourcing; community-based tourism (CBT)
SDG 10: Reduce inequalities	Addressing the Income Gap	Increase Value Chain	Tourism as a tool for equality
SDG 12: Responsible Consumption & Production	Sustainable tourism practices	Resource efficiency and waste reduction	Green certification; waste management plans
SDG 16: Inclusiveness	Diverse interactions	Inter-cultural understanding	Building strong institutions

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals	Multistakeholder collaboration	Formal collaboration mechanisms	Public–private partnerships; governance councils
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The Framework

Figure 1.1: Framework linking multi-stakeholder collaboration in tourism governance to sustainable development outcomes



The framework highlights how multi-stakeholder collaboration (MSC) in tourism can achieve measurable results by accomplishing sustainable development through concepts of stakeholder theory, governance theory, and sustainable development theory (SDGs). Instead of using an input–outcome framework, the process, mechanism, and outcome are bound together by effectiveness.

Findings

Table 1.2 Key Findings

Components	Themes	Findings	Quotes	SDG	Reference
Contextual Conditions	Institutional Capacity and Commitment	Fragmented mandates and lax enforcement hampered collaborative efficiency; agencies' political commitment to sustainability differs.	“Different committees and platforms exist, but the power to make decisions is centralized” (Government) NGO Participant	16 & 17	Sun et al (2025)
Contextual Conditions	Power Disparity	Community voices remain marginal. State and key private actors dominate acts.	“We attend meetings, but our ideas rarely shape final decisions.” (Community representative)	10 & 16	Sharma & Sayed (2024)
MSCF	Influence VS. Inclusiveness	Stakeholder representation is	“Participation looks good on	16 & 17	Ansel & Gash 2018

		available, but participation is mainly consultative and not decision-making	paper, but influence is limited.” (NGO stakeholder		Van et al (2025) Bell & Reed (2022)
Governance Mechanisms	Coordination & Sharing Information	Sharing information and formal platforms enhances implementation capacity	“Information flow can make implementation smoother” (Private sector participant)	17	Li et al (2025) Naeem (2019)
Governance Mechanisms	Trust Learning	Historical mistrust limits the collaboration, as trust-building and policy learning are uneven.	“Although we are experiencing improvements, the memory of past conflicts makes it challenging” (Civil society representative)	16	Gonzalez et al (2025) Brown (2024)
Governance Quality & Effectiveness	Legitimacy & Policy Coherence	Effective collaboration improves agency coordination and procedural legitimacy, but implementation gaps persist	“Communication among agencies increases even though outcomes continue to be uneven.” (Tourism Planning officer).	16	Howlet 2020
Sustainable Development Outcomes	Economic Outcomes	Employment gains and tourism growth are more evident than social or environmental benefits.	“Local communities are seeing limited benefits, despite tourism growth.” (Community Representative)	8 & 1	Nguyen et al (2025) Santos (2023)
Sustainable Development Outcomes	Social & Environmental Outcomes	Growth goals continue to take precedence over social justice and environmental preservation.	“Environmental issues are frequently the last to be addressed” (Representative of an NEA)	12 & 13	Gossling et al (2021)

Discussion

The framework proposes a conceptualization of outcomes for sustainable development in the context of tourism governance as a function of interplays between contextual factors, governance, and structures for multi-stakeholder collaboration, facilitated by the quality and effectiveness of governance. This responds to the criticism that research on tourism governance has examined cooperation as a problematization for the better, with a view to power aspects, institutional enabling, and outcome effectiveness (An et al., 2025; Hall, 2011).

Contextual Conditions and Institutional Embeddedness

Contextual conditions encompassing political, socio-economic, cultural, and institutional dimensions constitute the foundational substratum of the framework, thereby influencing both the architecture and operational dynamics of multi-stakeholder collaboration. Institutional theory suggests that governance is underpinned by formal and informal institutional constraints and legacies, which can influence patterns and coordination capabilities (North, 1990). Among the contextual factors identified for tourism governance are participants, legitimacy around knowledge claims, and the manner in which tourism sustainability is determined and implemented (Zhang et al., 2022).

Importantly, the framework suggests that collaboration does not occur in an institutional vacuum. Disparities in power among governmental entities, private-sector investors, and local communities, frequently exacerbated by policy frameworks, can inhibit substantial participation and distort outcomes towards economic growth imperatives, often to the detriment of social and environmental objectives (Han et al., 2025; Kabeya, 2025). This observation addresses a significant lacuna in the scholarship on collaborative governance, which has faced critiques for inadequately theorizing structural inequities and contextual limitations.

Governance Mechanisms as Operational Levers

A range of regulatory instruments, policy coordination, accountabilities, and processes of participation are considered operational levers of governance, mediating between context and collaboration (Sullivan et al., 2025). However, developed from a particular theory of governance, these are actually hybrids involving the state, market, and civil society.

Yet the effectiveness of such mechanisms is necessarily contingent on their coherence capacity for enforcement as well as their contribution to the realm of sustainability. Moreover, there is a risk of poor enforcement of regulations, fragmentation of the tourism policy domain, and symbolic participation with the governance mechanisms within the framework. The governance mechanisms within the framework are not crucially supportive, but potentially restrictive.

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration Frameworks and Power Dynamics

At the core of the framework lies the multi-stakeholder collaboration framework, reflecting theories of collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2018). Such frameworks are premised on deliberation, shared decision-making, and consensus-building among diverse actors. In tourism governance, collaboration is frequently promoted as a remedy to fragmentation and sustainability challenges.

Yet empirical evidence highlights a persistent “collaboration–outcomes gap,” that participatory processes fail to translate into measurable, sustainable development outcomes (Dredge, 2018; Lah, 2025). The framework responds to this critique by explicitly linking collaboration to governance quality and effectiveness rather than assuming automatic positive impacts. It recognizes that collaboration can reproduce existing power hierarchies, particularly when private sector actors dominate agenda-setting and resource allocation (Sharma & Sayed, 2024).

Governance Quality and Effectiveness as a Mediating Construct

The quality of governance and its efficacy serve as essential mediating variables connecting collaborative processes and sustainable development outcomes. The notion of quality is grounded in the theory of good governance, which encompasses variables such as accountability, responsiveness, inclusivity, and policy coherence (Howlett, 2023).

By situating the quality of governance as an intermediary variable rather than a terminal outcome, the framework enhances theoretical precision. It posits that collaborative efforts yield sustainable outcomes only when they enhance quality, implementation capacity, and institutional learning. This perspective addresses a significant shortcoming in tourism governance scholarship, and effectiveness is often inferred from process indicators rather than evaluated outcome-based measures (Ramukumba, 2025).

Sustainable Development Outcomes and SDG Alignment

The delineated parameters through which the outcomes of sustainable development, including the economic, social, ecological, and institutional objectives attained as the superior epistemology of evaluation, align with the UN SDGs. Although the role of tourism is clearly depicted through the SDGs 8, 9, and 12, the thematic application of the topic in relation to the elimination of poverty, the environment, and institutions has also been emphasized by Sun et al. (2025). Most importantly, this framework takes into consideration feedback effects, as the occurrence of results can impact future practices. In this regard, it reflects the adaptive approach to governance and the systems theory of learning, reflection, and the evolving nature of policy in socio-ecological systems.

Critical Implications

The framework theoretically adds to the literature by bridging opportunities for collaborative governance theory with institutional and sustainability approaches, moving beyond idealized participation. The framework also adds to academic inquiry theoretically and methodologically in analysing empirically "how," "in what ways," and "for whom" collaborative tourism governance facilitates sustainable development outcomes. Most crucially, it emphasizes power, context, and effectiveness in analysing tourism governance; hence, responding to pressing academic calls for politically and outcome-focused research in tourism governance (Zhang et al., 2026). It therefore sets the stage for robust comparative, mixed-method, and policy-focused research in tourism governance and the SDG.

Conclusion

Accordingly, this paper has concluded that the application of multi-stakeholder collaboration frameworks within the context of the institutional/governing environment in support of the achievement of the goal of sustainable development reflects a set of structurally constrained conditions, insofar as the potential for the achievement of the goal of multi-stakeholder collaboration frameworks in support of the achievement of the goal of sustainable development is concerned. Within the complex governing environment, the overall horizontal coordination and information exchange mechanisms can contribute to the legitimacy and coherence of the formal processes.

The findings highlight that MSCFs are only partially effective on governance processes rather than on sustainable development. Structural constraints, rather than the absence of collaborative arrangements, shape these limitations. Centralized decision-making and unequal power relations marginalize less powerful stakeholders, positioning MSCFs as mechanisms that legitimize pre-defined policy agendas rather than as transformative governance instruments capable of redistributing authority or reorienting development priorities. Persistent trust deficits and uneven policy learning further weaken collaborative capacity, constraining adaptive governance and long-term collective problem-solving.

The framework indicates efficacy in promoting economic goals, in particular, employment and growth, compared to the accomplishment of social and environmental equity. The current

imbalance reflects the dominance of growth-oriented logics in tourism development, especially when social justice and sustainability are less prioritized. The MSCF, therefore, contributes more strongly to SDGs associated with economic performance and institutional coordination than to those addressing inequality, community empowerment, and environmental integrity.

In conclusion, it is instead contended in this study that it is not a lack of collaboration but rather a lack of quality and quality-based depth in this form of governance that undermines MSCFs and likely precludes their potential for substantive development, in addition to being limited in sustainable objectives in sustainable development itself and in sustainable development outcomes and results in sustainable development as well. Based on this point, it is likely concluded that it is not the form of MSCFs themselves but rather their underlying capacities and quality in transforming governance in ways aligned with sustainable development objectives in this area themselves

Practical Contributions

Based on these findings, this study can make several contributions to tourism governance and policy. Firstly, this study provides empirical support that mere reliance on multi-stakeholder collaboration frameworks in tourism governance is not enough to realize sustainable development in practice. It serves to inform and remind policy-making in tourism governance to look beyond symbolic representation of all stakeholders in any multi-stakeholder collaboration framework and instead strive to reshape power dynamics to involve others in policy-making in tourism. Second, this study highlights tourism governance's role in improving institutional capacities of various state actors to reduce mandate fragmentation in tourism policy processes and practice generally.

Third, this study's findings serve to remind tourism governance of the dependency of MSCF success on trust-building and policy learning to effectively facilitate tourism governance processes and practice generally. Finally, this study's findings on MSCF's conflicting commitment to sustainable development might serve to inform tourism governance on bridging gaps between tourism policy objectives and policy practice in line with any of the SDGs on 'inclusive growth,' 'equity,' 'poverty,' and 'environment,' as opposed to focusing on 'growth objectives.'

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to the literature on governance and tourism supply chain networks. First, instead of a voluntaristic approach toward collaboration, which recognizes collaboration as a desirable process in its own right, this study indicates that MSCFs are influenced by structural factors, such as power relations. In other words, instead of collaboration being just a process to achieve a desirable end-state in its own right, it is a complex process where power relations shape participation and influence MSCFs. Second, instead of limiting to procedural aspects of collaboration, that is, its legitimacy and coordination capacity, it examines substantive collaboration concerning SDGs.

Thirdly, by linking collaborative processes with differentiated SDG outcomes, this study further develops sustainability governance theory by demonstrating how economic, social, and environmental dimensions are produced unevenly within the systems of tourism governance. Accordingly, the findings also contribute to the scholarship on tourism governance by positioning MSCFs as more than mere coordination mechanisms; rather, they are potentially, but often unrealized, transformative instruments whose effectiveness hinges on reshaping relations between governance, accountability structures, and development priorities.

Limitation and Future Research Directions

The study has limitations that need consideration. For example, the qualitative nature of the study limits the generalization of findings. Furthermore, an evaluation of the multi-stakeholder collaborative framework in a single destination and specific time could develop bias. Moreover, despite the inclusion of multiple stakeholder groups, insufficient representation of informal community actors can reduce the depth of understanding regarding grassroots governance dynamics. Lastly, the evaluation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) outcomes is inherently selective, given the inherent challenges associated with directly attributing complex social and environmental transformations to collaborative governance structures.

Future research could use a comparative study design to evaluate functionality and strengthen the external validity of the findings by exploring various environments based on politics, cultures, and economies. The incorporation of a mixed study design is likely to enhance the quality of the study findings by assessing the efficacy of MSCFs as a tool for collaborative governance while strengthening the chances of discovering causality in the collaborative environments of tourism industries. Future research could examine the functionality of knowledge systems in collaborative environments. Finally, future research could examine the potential of MSCFs to apply social justice principles and environmental considerations, including accountability, and avenues for MSCFs to cater to specific SDG targets in moving tourism cooperative governance toward transformative sustainability outcomes.

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