

Linking Stakeholder Collaboration and Sustainable Tourism Development: A Systematic Review

Abstract

Sustainable tourism development is complex, with multiple stakeholders influencing and being influenced by it. Effective collaboration among stakeholders is essential to identify solutions and achieve shared objectives. Notably, systematic reviews exploring the link between stakeholder collaboration and sustainable development are limited. This research seeks to address this gap and propose directions for future research. A systematic review identified forty-four relevant articles from the Scopus database, drawn from an initial pool of one hundred and twelve articles. The analysis revealed three key themes. Recommendations were provided to enhance stakeholder collaboration and promote sustainable tourism. The findings suggest that improved stakeholder collaboration can lead to better management, advances in environmental and resource conservation, and economic growth. This study systematically examines the relationship between stakeholder collaboration, stakeholder management and sustainable development, offering valuable insights for policy-makers and contributing to the academic literature by elucidating the role of stakeholder collaboration in sustainable tourism development, while proposing strategies to enhance collaboration.

Keywords: stakeholder collaboration, sustainable tourism, possible solutions, review, stakeholder management

1. Introduction

A crucial aspect of sustainable tourism is ensuring sustainable natural resource preservation, economic and social growth, and cultural and historical restoration. For the most part, the economic impact of tourism is at the center of tourist growth in developing countries. Additionally, the natural ecosystems of developing countries are under increasing stress due to poverty, lack of political commitment, and systematic corruption (Ngo et al., 2018). As a result, the number of tourists and the total revenue generated by the tourism industry are the primary indicators of successful tourism development. Because of this, it is challenging to increase tourism's economic benefits while protecting natural resources, improving social conditions, and safeguarding cultural heritage. Hence, sustainable tourism development is considered to be a challenging and tricky term. Hardy and Pearson (2016) asserted that sustainable tourism development should have an impact on (1) Economic health, (2) Subjective well-being of residents, (3) Preservation of resources, (4) Balanced culture, and (5) Optimal satisfaction of guest needs by focusing on its principles and utilizing thorough planning.

Moreover, multiple stakeholders influence sustainable tourism development. The interconnectedness of stakeholders and the need for resources necessitate collaboration among them. Stakeholders can benefit from collaborative procedures in which they can learn from one another, develop new policies, and adjust to a changing environment (Rowley & Moldoveanu, 2003). Historically, the concept of stakeholders was

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primarily associated with the context of organisations and their management. Several researchers, including Timur and Getz (2008), have demonstrated that destination settings are comparable to organisational settings. However, the tourism destination's structure is more complex than that of the organisations. Additionally, a tourism destination has several stakeholders, including the public sector, local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and businesses. These stakeholders have an impact on the destination and have the power to influence it or the projects that are taking place there (Komppula, 2016; Lalicic, 2018; Salman, et al., 2021; Wei & Yang, 2013). Literature on tourism development also proposes identifying stakeholders, estimating their power, determining their interest, and devising a plan for increasing stakeholder interactions, their management, prioritisation, and categorisation (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005; Timur & Getz, 2008; Jaafar et al., 2023).

In addition, experts have discovered that the sustainability of a tourist site is contingent on the stakeholders' level of interest in the location. Collaboration among stakeholders from different domains with diverse interests can give comprehensive and complete solutions for sustainable development, policy formulation, and advancing sustainability (Lee et al., 2017; Stoll-Kleemann et al., 2010; Salman et al., 2023). Moreover, stakeholder consultation is also considered important in tourism destinations (Damian et al., 2022). Even though many studies have examined stakeholders' attitudes and collaborations in sustainable tourism development, there is still a dearth of systematic reviews linking stakeholder collaboration and sustainable tourism development. The adequate systematic assessments of the databases searched, the articles omitted, the search phrases employed, etc., are also absent. According to Greenhalgh and Peacock (2005), this makes it difficult for upcoming scholars to reproduce the study, test the explanation, or assess the study's thoroughness. A systematic review of the literature on the study of stakeholder collaboration importance and linking it to sustainable tourism destinations is long overdue. Therefore, to determine the importance of stakeholder collaboration in sustainable tourism development, this study systematically explores and synthesizes the existing literature on stakeholder collaboration in recent studies of sustainable tourism development and provides possible ways to improve sustainability through stakeholder collaboration. This study is relevant and timely since international travel reopened after COVID-19. Therefore, there is a need for immediate solutions that might strengthen the collaboration among stakeholders of the destination and direct the focus toward sustainable tourism development. An important theoretical gap in the literature is filled with this paper's holistic approach to stakeholder collaboration for sustainable tourism development. This is relevant to every tourism destination's sustainability

This section explains the rationale for doing a systematic review and conducting this investigation. PRISMA, a suggested reporting item for scientific reviews and meta-analyses, is included in Section 2 of the paper. Sections 3 and 4 carefully explore the empirical research to locate, choose, and assess the available literature on the importance of stakeholders' collaboration in sustainable tourism development. This contains a discussion of the results, the paper's ramifications, and future topics of investigation for researchers.

2. Materials & methods

This section describes the materials and methods utilized in this systematic review. This includes study design, eligibility requirements, information sources and search methods, the systematic review procedure, and data extraction and analysis.

2.1. Study design

An epidemiological meta-analysis developed by Stroup et al. (2000) was adapted for this study. This is in accordance with the PRISMA standard (Moher et al., 2009). The main research question was kept in consideration throughout the whole systematic review process.

2.2. Eligibility and exclusion criteria

Consideration was given to the inclusion of specific studies focusing on the significance of stakeholders' collaboration and sustainable tourism development. This contains works published between 2003 and 2022. A nineteen-year timeline is an acceptable timeline to observe the importance of stakeholders' collaboration in sustainable tourism development. This is in line with studies conducted by Muhamad Salleh et al. (2020), Salman et al. (2024), and Jaafar et al. (2023), where the researchers used 19 years' timeline as an adequate timeline for a systematic review. Emphasis was put on selecting and considering journal articles that had been peer-reviewed. The article focused on two sole objectives: to explore the importance of stakeholders' collaboration in sustainable tourism development and provide solutions to sustainable tourism through stakeholder collaboration. However, case reports, meeting abstracts, and expert opinions were omitted from this publication. Also deleted were review articles, book series, textbooks, and conference papers. This is due to the absence of an excessive peer-review process. Only articles relevant to the study's objective were selected, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Inclusion & exclusion criteria

Criterion	Eligibility	Exclusion
Type of literature	Peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters in books with editorial committees or doctoral theses with thesis committees	Journals (systematic review), book series, book, conference proceedings
Timeline	Between 2003 and 2022	<2003
Language	English	Non-English
Indexes	Scopus	Not Scopus

Source: Adapted from Shaffril et al. (2018).

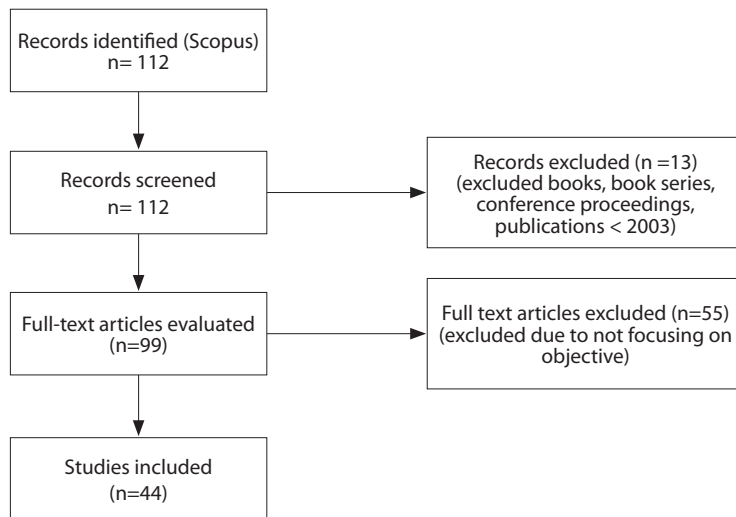
2.3. Information sources and search strategies

The authors collaborated with a research group to design the search method. In addition to the terminology and relevant synonyms, the research group assessed sentinel articles. In August 2022, the search was concluded after a thorough search of the Scopus database. The compilation of search results considered synonymous phrases such as "stakeholders' collaboration", "sustainable tourism" and "sustainable tourism development". In addition, the paper examined literature from fields linked to stakeholders' collaboration and their contribution to sustainable tourism development. The specialist was accessible for mediation during this phase, focusing on the specified eligibility criteria. Scopus was the main database used to search for primary studies. One main reason for using the Scopus database was that it contains 22,800 journals from over 5000 publishers globally.

2.4. Systematic review process

The systematic review process was completed in four phases in Oct 2022. The initial step consisted of identifying the search terms. Using prior research and a thesaurus, keywords relating to stakeholders' collaboration and tourism development were chosen, as described in the preceding section. Duplicate items were removed in the second phase. In the third phase of the systematic review process (screening in progress), out of 112 articles qualified to be reviewed, 13 articles were deleted. The articles were omitted because they did not emphasise the significance of stakeholders' collaboration in sustainable tourist development. 99 articles were evaluated for full text, and in the final phase, 44 articles were finalised, as presented in Figure 1. The flow conforms to Moher et al. (2009) standards. Figure 1 depicts the identification layer as the topmost layer, followed by the screening layer. The third and fourth layers are the eligibility layer and the inclusion layer, respectively.

Figure 1
Systematic evaluation of papers on the importance of stakeholders' collaboration in sustainable tourism development (Moher et al., 2009)



2.5. Data abstraction & analysis

The finalised articles were reviewed and examined. The emphasis of the investigation's output was on detailed investigations pertaining to the specified research concerns. The data was extracted first by scanning the abstracts and then the complete papers to identify appropriate themes and subtopics. Using thematic analysis, themes connected to the importance of stakeholders' collaboration in sustainable tourism development were identified. The themes were organised according to the defined research questions. The subsequent part focuses on the paper's results and discussions.

3. Results & discussion

This subsection discusses the findings and analysis of the articles that were assessed systematically in relation to the themes that surfaced. Regarding stakeholders' collaboration and sustainable tourism development, three main themes originated from the results of the reviewed publications, with an emphasis on sustainability. The themes are 1) Collaboration, 2) Management, and 3) Sustainable Development, as shown in Table 2. This section also discusses the paper's implications, shortcomings, and recommendations for future research. The findings comprehensively examined the importance of stakeholder collaboration in sustainable tourism development. As per Table 2, related to the research design adopted by the studies, five studies utilised a mixed method design, thirty-five used a qualitative design, and only four used a quantitative design.

Table 2
Main findings from studies

Authors	Main research design	Study area	Collaboration		Management		Sustainable development
			SC	CR	SM	DM	
Aas et al. (2005)	MM	Luang Prabang, Laos	✓	✓			✓
Cottrell and Cutumisu (2006)	QL	Sweden/Romania	✓	✓			✓
Yang and Wall (2008)	MM	Xishuangbanna, Yunnan, China	✓	✓			✓
Haukeland (2011)	QL	Norway	✓	✓	✓		✓
García-Rosell and Mäkinen (2013)	MM	Finnish Lapland	✓	✓		✓	✓

Table 2 (continued)

Vasconcelos et al. (2013)	QL	Portugal	✓	✓			✓
Prezenza et al. (2014)	QL	Italy	✓	✓		✓	✓
Sujarittanonta (2014)	QL	Thailand	✓				
Adu-Ampong (2017)	QL	Central Region of Ghana	✓	✓			✓
Lee et al. (2015)	QL	Canada	✓				✓
Roper et al. (2015)	QL	New Zealand	✓	✓	✓		✓
Jung et al. (2015)	QL	South Korea	✓	✓	✓		✓
Colarič-Jakše and Ambrož (2015)	QN	Slovenia	✓	✓		✓	✓
Farmaki (2015)	QL	Cyprus		✓		✓	✓
Olsen (2016)	QL	Jokkmokk, Sweden/ Kautokeino, Norway	✓	✓		✓	✓
Duarte Alonso (2016)	QL	Spain	✓	✓	✓		✓
McComb et al. (2016)	MM	Northern Ireland	✓	✓			✓
Canavan (2017)	QL	Isle of Man, British Isles	✓		✓		✓
Dangi and Gribb (2018)	QN	Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP), USA	✓	✓	✓		✓
Towner (2018)	QL	Mentawai Islands	✓	✓		✓	✓
Islam et al. (2018)	QL	Bangladesh	✓	✓		✓	✓
Teshome et al. (2018)	MM	Ethiopia	✓			✓	✓
Nguyen et al. (2018)	QN	Vietnam	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nyanjom et al. (2018)	QL	Western Australia	✓	✓	✓		
Ngo et al. (2018)	QL	Vietnam	✓	✓			✓
Hansen, Rogers, et al. (2019)	QL	United States	✓	✓			
Hansen, Fyall, et al. (2019)	QL	United States	✓	✓		✓	✓
Al-Tokhais and Thapa (2019)	QL	Saudi Arabia	✓				✓
Wondirad et al. (2020)	QL	Southern Ethiopia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Deng et al. (2021)	QL	China	✓				✓
Kankhuni (2020)	QL	Malawi	✓		✓	✓	✓
Keryan et al. (2020)	QL	Armenia /Georgia	✓				✓
Kennedy et al. (2022)	QL	Malta	✓				✓
Snis et al. (2021)	QL	Norway	✓			✓	✓
Salman, et al. (2021)	QL	Malaysia	✓	✓		✓	✓
Mendoza-Moheno et al. (2021)	QL	Hidalgo, Mexico	✓				✓
Lee and Karimova (2021)	QL	Taiwan	✓	✓			✓
Bhaskara and Filimonau (2021)	QL	Bali, Indonesia	✓		✓	✓	✓
Cehan et al. (2021)	QL	Romania	✓			✓	✓
Özgit and Zhandildina (2021)	QL	North Cyprus	✓		✓		✓
Rahmaftria et al. (2021).	QL	Indonesia	✓	✓		✓	✓
Salman et al. (2023)	QN	Malaysia	✓		✓	✓	✓
Dwipayanti et al. (2022).	QL	Indonesia	✓			✓	✓
Eckardt et al. (2022).	QL	South Africa / the UK	✓	✓			✓

Note.

Collaboration

SC= Stakeholder collaboration
CR = Collaborative relationships

Management

SM = Stakeholder management
DM = Destination management

Research design

MM= Mixed methods
QN= Quantitative
QL= Qualitative

3.1. Collaboration

This section focuses on the theme of collaboration. 43 out of 44 finalised studies highlighted collaboration as vital for achieving sustainable tourism in the destination. Stakeholders' collaboration and collaborative relationships were found to be the key factors in this theme. Stakeholder collaboration guides to motivate stakeholders to participate towards the well-being of the destination (Hansen, Rogers et al., 2019). A study conducted by Aas

et al. (2005) also highlighted the importance of stakeholder collaboration by stating that stakeholder collaboration helps to develop a consensus among the stakeholders. Additionally, collaboration among the stakeholders also improves the relationship with each other and within the industry as well (Hansen, Fyall et al., 2019).

Moreover, other than stakeholders' collaboration in the destination, studies have also pointed out that collaborative relationships among the stakeholders are vital for a destination's success. Collaborative relationships can exist for various purposes. A study by Cehan et al. (2021) noted that the results are significantly associated with collaborative relationships for other purposes. These collaborative relationships can be in terms of exchanging information or mutually agreeing to meet the destination's demand (Mendoza-Moheno et al., 2021). Genuine stakeholder participation in collaborative activities can mitigate perceived power disparities and steer stakeholder networks toward more trustworthy relationships (Nyanjom et al., 2018). These relationships among different stakeholders are vital to sustain the destination for the long term.

Stakeholder collaboration not only guides in achieving sustainability in the destination but also improves the destination's planning and management (Bhaskara & Filimonau, 2021). Nevertheless, studies have pointed out that stakeholder collaboration is not straightforward (Nyanjom et al., 2018; Wondirad et al., 2020). Adequate stakeholder collaboration requires a holistic approach (Nyanjom et al., 2018). Effective collaboration is challenging because of the presence of multiple stakeholders with diverse perspectives (Salman et al., 2021). However, it is accepted that each stakeholder's distinctive contribution can positively influence tourism's growth in the destination (Nyanjom et al., 2018). Therefore, collaboration amongst stakeholders is essential for a tourist destination to strengthen its competitive advantages. However, some issues were found by researchers such as Wondirad et al. (2020), who noted that if the stakeholder collaboration is not adequate, stakeholders will face issues such as a lack of empowerment and resource overutilisation. For this to be resolved, roles and responsibilities need to be defined clearly. This helps coordinate and control the process by ensuring that each stakeholder group's contribution to the collaboration process is clearly, cooperatively defined, and understood. Stakeholders must be given credit for their contributions for the collaboration to be legitimate. Therefore, stakeholder collaboration must be carefully planned and executed by the management of the destination.

3.2. Management

Another key theme that emerged from the studies reviewed for this research was "Management". The main factors of this theme were stakeholder management and destination management. For decades, researchers have studied tourism as both a complex phenomenon and an essential economic driver (Pimid et al., 2020; Salman, et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2018; Sun et al., 2013). Stakeholders are the key to achieving sustainability in the destination (Salman et al., 2023). However, when it comes to working with different stakeholders with differing perspectives on the same issue (such as eco-activists, investors, and hotel managers), stakeholder management can be difficult and even problematic (Dangi & Gribb, 2018; Luštický & Štumpf, 2021). Sustainable tourism is linked to the goals of stakeholder management because stakeholder groups influence tourism development in a variety of ways. These include supply and demand for tourism services, regulation, management of tourism impacts, and human resources. However, implementing and accepting sustainable tourism initiatives by stakeholders with fragile common interests and collaboration mechanisms is challenging (Towner, 2018). The obstacles to implementing sustainable tourism are generally tied to the stakeholders' priorities, structure, and resources. Therefore, understanding stakeholders' interests and their level of influence is vital for their management, enhancing stakeholder collaboration and achieving sustainability in the destination (Salman et al., 2022).

Moreover, to achieve sustainability in the destination, the reviewed studies also highlighted destination management as an important and complex factor comprising different activities such as planning, gathering

information, resource management, crisis management and destination marketing management (Luštický & Štumpf, 2021). Furthermore, to make a location more appealing to tourists, destination management influences the quality and quantity of the destination's primary resources and attractions, as well as its supporting resources and acceleration factors (Luštický & Štumpf, 2021). Therefore, destination management is vital for achieving competitiveness and sustainability. However, a key element of destination management requires the stakeholders (e.g. authorities/local communities/NGOs) to collaborate. There are a variety of ways to accomplish this, and each requires a different level of relevance and engagement from stakeholders. Furthermore, this process is made more complicated because stakeholder groups are categorised as primary, secondary, important, and non-supportive, and the list goes on and on and on. Recognising the notion that stakeholders who collaborate on specific activities are likely to collaborate on other activities as well, gives direction to the most efficient ways to maximise strategic approaches to destination management (Cehan et al., 2021). Hence, it can be inferred that stakeholder collaboration impacts destination management. Therefore, destination management should be done through adequate engagement and collaboration of stakeholders for achieving sustainability in the destination.

3.3. Sustainable development

Sustainable tourism development necessitates the involvement of multiple stakeholders (Wondirad et al., 2020). Stakeholder collaboration for sustainable tourism is distinct from other forms of collaboration. Some stakeholders' short-term economic interests may be impacted by sustainable development. Stakeholders' inability to work together effectively is one of the key problems impeding sustainable tourism development (Wondirad et al., 2020). For the sustainable growth of tourist sites, teamwork and collaboration are essential.

Environmental restrictions must be considered when planning and managing sustainable tourism to protect natural and cultural resources (Özgit & Zhandildina, 2021; García-Rosell & Mäkinen, 2013; Mendoza-Moheno et al., 2021). Planning, development and operation of sustainable tourism must be a part of both national and municipal sustainable development policies (Farmaki, 2015; Cottrell & Cutumisu, 2006). Specific attention should be given to the various types of tourist development activities done by different stakeholder groups and the ways in which they interact with current land and resource usage and socio-cultural aspects (Cehan et al., 2021). Tourism should support a diverse array of local economic activities, taking into account environmental costs and benefits (Adu-Ampong, 2017), but it should not be permitted to become the dominant economic activity in a region. Local communities' participation in tourism planning, management or control should be promoted and accepted by both government and industry partners. Strengthened partnership and collaboration is vital (Afric Rakitovac & Urošević, 2023) for sustainability. Moreover, to ensure that the destination is sustainable and the benefits of tourism are distributed fairly, it is important to involve indigenous people, women, and minorities (Dwipayanti et al., 2022; Luštický & Štumpf, 2021). Moreover, the destination area's people, economy, environment, and political structures should all be respected by everyone involved.

3.4. Possible ways to improve sustainability through stakeholder collaboration

To improve stakeholder collaboration, research should be undertaken to determine the existence of current collaboration conditions in the area or destination (Salman et al., 2023). This may elucidate some difficulties occurring at destinations due to ineffective stakeholder collaboration efforts, enabling the required actions to be taken and research to be conducted to enhance the effectiveness of stakeholder collaboration. Furthermore, when it comes to improving collaboration among stakeholders, the idea of formally discussing development concerns across diverse groups has to be established, which might lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of each other's perspectives, which in turn could lead to greater collaboration and the formation of alliances (Aas et al., 2005; Towner, 2018).

Studies show that all stakeholders have the ability to engage in the planning process, so each stakeholder should provide a clear statement describing their role, responsibilities, and dedication to the process (Adu-Ampong, 2017). Moreover, Aas et al. (2005) noted that establishing the capacity of stakeholders to participate in the planning stage from the outset not only provides a measure of commitment but also encourages the organisation of subsequent meetings and workshops. Lastly, it is also necessary to design incentives encouraging stakeholders to attend regular meetings, particularly non-profit groups that are frequently not compensated for their attendance. Incentives can be in the form of income or presents for their group or business (Sun et al., 2013).

There is no single fit for all solutions. Stakeholder collaboration will vary according to the destination. However, factors like teamwork and community participation are still vital for adequate collaboration. More research is needed to explore the factors that can be considered generalisable for different destinations. This can guide to develop solutions and pragmatic policies that will enhance stakeholder collaboration in the destination.

3.5. Evolution of stakeholder collaboration in sustainable tourism development: a 19-year perspective

Across this period, the analysis of the provided articles suggests an increasingly sophisticated understanding and implementation of stakeholder collaboration in sustainable development in tourism.

In the earlier years, around 2005, the literature appeared to focus on the importance of stakeholder collaboration as a key factor in achieving sustainable tourism (Aas et al., 2005; Timur & Getz, 2008). This was a critical foundational understanding that set the stage for later developments. By the mid-2010s, research had begun to take a more nuanced view of stakeholder collaboration, recognising the need for shared understanding and balancing diverse interests for effective collaboration. Concepts like sustainable development and responsible tourism began to be incorporated more integrally in the discussion. The shift from simple recognition of the importance of stakeholder collaboration to a more strategic and nuanced understanding of its dynamics is significant. However, it is also important to note that challenges such as power imbalances, resource allocation, and achieving effective communication remain relevant across the timeline.

The most recent years (from 2020 onwards) have seen an even more evolved understanding. There is a clear shift towards a broader systems perspective, recognising the complexities of socio-ecological systems and the interconnectedness of stakeholders within them. This is evident in the focus on participatory management in cultural heritage-based cities (Salman et al., 2022) and the inclusion of WASH frameworks in tourism studies (Dwipayanti et al., 2022). Furthermore, the framework for evaluating sustainability outcomes in volunteer tourism (Eckardt et al., 2022) shows a deepening and refinement of the way stakeholder collaboration is approached.

Over the past 19 years, there appears to be a trend towards a more complex and nuanced understanding of stakeholder collaboration, moving from a more simplistic view of collaboration as beneficial to a more sophisticated understanding of how to manage collaborations effectively, considering the system's complexities. However, some fundamental considerations, such as balancing different stakeholder interests, communication, and resource allocation, remain consistently important across this timeline.

4. Conclusion

Stakeholder collaboration is vital for destination sustainability. This study has reservations about which type of collaboration suits all destinations, though this debate is beyond its scope. The findings demonstrate

the importance of collaboration and management for sustainability. The study identified stakeholder collaboration, relations, stakeholder management and destination management as key factors for sustainability. Enhanced stakeholder collaboration and management could increase environmental conservation, economic growth and resource conservation. Clear stakeholder roles are essential to guide objectives. The study achieved its purpose of developing strategies to increase stakeholders' collaboration in sustainable tourism. Lack of empowerment due to inadequate collaboration can be addressed through awareness of collaboration benefits. Government, private sectors, NGOs and local communities should work together to build strong collaborative relationships.

Tourism managers should partner with the private sector and establish international partnerships focused on cultural preservation. This will address gaps in sustainable tourism globally. Regional and international cooperation is vital for conservation and development success. Sustainable tourism depends on stakeholder collaboration, without which community empowerment would be difficult due to multiple parties involved. Collaborative efforts can improve community health, environment, and cultural sensitivity. Academics and policymakers must establish regulatory frameworks through tourism policies that represent indigenous peoples' interests while prioritising sustainability. Benefits include employment opportunities for residents near tourist sites. Effective stakeholder collaboration will enhance sustainable tourism, preserve cultural legacy, and improve tourist attraction management. This would benefit communities worldwide. Given the importance of indigenous knowledge, this article provides strategies for sustainable tourism management across nations, focusing on cultural heritage implementation.

5. Paper's implications

This study contributes to the body of knowledge concerning the significance of stakeholder collaboration in sustainable tourism in two ways, as part of its implications and general significance. First, in accordance with Shaffril et al. (2018), this study has provided a comprehensive overview of the significance of stakeholder collaboration in sustainable tourism around the globe. Despite the plethora of studies on stakeholder collaboration in achieving sustainability, there is insufficient evidence of attempts to review these research papers. As a result, this research tries to bridge the gap in understanding the role of stakeholder collaboration in sustainable tourism development, understanding the challenges faced in collaboration, and possible solutions to enhance collaboration for sustainable tourism. Moreover, the themes that emerged from the study can be used in the tourism literature to identify critical roles, obstacles, and possible solutions related to tourism. This represents the theoretical contribution to tourism's body of knowledge. This article presents practitioners and policymakers with the triangulation of information, discussion, and possible solutions for understanding the importance of stakeholder collaboration in tourism. After careful analysis of the studies and extracting the main issues in the context of collaboration and sustainable tourism, possible solutions were presented to policymakers. This study can aid them in managing stakeholders, which will, as a result, smooth the sustainable tourism implementation process. Second, the findings are useful in giving policymakers and other stakeholders a new perspective on the importance of understanding collaboration in sustainable tourism globally. Lastly, the study adds to the understanding of the significance of stakeholders' collaboration in achieving tourism sustainability. Understanding key stakeholders and their key roles in collaboration will help implement sustainable tourism in the destination, which will generate an alternative source of income for the community of the destination. Additionally, understanding stakeholders' roles increases environmental awareness, enhances tourism's socio-cultural impact, and promotes the efficient management of natural resources to ensure the area's long-term viability. Effective management for stakeholders, particularly primary stakeholders such as the community, organisations, and government, can help resource conservation and environmental protection and generate economically viable activities in the region.

6. Limitations and future research directions

Despite this paper's implications and contributions, the study has some limitations that should be addressed in future studies. This paper's analysis was based on a systematic review of past scholarly findings. This tactic was utilised to fill a present gap in the literature regarding the importance of stakeholders' collaboration in sustainable tourism. This paper recognises the shortcomings of the systematic review approach but does not compromise this study's robustness. As this research is limited to understanding stakeholder collaboration and sustainable development, future research should consider other review objectives and compare the stakeholder collaboration factors of different geographies. Moreover, other than stakeholder collaboration, future studies could focus on the key indicators for sustainable tourism and how it is linked to destination success. This would increase the generalizability of the findings for future studies. Moreover, another limitation is the language bias, as only English-language articles were included in this systematic review. The decision to only include English-language works was made due to practical constraints, and this may potentially limit the universality of the findings. Therefore, future studies may consider including non-English sources to capture diverse viewpoints and insights related to stakeholder collaboration and sustainable tourism from various global contexts. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted tourism destinations and stakeholders residing in those destinations (Salman et al., 2022). Therefore, studies on how COVID-19 impacted stakeholder collaboration in a destination should also be conducted. Moreover, since travel restrictions and lockdowns have been lifted, it would be interesting to find out how the roles of stakeholders have changed because of the pandemic. Therefore, future researchers could investigate this novel area.

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Declaration of Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing interests that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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